



January 15 2012

UDC V8 UTE CHAMPIONSHIP CLOSES UP

It is all on in the UDC V8 Ute Championship after a weekend of exciting action and changing fortunes at Teretonga Park in Invercargill.

The southernmost round of the championship produced three different winners and saw the points margin of championship leader Andrew 'DJ48' Waite slashed from 94 points to a mere 21.

Chris 'Hammer Time' Hanley of Auckland won the round after qualifying fastest and then carding a fifth, a second and then a race win in his PB Technologies Holden in a variety of trying conditions. Fellow race winners Peter 'Kaos' Ward and Mike 'Buzz' Lightfoot, also of Auckland, were second and third overall for the weekend respectively.

Ward and Lightfoot were both first time race winners in the championship while Hanley scored a breakthrough round victory in a weekend that produced some fantastic racing.

While the top three exponents of the weekend had a lot to celebrate, for championship leader Waite the weekend was a disaster. A serious engine problem developed in the Valvoline/Hydraulink Falcon on Sunday and he cruised at the rear of the field all day to collect points to minimise the harm to his championship prospects.

Hanley was "rapt" with his first ever round win. "I seemed to have an advantage in the wet conditions. I struggled in the dry. It has been a good weekend. We have made a huge gain in the championship."



HOLDEN



Ward described a round that contained his first race win and best ever round result as "awesome." "I love the wet," he said after qualifying fourth and recording race results of seventh, first and second in his Ward Demolition Holden.

Lightfoot was happy with third place overall, citing the second race where he came from twelfth on the grid to third as a highlight along with his first race win. "The BSL Buckley Systems Falcon is unscathed and unmarked. Best of all I have created a gap back to the fourth placed runner in the championship. I owe a big thanks to the Stoneman boys and my crew."

Meanwhile Waite said "that is the bad one out of the way. I was able to build a big lead at the first two rounds so we will work to do it again."

Lightfoot won the opening race of the round on Saturday afternoon in the dry after an exciting battle with Wellington driver Dave 'The Boss' Stewart who finished second with Waite of Auckland, third.

Both of Sundays races were held in wet conditions. The first saw a great battle at the front of the field between Geoff 'SOS' Spencer of Palmerston North, Ward and Stewart while Hanley and Lightfoot were carving their way through the field from the back.

With the chequered flag in sight Spencer speared off at the elbow while Stewart went off near the end of the race as well. That left Ward, on the occasion of his 80th start, to take his first victory from Hanley, Lightfoot and impressive rookie Brett 'The Scud' Rudd of Manakau City who pointed out, "the wet suits my driving style." Had Spencer held on it would have been his maiden victory. "I lived up to my nickname - 'SOS - Silly Old Spence,' he said.



The finale was again held in wet conditions and proved to be another cracker. Hanley, Ward and Lightfoot ran at the front of the field all the way. Behind them there was a huge battle as the bulk of the field fought it out, Spencer eventually prevailing from a train of cars.

The UDC V8 Ute Championship continues at Timaru International Motor Raceway next weekend and after this weekends action it will be keenly anticipated.