

Hampton Downs meeting provides valuable experience for Webling.

The NZ Motor Cup meeting at the new Hampton Downs track in the Northern Waikato, one week before the NZ Grand Prix meeting at Manfeild (February 13-14), provided valuable experience and increased set-up knowledge for Taranaki driver, Stefan Webling, racing in this technical wings-and-slicks premier NZ formula, for the first time this year, in the Triple X team with his team-mate being the very experienced Earl Bamber.

“The Hampton Downs track was totally new to me and my team. It is so different to any other track in New Zealand, with its undulations, camber etc, that we were learning all weekend how to set up our cars for these conditions – which are very similar to many European circuits. Virtually all our New Zealand circuits are flat – the hill at Pukekohe being the only other rise and fall in an otherwise flat and fast circuit. Hampton Downs is a fantastic track to drive on – once you get your car’s gearing and set-up right. It is a real driver’s circuit, and almost every corner – or sequence of corners – is a challenge. By the second race, we really made progress and I enjoyed driving the car. However, for the third and final major race for the NZ Motor Cup, the track etc had become very warm and my car was not as good as in the previous race. Nevertheless, I learned heaps about the car and how to drive it and that has significantly helped me to prepare for this weekend’s NZ Grand Prix meeting at Manfeild,” says Webling.

In testing prior to qualifying, Webling was consistently in the top ten as the team learned how to best set the car up and Stefan learned the circuit. Then he qualified ninth – ahead of former Grand Prix winner, Andy Knight, with his team-mate, Bamber in sixth.

Then in the first race on Saturday afternoon, he finished seventh, just two places behind eventual NZ Motor Cup winner and very experienced European driver, Sten Pentus.

In the first race on Sunday morning, Stefan was much happier and going well, until he tangled with Daniel Jilesen, and had to pit to check for damage, finishing the race in 12th place.

Then came the 20-lap feature race for the historic NZ Motor Cup, and Stefan ran strongly through the race to finish in sixth place, two places behind Bamber.

“I learned heaps this weekend and with all those laps under my belt on a very challenging circuit, I am happy with what we achieved and am much more confident going into the Grand Prix at Manfeild. I have to sincerely thank my team for all the hours of hard work they put in to adjust the car for that circuit and my driving style. The experience was invaluable, and I am very much looking forward to the Grand Prix meeting at Manfeild,” said Webling.