

2024  
NEW ZEALAND



 **JUNIOR  
DRIVER  
CHAMPIONSHIP**

CAMBRIDGE 15 OCTOBER | ADDINGTON 16 OCTOBER | ADDINGTON 18 OCTOBER

## INTRODUCING OUR 12 JUNIOR DRIVERS



MAX HILL



KERRY TOMLINSON



WILSON HOUSE



SAM THORNLEY



CRYSTAL HACKETT



EMILY JOHNSON



ZEV MEREDITH



MONIKA RANGER



CARTER DALGETY



RILEY HARRISON



SETH HILL



OLIVIA THORNLEY

# WELCOME

This is an exciting time for this country's top young talent as they battle it out at the 2024 McMillan Equine Feeds New Zealand Junior Drivers' Championships at Cambridge and Addington.

You only have to look at the roll of honour who have won this event in previous years to realise what a springboard these champs can be - the likes of Maurice McKendry, Mark Purdon, Blair Orange, Sarah O'Reilly and Mark Jones have all gone on to achieve great things in our sport (even winning World Driving Championships).

I wish all 12 drivers who have qualified all the very best. You all deserve to be there so go out and do your best.

I'm sure it will be a very strongly contested competition and that you both enjoy and learn from the experience.

Regards

**Brad Steele**

Chief Executive  
Harness Racing New Zealand

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A market will be available on the Junior Driver Championships at [www.tab.co.nz](http://www.tab.co.nz)



# FUN FACTS

1. The New Zealand Junior Drivers Championships have been going since the mid 1970s and the first to win it, Maurice McKendry is the only driver to have won it four times in a row, from 1976 - 79.

2. Sarah O'Reilly is the only other driver to have won it four times. She did that over a space of five years (2019, and 2021-23). She has since graduated to the open driving ranks.

3. On one occasion the championships were won jointly by two drivers. Tony Herlihy won it all by himself in 1981 only to share it with Jim Curtin in 1982. These days if two drivers have the same number of points there is a countback to determine the winner. Herlihy has gone on to be the most successful driver in the country.

4. Remarkably Dexter Dunn has never won the Championships. He was the country's top junior driver and won the junior drivers' premiership four years in a row from 2008 -2011 and was the country's leading driver overall 10 years in a row between 2008 and 2017 before he headed to North America where he is now one of the sport's superstars. Between 2008 and 2011 the four winners were Shane Walkinshaw, Zachary Butcher, Simon Lawson and Tim Williams. Dexter's brother John won in 2007.
5. The only driver to have won the championships before who is returning this year is Kerryln Tomlinson. She won the championships in 2020. This year the Oamaru-based driver made the cut as one of the two top drivers south of the Waitaki River.

6. Among those to have won the Junior Drivers' Championships have been the likes of Tony Herlihy and Maurice McKendry, as well as Mark Purdon, Mark Jones and Blair Orange. Herlihy, McKendry and Jones went on to win the World Drivers' Championships later in their careers.

7. Expect plenty of inter-family rivalry in this year's Championships. Of the 12 drivers there are two sets of siblings, brothers Seth and Max Hill and Sam and Olivia Thornley. Only Sam Thornley has competed at the championships before, the other three are on debut.

8. The winner of this year's Championships will automatically qualify, if eligible, for the next Australasian Young Drivers Championships in December. Last year Sarah O'Reilly, Zev Meredith and Crystal Hackett all competed at the championships in Queensland. Meredith and Hackett are back again for this year's Junior Championships.



# FAQ'S

- So how do the NZ Junior Driver Championships work?

**The six heats will be held at two venues, Cambridge Raceway and Addington Raceway, starting Tuesday, October 15.**

There will be three heats at Cambridge to get the championships underway followed by two at Addington the next day (Wednesday, October 16) and then finishing with a sixth and final heat at Addington on Friday, October 18.

The winning driver at each heat will get 17 points, with 12 for second, 10 for third and going all the way down to one for 12th and last place.

If a driver does not get a drive because of insufficient entries or a scratching they will get 7 points.

At the end of the six heats the winner with the most points will win.

So how do you qualify for the NZ Junior Drivers' Championships?

The qualifying period for the 2024 NZ Junior Driver Championship was January 1, 2024 to September 15, 2024.

During that time junior drivers were allocated points, with the top 12 decided by the following criteria – the top four points scorers in Canterbury, the top three in the North Island, and the top two points scorers in the Southern region (South of the Waitaki), with the next two highest points scorers overall, and a wildcard selected by HRNZ Chief Executive Brad Steele.

Who's in this year's championships?	
<b>The top four points-scorers in Canterbury for the year</b>	<b>The next two top points-scorers (nationally)</b>
Sam Thornley	Riley Harrison*
Wilson House	Emily Johnson*
Carter Dalgety	
Olivia Thornley*	
<b>The top three in the North Island</b>	<b>The wildcard selected by HRNZ Chief Executive Brad Steele:</b>
Crystal Hackett	Seth Hill*
Zev Meredith	
Monika Ranger	
<b>The top two South of the Waitaki</b>	
Kerryn Tomlinson	
Max Hill*	

\* denotes driver on debut



## MAX HILL

### Career Highlight

Winning on Smokin Bandar at Addington

### Fave Horse

Brookies Player

### Who you look up to in racing

Ricky May

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Travelling overseas and playing rugby

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

The Rookie

### Coffee or Tea

Coffee

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Sweet

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Fruit

### The race you most want to win

Darren DeFilippi Memorial



## KERRY TOMLINSON

### Career Highlight

Winning the Junior Driver Championship in 2021

### Fave Horse

Mordecai

### Who you look up to in racing

The Williamson family, they have all done so much to help me improve my driving and my training

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Make-up artist

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

Not on Netflix but Game Of Thrones

### Coffee or Tea

Neither

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Sweet

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Vegetables

### The race you most want to win

The New Zealand Trotting Cup



## WILSON HOUSE

### Career Highlight

Driving five winners out of six drives on December 12 last year

### Fave Horse

Styx Jewel

### Who you look up to in racing

Blair Orange

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Taking Sundays off

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

The Rings Of Power

### Coffee or Tea

Coffee

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Savoury

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Vegetables

### The race you most want to win

The New Zealand Trotting Cup



## SAM THORNLEY

### Career Highlight

Driving three winners in a day and training one of them

### Fave Horse

Black Mach – he has been good to me

### Who you look up to in racing

Ken Barron and Blair Orange. They have been so good to me, giving me a lot of driving opportunities and also helping me with my drives.

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Farming

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

I am watching nothing at the moment

### Coffee or Tea

Coffee

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Savoury

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Vegetables

### The race you most want to win

Any Group 1 Race





## CRYSTAL HACKETT

### Career Highlight

Winning the Group 1 Dawson Harford  
Taylor Mile on Mach Shard

### Fave Horse

Mach Shard and Better Knuckle Up

### Who you look up to in racing

Chris Alford and Michelle Wallis

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Showjumping/riding horses

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

The Rookie

### Coffee or Tea

Coffee

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunrise

### Sweet or Savoury

Sweet

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Vegetables

### The race you most want to win

Auckland Cup or Rowe Cup



## EMILY JOHNSON

### Career Highlight

A treble at Bunbury

### Fave Horse

Voronov

### Who you look up to in racing

Aiden De Campo

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Police

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

Friends

### Coffee or Tea

Coffee

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunrise

### Sweet or Savoury

Savoury

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Vegetables

### The race you most want to win

The Inter Dominion



## ZEV MEREDITH

### Career Highlight

My first training win with Boss Kenny

### Fave Horse

Boss Kenny

### Who you look up to in racing

There's a lot of people to look up to in this game so  
many of the seniors are so talented and helpful

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

On the 'bene'

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

I just play Xbox

### Coffee or Tea

Tea

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Savoury

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Fruit

### The race you most want to win

If they ever bought the Jewels back I'd love  
to win a Harness Jewel



## MONIKA RANGER

### Career Highlight

Winning a race on my own horse

### Fave Horse

Lady Of The Light

### Who you look up to in racing

Tony Herlihy, Zac Butcher and David Butcher

### What would you be doing if you weren't in racing

Flight Attendant or working at the airport

### What are you currently watching on Netflix

Bad Monkey (Apple TV)

### Coffee or Tea

Tea

### Sunrise or Sunset

Sunset

### Sweet or Savoury

Savoury

### Comedy or Horror

Comedy

### Fruit or Vegetables

Fruit

### The race you most want to win

The next one



CARTER DALGETY

Career Highlight  
Group 1 Invercargill Cup and my first win at The Meadowlands

Fave Horse  
Krug

Who you look up to in racing  
Jack Trainor

What would you be doing if you weren't in racing  
Wall Street

What are you currently watching on Netflix  
Getting Gotti

Coffee or Tea  
Tea

Sunrise or Sunset  
Sunset

Sweet or Savoury  
Savoury

Comedy or Horror  
Comedy

Fruit or Vegetables  
Fruit

The race you most want to win  
The New Zealand Trotting Cup



RILEY HARRISON

Career Highlight  
Winning the Darren DeFilippi Memorial

Fave Horse  
Lethal Speed

Who you look up to in racing  
John Dunn and Sam Ottley

What would you be doing if you weren't in racing  
Police Officer

What are you currently watching on Netflix  
I don't watch TV

Coffee or Tea  
Coffee

Sunrise or Sunset  
Sunrise

Sweet or Savoury  
Savoury

Comedy or Horror  
Comedy

Fruit or Vegetables  
Vegetables

The race you most want to win  
Any Group race



SETH HILL

Career Highlight  
Driving my first winner in Cromwell

Fave Horse  
Playing With Stars

Who you look up to in racing  
Brendon Hill and Ricky May

What would you be doing if you weren't in racing  
Farming

What are you currently watching on Netflix  
The Rookie

Coffee or Tea  
Coffee

Sunrise or Sunset  
Sunset

Sweet or Savoury  
Sweet

Comedy or Horror  
Comedy

Fruit or Vegetables  
Fruit

The race you most want to win  
The New Zealand Trotting Cup



OLIVIA THORNLEY

Career Highlight  
Both my Group One wins in the NZ Oaks and Sires' Stakes Final

Fave Horse  
Millwood Nike

Who you look up to in racing  
Natalie Rasmussen and Sam Ottley

What would you be doing if you weren't in racing  
Equine Vet

What are you currently watching on Netflix  
Yellowstone

Coffee or Tea  
Neither

Sunrise or Sunset  
Sunset

Sweet or Savoury  
Sweet

Comedy or Horror  
Comedy

Fruit or Vegetables  
Fruit

The race you most want to win  
The Dominion Trot



# HARRISON TO DEBUT AT JUNIOR DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY DAVE DI SOMMA, HARNESS NEWS DESK



**Riley Harrison doesn't quite know what to expect from this year's McMillan Equine Feeds Junior Drivers' championships.**

The 23-year-old is one of five to debut at the championships this year, along with Emily Johnson, Olivia Thornley, and Seth and Max Hill.

"There are a lot of juniors out there with more experience than me," says Harrison, "but hopefully I will learn a few things and meet a few people."

A talented sportswoman at school, who played representative basketball as well as cricket and touch, Harrison has been working for the country's leading trainers, Robert and Jenna Dunn at Woodend Beach for the last four and a half years.

"I love it so much but we do work long hours."

She has driven 13 winners over the past couple of years. Her highlight so far was winning the Darren DeFilippi Memorial Junior Drivers' race at Addington in July with the Paul Nairn-trained Luvavici.

She is always on the lookout for outside drives because there is a lot of competition for drives among the Dunn horses.

"It's pretty hard at Jonny's with all the nice horses and there's Blair (Orange), Tim (Williams), Bob (Butt) and that driving for them."

"I'm keen to build those outside books even if it means travelling to places for just the one drive."

So far her new approach is reaping some rewards.

In 2024 she has had over 100 drives compared to just 51 in 2023.

One of her immediate goals is to get to 15 career wins so she can drive in Group and Listed races, as well as at Premier meetings.

"That's a big push for me."

As for the up-coming championships at Cambridge and Addington Harrison isn't too far ahead of herself.

"I don't think I can win it but it would be cool if I could get a placing or something."

**"HOPEFULLY I WILL LEARN A FEW THINGS AND MEET A FEW PEOPLE".**





# CRYSTAL HACKETT READY TO STRIKE AT NZ JUNIOR DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY DAVE DI SOMMA, HARNESS NEWS DESK



**Third time lucky is the theme Crystal Hackett is embracing as she heads to this year's McMillan Equine Feeds Junior Drivers' Championships.**

The now two-time Group 1 winner will be one of the leading contenders along with the likes of Carter Dalgety, Sam Thornley and Wilson House to win the championship that has been dominated in recent years by Sarah O'Reilly.

O'Reilly's win last year was her fourth in five years. Now that she's graduated to the open driving ranks the championships are very much up for grabs.

"Hopefully Sarah's left something for the rest of us and we'll be able to strike this year," says Hackett, "it would be cool to get my name on the trophy following on from my cousin Robbie a few years ago." (Robbie Close won in 2015).

"It's something all juniors want to tick off."

"I've definitely learnt from the first and second years and you know what to expect and you learn not to be too hard on yourself while you're driving horses you don't know."

Hackett heads to the championships on the back of a lot of drives this season, thanks in large part to her employers Barry Purdon and Scott Phelan and her parents Michelle Wallis and Bernie Hackett.

Both are major players in the northern scene.

"I can't thank either of them enough, they have the horsepower in both barns and they let me drive them which is even more special."

In 2024 Hackett's had 30 wins from 205 drives. That's on par with her total number of drives last year already.

"We get more opportunities with Cambridge on a Tuesday."

"I'm just driving a lot more during the week now. Usually I'd go to Auckland with three or four drives, now it can be eight or 10 drives a week."

"Every year I look forward to trying to stay at the top of the North Island (junior drivers) premiership and to continue to drive winners."

Mach Shard's Group 1 double in the Messenger and Taylor Mile in April and May this year was an undoubted highlight and she'd like to get another one by the time the Junior Driver championships wrap up at Addington on Friday, October 18.

"A week away from work and socialising with the other juniors, it's always a good week."

**"IT'S SOMETHING ALL JUNIORS WANT TO TICK OFF."**





# SIBLING SPOTLIGHT: THE HILL BROTHERS CHASE JUNIOR DRIVING GLORY

BY JONNY TURNER



**Win, lose or draw, the New Zealand Junior Drivers Championship will provide a proud moment for Max and Seth Hill.**

The brothers have both made it through to the highly anticipated series which kicks off at Cambridge on Tuesday.

Neither Hill looked guaranteed a place in the championship during the qualifying period.

Seth's strong form was rewarded with him being selected as the Harness Racing New Zealand CEO Brad Steele's discretionary selection to make the competition.

While Max's talent on the rugby field, which led to a foot injury and time out of the sulky, threatened to end his championship run.

But his talent in the sulky helped made up for his time on the sidelines.

"It was a thrill to make it, I was out with a foot injury and I was worried I wouldn't make it," Max said.

"But I managed to pull through, so I was pretty stoked about that."

Max was just as rapt that Seth was able to make the competition too.

"It is awesome that Seth has made it, he has had a great season, too."

"It will be great to go up against him."

Max is having his first crack a driving series in the New Zealand Junior Driver Championship and he heads north in the best possible form.

The reinsman drove a double at Wyndham last week before winning with Robyns Hustler at Ascot Park at his last meeting before heading to Cambridge.

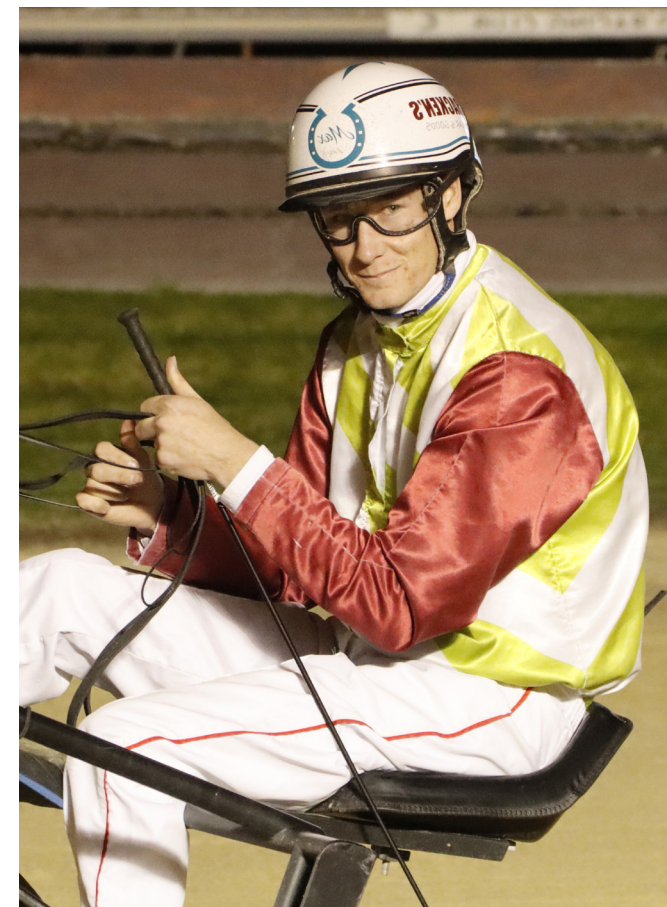
"It is my first year so I will give it my all and do it for the southerners."

"I am in form at the right time, which is good."

The Hill brothers are not the only siblings to compete in the New Zealand Junior Drivers Championship.

Sam and Olivia Thornley are also part of a strong South Island contingent.

**"IT IS MY FIRST YEAR SO I WILL GIVE IT MY ALL AND DO IT FOR THE SOUTHERNERS".**





McMillan Equine Feeds 2024 New Zealand Junior Drivers Championship

		HEAT 1		HEAT 2		HEAT 3		HEAT 4		HEAT 4		HEAT 5		HEAT 6	
		Place	Pts	Place	Pts	Sub Total	Place	Pts	Sub Total	Place	Pts	Sub Total	Place	Pts	Sub Total
1	Max Hill														
2	Kerryn Tomlinson														
3	Wilson House														
4	Sam Thornley														
5	Crystal Hackett														
6	Emily Johnson														
7	Zev Meredith														
8	Monika Ranger														
9	Carter Dalgety														
10	Riley Harrison														
11	Seth Hill														
12	Olivia Thornley														

Points awarded for each of the NZ Junior Driver Championship races shall be:

1st - 17, 2nd - 12, 3rd - 10, 4th - 9, 5th - 8, 6th - 7, 7th - 6,  
8th - 5, 9th - 4, 10th - 3, 11th - 2, 12th - 1  
Scratching = 7 No drive = 7

In the event of a tie for any place following the two races of the NZ Junior Championship, final placings shall be determined by applying the following count back procedure:

- (a) On the basis of number of wins in the Championship races.
- (b) On the basis of the number of seconds in the Championship races.
- (c) On the basis of the number of thirds in the Championship races.
- (d) On the Basis of the number of Junior Driver races won during the season.
- (e) On the basis of the total number of races won for the season.
- (f) On the basis of total lifetime wins.







# The preferred feed for performance



The increased physical demands of hard working horses mean that providing a balanced diet that meets all nutritional requirements is essential for peak performance.

McMillan Performance Feeds are designed to meet these requirements by providing energy from both slow and fast release sources, quality protein that delivers the most suitable ratio of amino acids, high levels of essential vitamins and minerals.