

# MTA NEW ZEALAND FORMULA FORD CHAMPIONSHIP

## FORMULA FORD TITLE WIDE OPEN AS HALF WAY POINT APPROACHES

With the summer holiday season over for most of us, it is back to business for the MTA New Zealand Formula Ford Championship. What better way for drivers and teams to commence the New Year's racing than to continue the South Island leg of the Series and sample more of the renowned hospitality from the dedicated race fans of Timaru and Invercargill.

As usual, Southerners will be treated to some of the best racing on offer as Levels International Raceway and Teretonga Park are two of the best Kiwi circuits suited to the wheel to wheel racing Formula Fords are designed for. In fact, some of the best racing seen last season was at those two venues and with the dates brought forward to January it is most likely the weather will play a positive part in ensuring good clean racing.

Levels International Raceway will see the half way point in the Championship but as expected, there is no clear favourite yet to emerge. The surprise of the season is debutant contender Richie Stanaway leading the points standings after totally dominating Round 3 at Powerbuilt Tools Raceway at Ruapuna. Not only is the driver debuting but so is his newly imported Mygale manufactured car from Australia which came into the season as a virtual unknown. To emphasise the competitiveness of Formula Ford racing, the Ruapuna track record was broken three times in three races during Round 3 and more lap records are expected to go over the next two rounds.

Without question, the main opposition for Stanaway will be Taranaki driver Stefan Webling who was in devastating form on these tracks last season and will be determined to regain the Championship points lead. Although most may pick the top two points earners to set the pace, there is another group of hot teenagers pushing their chances and with just one slip from the leaders are within striking distance of the top spot. These include fellow podium placegetters Simon and Mitchell Evans and Jamie McNee although Martin Short and Matthew Penrose have also been making regular inroads into the top five.

Naturally there is interest in local drivers with several Canterbury based competitors joining the Southern rounds including the impressive Nick Donaldson, Chris Cox, Brett Sullivan, Matt Williams and the new lady of Formula Ford racing, Clara Bond. For Southland fans their will be plenty to cheer about judging from the performances of Damon Leitch who sprung a major surprise in making the Round 2 podium at Pukekohe in early November. Stephen Heffernan is another Invercargill based driver who is only contesting selected Championship rounds but is always on the charge in front of his home crowd.

Racing for Rounds 4 and 5 will comprise the usual three race format to take place at Levels International Raceway (Timaru) on January 10th and 11th with Teretonga Park (Invercargill) the following weekend.

### Championship Points After Round 3:

Richie Stanaway (Tauranga) 565; Stefan Webling (Oakura) 547; Simon Evans (Auckland) 453; Jamie McNee (Wellington) 443; Mitchell Evans (Auckland) 429; Martin Short (Hamilton) 397; Matthew Penrose (Rangiora) 368; Damon Leitch (Invercargill) 348; Chris Cox (Rangiora) 321; Brett Sullivan (Nelson) 304; Kerry Ross (Tauranga) 185; Kim Crocker (Tauranga) 154; Nick Donaldson (Christchurch) 124; Ken Smith (Auckland) 111; Daniel Jilesen (Taumarunui) 96; Matt Williams (Christchurch) 96; Clara Bond (Christchurch) 80; Henry Thomas-Kircher (Taumarunui) 65; Stephen Heffernan (Invercargill) 52.