



Suzuki Swift Sport Cup 2009/10
Round One: Pukekohe
06-08 November, 2009

Well it's good to be home after what turned out to be quite an eventful weekend for the opening round of the 2009/2010 Suzuki Swift Sport Cup at Pukekohe Park Raceway. With the rain well and truly on site while we set up in the pits on Thursday, it left us quite wet and cold by the evening but looking forward to the practice sessions on Friday nonetheless.

On Friday morning the sun had turned up, and it was a stunner of a day. The good weather made it ideal for practice as it kept the set up side of things quite simple. In the first session in the morning we went out with a couple of new tyres on the front and got back into the groove of things. The track was quite slippery early on in the session, but we kept it clean to finish the session with the 8th quickest time.

Friday afternoon and the sun was still shining brightly, and we again hit the track with the same tyres we ran in the morning session. We spent the 20 minute session running mainly on our own and not with the pack drafting etc; which resulted in only the 14th quickest time, however I left the circuit looking forward to running with the pack for qualifying on Saturday morning.

On Saturday morning the first session of the day was qualifying. I ventured out with my team mate Matt Gibson and we set about putting in some laps together, however it became evident we would be better off running with a bigger group of cars to get the most out of the draft. After an interesting session where towards the end it was getting pretty crowded, we set a time good enough for 7th on the grid, which left us looking really forward to the first race.



Race One on Saturday afternoon was to be my first competitive race start, so we were heading a bit into the unknown. We managed a good start and coming up to the hairpin on the first lap I made up a position which had me in 6th, however on lap two coming out of the first corner the back end of the car was quite skittish, and through turns two





and three it came around on me and I just plain lost it and couldn't quite gather it up in time. I haven't seen a replay of it as yet but a quick word to Neil Allport after the race helped me realise just what went on in the heat of the moment.

I managed to keep it going, and after a few checks down the back straight to make sure everything was a-ok we kept on trucking and finished the race still running with some decent pace given I was out there on my own. With Bamber and McMaster jumping the start this promoted my team mate Matt Gibson to the race win, which was a great start for us for the LG Teams Championship, and left me even more determined to score some good points on Sunday.

After the race the team worked hard to get the car straightened out ready for race two on Sunday morning, in which we started 8th, due to the fact the grid positions for race two were decided by our qualifying time added to our fastest race lap in race one. It made all that pounding around by myself in the opener totally worth it.



For race two we went up a bit in tyre pressures for more grip early on, and it definitely seemed to work. I managed to get a good start and moved up a place off the line, and then gained another place around the outside at the hairpin on the opening lap. However this was taken back the next lap at the hairpin. I spent a couple of laps locked in battle with the cars around me, but on lap four we missed the brake point at the hairpin and ran onto the grass. I managed to gather it up and rejoin the track in tenth place, but I was too far behind to be in the draft and ended up running

the race on my own to finish up in tenth position.

Race three was a reverse grid race based on points gathered from the first two races. Our misfortunes in the first two races left us in a good position for the final race, which we started from fourth on the grid. Once again I managed a good start and gained a place off the line, and it was all on for the first couple of laps as we all squabbled in a big pack sometimes going 3-4 cars wide through the turns. I was determined to hold my own and keep the car straight, which paid off as cars around me touched and ended up going off.





At the midpoint of the race the red flag came out and I found myself in fifth behind Craig Innes, Grant Ryan, Willy Bamber and Ben Dallas, however I was moved ahead of Dallas as with the rules stating we reform back in our race positions from the lap previous.

As the safety car pulled in I got a decent restart and was behind Bamber with a bit of a gap back to Ben. The next lap I was still in fourth as Ryan and Innes touched at turn three which kicked up a lot of dust and left me somewhat blinded as to what was going on ahead.

Through the commotion Dallas managed to stick one up the inside to make a move on what had become second place. I found myself in third with Shaun Lawrence closing in and we began our own little battle for 3rd place. Shaun managed to get past at the hairpin a few laps before the end, and on the next lap I attempted a move on him at the hairpin which didn't quite work out.

I was right on his bumper coming over the hill heading into the final lap, and moved to the inside and tried to make a move as we went foot to the floor side-by-side through the turn one sweeper.



There was a little touch but he managed to stay ahead as we headed down the back straight for the final time, where once again I attempted a move at the hairpin but Shaun had the line covered and managed to hold on to third, as we crossed the line separated by 0.1 of a second.

Finishes of 16th, 10th and 4th for the weekend leaves us 9th in the points, however the experience of racing with 15 other cars on track proved a extremely valuable experience.

I look forward to once again working together with my team mate Matt Gibson and manager Jono Lester in a few weeks time at Powerbuilt Tools Raceway in Christchurch, where we look to build on the experience of a eventful weekend at Pukekohe.

My thanks must also go out to all my supporters and backers who helped me to get on the grid for this season. It's been a incredibly busy journey and I'm really looking forward to what the season has in store for all of us over the next few months.





Also a special thanks to the hands-on assistance from Jake Pascoe and Dom Storey who along with Jono provided invaluable help and support throughout the weekend – hopefully there will be no more panels to be straightened for the rest of this season!

See you all again in Christchurch, where we look forward to doing it all again!

Sam Robinson

