



Media Release

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MotorSport Names Nine Candidates to 2008 Elite Academy

Nine talented young racing and rally drivers will attend the week long MotorSport Elite Academy in Dunedin in July.

"There was intense competition for the available spaces with 43 candidates seeking nine positions," said Steven Kennedy, chairman of the MotorSport NZ Scholarship Trust which organises and funds the Academy.

"This highlights the status the programme has achieved over the past four years.

"Everyone can see the success of drivers who have graduated from the Academy and recognise how important it has been to their development.

"The programme, which is run for the Trust by the New Zealand Academy of Sport South and Otago University's sports science specialists, focuses on a wide range of skills required for high performance sport. Participants have to have a very high standard of physical fitness prior to commencing the course.

"The scientists have recognised that the level of fitness of the young drivers we have put through the academy has been the equal of Olympic athletes and their reaction times have been equal to or better than those of fighter pilots.

"The Academy is a tough, demanding programme both physically and mentally. Its benefit shows in the performance of many young Kiwi drivers both at home and overseas," he said.

This year's Academy class will comprise five race drivers and five rally drivers:

Richie Stanaway (Tauranga) who has just completed his first year in Formula First and is moving into Formula Ford next season.

Michael Burdett (Auckland), a talented young driver who performed well in his first season in the Toyota Racing Series finishing fourth.

Stefan Webling (Taranaki) winner of the 2007 MTA Formula Ford Scholarship. He graduated from karts to Formula First in 06-07 then Formula Ford in 2007-08, achieving fourth place in the championship.

John Whelan (Dunedin), Formula Ford champion in the 07/08 season moving next season into Toyota Racing Series.

Courtenay Letica (Auckland) in his first season in Mini Challenge fresh from karts provided hot competition for the championship leaders, finishing fourth.

Patrick Malley (Auckland), rally driver in his third year in the National Rally Championship. Patrick is competing this season in the Ford Fiesta class.

Kieran Hall (Nelson) promising young rally driver who has contested South Island rounds of Rally Xtreme, regularly achieving top five finishes.

Sloan Cox (Rotorua), only 16 years of age and in his first full season in the national championship, placing among the top ten.

Kirsty Nelson (Northland), the only woman in this year's Academy and contesting her second year in rallying at the national level. She was the leading woman driver and finished in the top ten at the recent Rally Otago.

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