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PRESS RELEASE

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MATURITY FOR SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

Now in its third season, the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup Championship reaches real maturity as a one-make production based saloon car class.

There's a quality lineup for the first round here at Pukekohe and the promise of close racing.

For the first time, the colourful Swifts are running as a stand-alone event, adding extra credence to a category that continues to get better.

Right from the outset the Swift Sport Cup was intended to provide a stepping stone into the motor racing world while also offering more experienced competitors an opportunity to test their skills in a highly competitive environment.

The philosophy behind the class is that the driver matters, not the size of the entrant's budget.

Two time champion and first scholarship winner Cody McMaster returns to defend his past two championships in his Winger backed car previously driven last year by Scott Downes.

Michael Paaymens takes up the drive for the North Island Suzuki Dealer team. Michael was one of the entrants from this years Scholarship and was the 2007 NZ Mini Stock Champ.

Alan Dunkley that did two events last year joins the class for the 2009 / 2010 season.

Little surprise to see even more young drivers entering the championship, and several of the Swift drivers racing today have spent their nursery days racing karts.

Eighteen year old Matt Gibson, who won the Castrol Suzuki Swift Sport Cup Scholarship at Manfeild in August, cut his racing teeth in karting from the age of 12.

He won the First Club Championships in the Manawatu and at just 16 went on to race a Formula Ford in the 2007/08 Manawatu Winter series, securing several podium finishes and pole positions. He finished sixth in the championship and in the next season smashed the class lap record at Pukekohe.

Gibson will be racing with his head as much as his heart. "I know that to win a championship I must know when to settle for second and when to push for a win," he says.

William Bamber, who also comes from Wanganui, is still only 15, but must be a hot favourite for the opening round.6-8th of November

William already has an impressive track record, scoring 1,213 points to finish a close second in the Swift championship last summer.

Will is younger brother to his more famous older racing brother Earl Bamber and began in karts at the age of seven.

William is an LG- ZM development driver and is being mentored by Angus Fogg whose motor racing career spans more than two decades.

Will learnt much about race craft last season and this experience, he believes, will put him in good form for the 2009/10 series. He realises the benefits of drafting when the evenly matched Swifts run close together, the difficulties in passing when no car has a clear advantage and the need for patience.

Watch out for other junior racers like Bramwell King from Palmerston North who, at 13, is the youngest driver in the Swift Cup.

King finished second in the 2006 North Island Sprint Kart Championships, third in the 2007 New Zealand Sprint Kart series and won the 2009 Formula First United Travel Championship.

This season he is running in both the Swift and Formula First classes in what will be a busy season for the youngster.

Sam Robinson, a 21 year old automotive technician from Wellington, wants to finish in the top three results for the season, and Aucklander Marc Spring, a comparative veteran at 34, has similar aspirations.

Marc entered the Swift challenge for the first time last year, completing four rounds and finishing equal eighth, while setting a lap record at Manfeild.

Craig Innes, 31, from Taupo has a solid racing background - his dad Bryan was a top Mini Cooper racer back in the sixties, and last season Craig won the Mini Challenge series.

Adding glamour to the grid are two keen young ladies. Samantha Bennett, from Melbourne, is the first international driver to take part in the Swift Cup - and only saw Pukekohe for the first time last month.

She is driving the ex-Richard Moore car with backing from Wingers. At 22, Samantha is keen to make a solid impression and will be joined on the grid by Katherine Collins, a 19-year-old university student from Christchurch.

Katherine finished 13th in her inaugural season in a Suzuki last season and will be putting her experience to good use at Pukekohe this weekend.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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