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PRESS RELEASE

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DALLAS CLOSES SWIFT SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP POINTSORE ON BAMBER

Auckland Ben Dallas has closed up the leadership pointscore after a close round victory in the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup championship at Teretonga.

Going into the fourth round at Timaru on January 23/24, the 19-year-old snow sports equipment salesman has moved to within 36 points of series leader William Bamber. Dallas is confident about his Timaru prospects after showing good pace there last year, but realizes the competition is getting faster.

Bamber, the promising 16-year-old Wanganui high school student, won two of the three qualifying races on the Southland circuit of Teretonga, but his luck ran out in the third race, and he finished second overall for the day. William set fastest practice time of 1 minute 12.783 seconds, less than half a second faster than Dallas. Alan Dunkley a 20-year-old Auckland, was third with 18-year-old Wanganui racer Matt Gibson fourth. A mere 1.16 seconds separated the top ten cars - a clear indication of the close matching of the production based Suzuki Swifts.

In the first race Bamber stormed to a 5.7 second victory over Taupo driver Craig Innes, Dallas and Gibson, with the winner setting the fastest lap of 1 minute 12.466 seconds. The cars ran tightly bunched in the second race, with Bamber just crossing the line ahead of Dallas while third runner Gibson was almost as close. Fourth and fifth place runners Scott Harrison and Dunkley were also in close attendance, but Innes was unable to repeat his fine first race performance, trailing to an eleventh position.

The first two races were textbook material, according to Dallas, but the reverse grid race three produced some upsets. Bamber and Gibson had a coming together and while William finished sixth on the road, a time penalty relegated him to eleventh, with Gibson twelfth. Dunkley had the hard luck story of the meeting. After mechanical problems forced a rapid engine change on site at the circuit, Dunkley crashed heavily in the third race but escaped unhurt.

Meanwhile, Ben Dallas, who started from eleventh, worked his way through the field. On the final lap Ben closed in on Shaun Lawrence. "I still had about a four second gap on Shaun but applied pressure and managed to pass him two corners before the end," said Dallas. He took the chequered flag two tenths of a second in front of the Hamilton driver, while Branwell King was third, just in front of 21-year-old Whangarei driver Scott Harrison.

Prominent Christchurch driver Cody McMaster, a two times winner of the Swift Sport Cup Championship, was unable to compete at the Invercargill meeting due to recovering from recent elective surgery. His absence opens up the chances for other drivers to get ahead and McMaster hopes to return to racing at the Manfield meeting in mid February.

When the points were added up, Dallas had amassed 202 at Teretonga, and a total of 565 for the three rounds. "It was my best meeting this season for sure," said the Aucklander.

Bamber is still the overall points leader, with 601 after scoring 180 points in round three. Harrison finished third overall and is lying fifth in the season to date pointscore with 386 - just one point less than the unfortunate Dunkley. Gibson was fourth overall at Teretonga and is third in the championship while Lawrence is running fifth

All eyes will be on Dallas at Timaru. He finished third in the Swift Sport Cup Championship last season and won the Castrol Suzuki Scholarship in 2008. But for the final three rounds Ben is facing the most pressure yet, knowing he has a chance to wrest overall honours away from Bamber who is just as determined to win.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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