

Webling Wins Torrid Ruapuna Formula Ford Round

Oakura's Stefan Webling (21) WON the second round of the Formula Ford Championship at Powerbuilt Raceway Ruapuna last weekend.

In a meeting that featured some of the hardest and closest Formula Ford racing seen for some time, with most of the top drivers being involved in some kind of incident involving other drivers or race officials, Webling kept out of trouble and finished consistently in the top three places – except for the final race in which a minor incident had him out on the grass, but able to recover and finish fifth which gave him enough points to win the round from Henry Thomas-Kircher and Tim Vickers, and reduce the gap in the championship to just five points from leader, Matt Williams and be two points from second-placed Andre Heimgartner, Webling's Superlux Lighting team-mate.

Webling qualified fourth, and then had a close tussle during the first race with Heimgartner and Whelan for second place as Williams had made the best start to beat them all to the first corner. Whelan made a desperate move up the inside of the last lap last corner to take second place with Webling third.

Then in the second race, Heimgartner made no mistake from the start and led from start to finish with Webling, Whelan and Williams in a furious dice until one of Williams moves to push his way through came unstuck and he dropped back. Webling held second while Thomas-Kircher took advantage from all the jostling to finish third, Williams recovering to finish fourth ahead of Whelan – but showing some petulant displeasure after the cars had crossed the finish-line by driving into the side of Webling's car, spinning him into the infield. No official action was taken against Williams after a hearing decided there was insufficient evidence of a deliberate action.

The third longer 10-lap race saw Heimgartner and Williams, then Whelan and Thomas-Kircher, then Webling and Tim Vickers lined up on the grid. Again there was a furious dice between Heimgartner and Williams, Williams eventually taking the lead until they touched, eliminating Heimgartner and Williams receiving a drive-through penalty. Behind these two was another furious battle until Webling tangled wheels with Whelan, Webling flying up into the air but landing on his wheels and spinning into the infield. Fortunately he was able to rejoin the race. Whelan received a drive-through penalty for his part in the incident. Thomas-Kircher took over the lead but was overhauled by the Vickers brothers, Tim winning from Richard with Thomas-Kircher third, then Ralph Godwin and a fast recovering Webling.

"Whew – that was a tough meeting," said an elated Webling after he realised he had won the round. "I had planned on getting good points at this meeting to close the gap on the championship leaders and so it turned out – it would have been so easy to lose points, so close was the racing."

"I was also pleased to get a good result as I had a new sponsor, Motul Oil, join Superlux (our team's sponsor) on my car. This will help our budget for the next couple of rounds close together in the South Island although we will have to find some additional funding to complete the championship. Over the Christmas etc break, Andre will do some further testing of our cars with our Motorsport Solutions team's engineers as these new Mygales still need some sorting to get the best out of them," said an enthusiastic Webling.

The next round of the Formula Ford Championship is : January 15-16 at Teretonga Park, Invercargill.

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