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Craig Innes



Swift Sport Cup Series

MINI CHAMP SWITCHES TO SUZUKI SWIFT FOR SIX-ROUND RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

A championship winner has joined the lineup of drivers chasing top honours in the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup series on New Zealand motor racing circuits this summer.

Craig Innes, who won the Mini Challenge saloon car championship last season, has switched to the Swift one-make series.

The 31-year-old Taupo driver is keen to emulate his solid winning performance last year, and has his sights on another championship victory.

"I am keen to race in a stand-alone class and the Suzuki championship is shaping up to provide a good field of equal performance cars," said Craig.

"People can relate to the Suzuki Swifts racing, as they do with well known cars like the New Zealand V8s," he said.

Craig comes with motor racing in his blood. His dad, Bryan, was a well known Mini Cooper racing driver in the sixties, achieving considerable success on New Zealand tracks.

Karting provided an entry into motor sport for a young 12-year-old Craig. He raced at junior level for three years before progressing into senior grade kart competition.

His initial experience with one-make racing was in a Nissan Sentra and, following a four year break, he entered the highly competitive Formula Ford class for the 2006/07 season, assisted by veteran driver Kenny Smith.

Innes said he learnt much from the Formula Ford foray but believes there is a more level playing field with evenly matched cars like the production-based Suzuki Swift.

He said the fact that the Swifts were equal performers put more emphasis on driver ability rather than the size of the entrant's budget.

Craig is also putting something back into the sport by offering driver training for budding newcomers to racing.

Innes is campaigning all six rounds of the 2009/10 Swift Sport Cup which begins at Pukekohe on November 6, and ends in his home town of Taupo on March 21.

His newly prepared 1.6-litre Swift Sport hatchback is owned by Colin Caldwell, and supported by Smiths Sports Shoes, the Ebbett Group, TV3 and Taupo Weekender.

Close competition, the arrival of new drivers and the change to a stand-alone class are all expected to add new interest and an even higher profile for the Swift series.

"There is no question this is an exciting and expanding class of racing in New Zealand motor sport," said Paul Burborough, the series coordinator.

"It is a stepping stone into the motor racing world but also offers more experienced competitors a chance to test their skills in a highly competitive environment," he said.

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