



Suzuki Swift Sport Cup 2009/10
Rounds Three & Four: Teretonga | Timaru
15-17 January 2010 | 22-24 January 2010

Teretonga Park, Invercargill

Invercargill was the scene for the third round of the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup, and I was looking forward to the challenge of learning a new circuit after a week of travelling to what is 'The World's Southernmost Race Place'.

Practice got off to a good start with the seventh quickest time in both sessions, so we left the car as it was for qualifying but for new tyres bolted onto the outside of the car.

Qualifying proved to be an interesting game trying to find traffic to run with and set a good lap time, and in the end I finished the session in eighth spot.

Race One was one to forget. I was running in ninth and spent the majority of the final lap attempting to pressure Grant Ryan into a mistake; getting ready to set him up to slip by in the final corner. That plan came undone when Ryan suddenly changed line through the turn five apex, scrubbing off all his speed. With my car taking the natural line the speed difference between the two of us meant that we touched slightly, resulting in my being penalised for *"making contact with another vehicle resulting in the other vehicle being disadvantaged"*.

From my point of view and that of my team manager Jono after reviewing the video footage, I had nowhere to go to avoid contact with a rapidly slowing car ahead.

Race Two early on Sunday morning saw me starting last on the grid as a result of the penalty, feeling fired up and ready to get back to where we should be. I made a good start and kept out of trouble making most of the opportunities to find myself in seventh at the end of the first lap. The safety car was deployed for an incident on lap one and on the

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restart I found myself stuck in the second pack of cars , where after much shuffling over the remaining laps I eventually crossed the line in tenth.

Later in the day we still had the business of the reverse grid race to get sorted. Once again as a result of my penalty from Race One, I was lining up from last on the grid, however surrounded by good company in which I was hoping to follow through the field.

I made a good start and began to make ground through the field, however while working my way past two cars in front I saw Alan Dunkley fly off into the wall at Turn Three.

The red flags came out and that saw we all shuffled back into the order we were on the grid effectively. At the restart I found myself struggling to make any serious inroads to the cars ahead, along with William Bamber behind me and my team mate Matt Gibson ahead.

After spending much of the race working with Matt trying to make progress, we ended up crossing the line in ninth and tenth respectively. Tenth then became seventh with penalties applied to some of my rivals for various infringements during the race.

I left the circuit a little disappointed, with the results not quite being a true reflection of the pace our car had. However I found it a big learning experience and was looking forward to the next round a week later at Levels Raceway in Timaru.

Levels Raceway, Timaru

After a few days in Queenstown spending time on the luge, paintballing and climbing mountains with Matt Gibson and William Bamber, we headed to Timaru for Round Four of the Suzuki Swift Sport Cup.

It was an overcast Timaru that greeted us on Friday morning for practice, however it remained dry which I found ideal for learning another circuit I had never seen before this weekend. Practice went well finishing both sessions in ninth fastest with less than a second covering the top ten cars. The scene was set for another close weekend of racing.

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Qualifying on Saturday morning was set to be a different story, with heavy rain falling throughout the night and still present as we turned up to the circuit for qualifying.

As the first cars out on track for the day it was a step into the unknown for a lot of us, and it proved to be quite a mission just to keep the car on the circuit at some parts of the lap.

I had a spin early on but kept the car off any walls; the same couldn't be said for my teammate Matt Gibson who had a big shunt coming onto the main straight, bringing out the red flags and stopping the session while the mess was cleared up.

That very same corner claimed many more victims in the Porsche GT3 Cup, Formula Ford and NZV8s as the day went on.

We finished qualifying with the eleventh quickest time, with the session being interrupted by red flags twice just as the car was up to temperature and starting to set some quicker laps.

I spent a lot of the morning watching the other classes on track trying to predict what the weather was going to do, and how fast the track was going to dry out if the rain stopped.

When we got into our cars for Race One the track was still wet, so we decided to leave the wet setup on the car. However, when we were released onto the circuit I was amazed to find the track almost completely dry!

With a strong breeze around and the rain somewhat holding off the track completely changed from what I saw minutes before getting in the car.

Race One was spent fighting a car that just wanted to understeer everywhere with the wet set up on a dry track. Keeping in mind the grid for Race Two was decided on our fastest lap times from Qualifying or Race One, and with the track being dry I focused on keeping it clean and trying to set a good time to get us up the grid for the next race.

Managing to drive around the understeer somewhat especially towards the end, I set the seventh quickest time on my way to tenth place.

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I started seventh in race two and after a solid start the car was feeling a lot better than it did during race one, but while running in sixth battling with William Bamber I was left out wide through the fast turn four, taking a trip across the grass while four other zipped up the inside.

We set on trying to claim some of those positions back and had a couple of battles with the guys in front, but ended up coming home in tenth once again. This set me up nicely for the reverse grid race in which I would be starting sixth.

After a rather non-eventful first couple of corners down the back straight I had a issue when changing from third to fourth gear, allowing a few cars past. Setting my sights back towards the front I began to line up AJ Lauder who was ahead of me, having a look down the inside down the straight but running out of room.

I decided to stick in behind him and get myself ready for a dive down the inside to turn six. This wasn't meant to be as Lauder and King touched, sending King's car sideways in front of me.

Bramwell King's car ending up on its side bringing out the Red Flag, and I was hit from behind as the field slowed, sending my bumper and guard into my right rear wheel causing it to make a terrible noise from the rubbing on the guard.

On the restart I was in tenth. It wasn't going to last though as the rubbing on the right rear upset the car not only down the straights, but especially through the left-hand corners.

As the guys behind worked their way past I made it my mission to keep the car on the track and bring it home for some points. Managing to somewhat keep close to the battling pack in front I was able to get by AJ Lauder when he made a mistake and brought the car home fighting for thirteenth.

Although the results from our trip down to the South Island were not quite what we were after, I am feeling much stronger as a result of the tough times we had down there and am most definitely looking forward to our next round at Manfeild in two weeks time.

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Before then we will be testing at the circuit along with a few of the other drivers, hoping to hit the ground running on the Friday and continue to do so throughout the weekend.

Once again I would like to thank the many businesses and personal supporters who have come on board to help us as we pursue our dream this season, and again many thanks to my mechanic/engineer/driver trainer Jono Lester and his father Richard for their assistance as we tackle the circuits throughout the country.

I look forward to doing it all again at Manfeild on 12-14 February, and look forward to seeing some of you there!

Sam Robinson

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