



### 2009/10 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup Round Five: Manfeild 12-14 February, 2010

Manfeild was the venue for Round Five of the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup – my supposed home track, however before the actual event I had only driven the circuit twice, with the first time ending with engine failure after three laps, and the second ending up in the wall with a brake issue.

I was keen to turn this record around in what turned out to be a mixed weekend of racing at Manfeild.

Friday testing got off to a good start, with the team again doing the usual by running old tyres and brakes. I spent a bit of time getting up to speed in the morning session to finish up in tenth, and with the car feeling great we left it unchanged for the afternoon session, where I was sixth quickest.

This left the team feeling good about our prospects for qualifying the next morning.

Saturday came and rain was threatening, as it surely couldn't be a weekend at Manfeild without some water on the circuit.

Qualifying, however, ended up being a dry affair, and with fresh tyres on we set about running in traffic to maximise the draft, and with changeable wind conditions it really made qualifying quite a mixed session in terms of getting a good lap time.

My fastest lap came on lap five. Admittedly it wasn't the greatest of laps, with the car not being in the most ideal situation among the traffic. What should have been our fastest lap was our last one, in which we pulled in a big gap to the cars in front through the infield, and then had a two-car tow on the back straight.





But the ever changing wind conditions affected this lap quite badly and it was in fact over a second down on that from lap five. This meant I would line up in tenth for the first race, only 4/10ths of a second off second place.

Race One was held in very wet conditions, and I made a good start and worked my way past a few of the drivers in front. At the start of the weekend we had a new windscreen fitted, and without having put some anti-fog on the inside, this quickly became an issue.

Where we were placed on the track became guesswork with the limited visibility, but I managed to keep it on the black stuff to come home in eighth place.

Race Two was held early Sunday morning on a damp track.

On the formation lap we worked hard to warm the brakes and tyres to be quick out of the box at the start. However, there was a knock and a bit of noise developing from my left hand side driveshaft on the warm up lap and as we pulled up on the grid a lot of smoke seemed to be coming from the left front wheel.

Come race start I once again made a good start and entered the first corner behind Bamber, attempting to roll around the pack on the outside but the grip I was hoping for just wasn't there, and ended up running a bit wide on the grass and rejoining in fourteenth.

This wasn't to last as the car came good and we set about claiming our positions back, when coming into 'Splash' corner the back end of the car stepped out.

The usual fix to this is to boot the throttle to keep the car straight, however when I did so there was a clunk and the engine hit the rev limiter and sent me into a spin.

With a broken driveshaft the cause, the car wasn't going anywhere, so I coasted down into the inside to be towed to safety and watch the race from the sidelines.

Despite having to fit new parts, this drama left us starting the reverse grid Race Three from pole position, and having had a fast car all weekend I was intent on a good result.





It didn't quite go as planned, and after a decent start I lead most of the first lap until a car came past, spending the next few laps battling with the front bunch for the lead.

I was struggling with the car, in particular in the early and mid part of the corners, as it didn't want to behave. This left me in a vulnerable position to be overtaken in the corners following, and unfortunately I slipped back and ended up battling away mid pack eventually crossing the line in tenth position once again.

After what turned out to be another character building weekend I find myself in twelfth in the points standings, with a chance of moving up one place and a very outside chance of moving into the top ten at the last round at Taupo.

This doesn't mean we won't be giving it our all at the final round, as having had a productive test day at Taupo pre-season I am confident myself and the team can extract some good pace from the HMC Kapiti Swift at the Taupo Motorsport Park.

Before we move on to the next round though, a huge thank you must go out to the guys at Just Rust in Tawa for turning what was a very mangled looking race car into the straight looking one we had at Manfeild.

Also to Henshaw Signs for supplying the necessary signage and vinyl to have the car looking awesome for Round Five, to the Suzuki boys for their hands-on help, and to Jono Lester for his invaluable help during the weekend setting up not only the car; but also the driver!

We would also like to welcome Lilburn Transport on board as part of the team. Every bit of support we receive is greatly appreciated, and we very much looking forward to finishing the season on a high in a month's time!

Until then,

**Sam Robinson**



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Sam Robinson.co.nz

RACE REPORT - SWIFT #7



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