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## PRESS RELEASE

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PHOTO BY: Geoff Ridder

## POINTS CLOSE UP IN SUZUKI SWIFT SPORT CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

The importance of finishing a race even when the odds are bad was underlined by William Bamber at the recent Timaru national motor race meeting.

Leading the pointscore in the 2009/2010 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup Championship, the 16-year-old Wanganui student had a miserable first race but emerged from the pits at the tail of the field. He finished the race, gaining a valuable few points that have kept him within reach of Aucklanders Ben Dallas.

Dallas and Bamber were always going to be the top contenders for this fourth round in the popular one-make Suzuki Swift series. Yet poor weather turned the tables and created an interesting result for the keenly contested national championship.

In fact, it was Taupo car dealer principal Craig Innes who was overall winner at Timaru, taking out two of the three qualifying races. It was the best-ever Swift championship meeting for Innes who celebrated his 32nd birthday on race day Sunday.

Dallas finished second overall, bringing his pointscore total to 728 - just 26 points less than Bamber who finished fourth overall at Timaru behind 20-year-old Alan Dunkley from Auckland. Several drivers are still in with a chance of taking out the championship as the season progresses towards the fifth round at Manfeild near Palmerston North on February 12-14. Dunkley is lying third in points with 542, just 2 points ahead of Castrol Scholarship winner Matt Gibson from Wanganui while Whangarei driver Scott Harrison is also well in contention with 536.

Soaking wet practice conditions saw a determined Bamber on pole position with a best lap time of 1 minute 23.488. Such were the conditions that the Swifts were seven seconds a lap faster once the track dried out. Eighteen year old Matt Gibson crashed heavily in qualifying but a mammoth effort had the car going again for Race 1 on Saturday.

Innes showed the fine form that would continue for the rest of the weekend when he posted second best practice time of 1 minute 24.001 seconds, followed by 15-year-old Thames student AJ Lauder, Dunkley, Dallas and Harrison. Soon after the start of the first race, Bamber tapped the identical Swift of Innes, damaged his car and had to pit with braking problems that resulted from the incident. Meanwhile Innes went on to win by more than 2 seconds, with Dunkley runner-up, Harrison in third and Dallas fourth.

Dunkley recorded the best lap of 1 minute 16.482 seconds in the opening race which put him in grid position one for the second event. He was accompanied by Bamber on the front row, with Harrison and Dallas on the second row. From the fall of the flag Dunkley took the lead from Bamber and Dallas but in the opening stages Innes - who had started from row three - passed Dallas.

With the top cars running extremely close, Bamber's car hesitated and the young Wanganui racer lost several places in an instant. At the half way mark Innes assumed the lead while Dallas moved up to second; with Dunkley now back in third. The Taupo driver stormed on to win by little more than two-tenths of a second, and then a gap of 8 seconds to Dunkley. Bamber recovered to take fourth in a mad scramble between his car and Gibson, Harrison and Bramwell King. Just eight tenths of a second separated these four Suzuki's as they crossed the finish line.

Race three was a reverse grid event, with the slower cars starting at the front. While Innes recorded the fastest lap time in this race, such was the competition he could finish no better than tenth. It was Bamber who had his best result of the meeting, working his way through to win from Grant Ryan. Shaun Lawrence took third from Marc Spring, Mike Turley and Harrison, with Dallas in seventh.

The Suzuki Swifts are producing some of the best national racing this season, and the competition is expected to be fast and furious again when the teams meet up at Manfeild, followed by the final round in Taupo on March 19-21.

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#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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