



MEDIA RELEASE : WORLD DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIP

Blair Orange, the country's leading driver for the past seven years, will again wear the silver fern at this November's World Driving Championship (WDC) in New Zealand.

It will be Orange's second world championship after representing the country in Europe in 2023.

The fourth most successful driver in this country's history, he has over 2900 career wins including three New Zealand Cups with Copy That (twice) and Cruz Bromac.

The drivers from 10 different countries who will compete at the WDC were announced at a function at Addington Raceway this evening. It will be the first time New Zealand has been the sole host of the championships since they started in 1970.

The 10 drivers (in alphabetical order) are:

Brett Beckwith (USA)
Mats Djuse (Sweden)
Gary Hall Jnr (Australia)
James MacDonald (Canada)
Michael Nimczyk (Germany)
Blair Orange (New Zealand)
Santtu Raitala (Finland)
Antonio Simioli (Italy)
Jaap van Rijn (Netherlands)
Pierre Vercruysee (France)

This year's championship will see the return of two former champions. The Ontario-based James MacDonald won the title in his home country Canada in 2017 while Pierre Vercruysee did the same in France in 2013.

Jaap van Rijn from the Netherlands has a tough act to follow after countryman Rick Ebbinge won the last two world driving championships in 2019 and 2023.

Australia's representative Gary Hall Junior is well-known on both sides of the Tasman. The 42-year-old has over 4000 career wins with 69 at Group 1 level, including three Inter Dominion wins with the great (Im) Themightyquinn.

"This is a terrific thrill," Hall Jr said, "as I've gotten older and travelled more, I've got a real sense of what these series mean and what an honour it is to be part of them, especially representing your country in this case.

"Personally, I'm thrilled it's in NZ where I'll feel comfortable driving."

Twenty years Hall's junior is American representative Brett Beckwith. At 22, he's a fourth generation horseman who lives in Saratoga County, New York. He is aiming to be the first American to win the world title since Dave Magee in 1995.

Six New Zealand drivers have won the WDC. They are Tony Herlihy, Maurice McKendry, Dexter Dunn, Mark Jones, Robert Cameron and Kevin Holmes

This year's championships will be held at four venues - Kaikoura, Cambridge, Winton and Addington - in November, culminating in the final heat to be held on the sport's biggest occasion, IRT New Zealand Cup Day at Addington on Tuesday, November 11.

A dedicated WDC website is also now up and running.

It can be found at: wdc25.nz



114 Wrights Road, Christchurch 8024
PO Box 459, Christchurch 8140
www.hrnz.co.nz