



OFFROAD MOTORSPORT IN THE CITY

Counties Manukau Offroad Racing Club (CMORC) knows how to put on a spectacular Offroad event and for the last four years has hosted national events at Colin Dale Motorsport Park in Manukau, each one bigger and better than the last. According to new CMORC President, Ian McCormack "Every event we host is looked upon as a practice for the next. That way we keep improving our own performance." On March 11 2012 the excitement reaches a new level with the first round of the 2012 Mickey Thompson National Offroad Racing Championship. For the second consecutive year Mickey Thompson Performance Tyres and Wheels has backed the ORANZ National Series, this year launching with a fast and spectacular Shortcourse race meeting on the 1.1 kilometre track at Prices Road.

Combining classes will see at least 10 cars on the track at any one time and mixing fast and slower cars in the same race ensures plenty of action and excitement from when the lights first go out. The pressure increases when at least 20 cars from different classes take to the track for the 15 lap feature races which complete the 24 race program.

According to Event Manager Kevin Hall "We are putting on a show, for the public, the sponsors and the competitors, and this year will be the best that Counties Manukau Offroad Racing Club has hosted." Club Site Manager Matt Koppens adds "We have tweaked the track this year to put more interest and drama into it without compromising safety or limiting competitiveness".

The sport has created a new points system that rewards effort and performance through all classes and drops the NZ1 focussed system. That puts a new focus on Shortcourse racing which will drive the efforts of competitors as they try for maximum points in their class title quests and fits the club's long term focus on Shortcourse events. This is an exciting time for the offroad fraternity with such a good venue inside the city limits, backed by the Auckland Council as they develop Colin Dale Park as a dedicated motorsport venue which will become the home of offroad racing in Auckland. In time, development of the

permanent track will give the sport a profile not seen since the Offroad GP series.

The Counties Manukau drivers that last year dominated the North Island Championship are all anxious to get their 2012 campaign off to the best possible start on their home track, defend their regional titles and have a crack at their National Class titles at this year's final in Hawkes Bay. Nick Hall (561) who took out the 2011 North Island Championship knows how important a good start is "In last year's chase we left the first round 10 points down and it was a real struggle to gain the advantage we had at the end". Fellow Counties driver Paul McCormack (373) who finished only 10 points behind is a bit more philosophical about his chances this year. "New rule changes for 2012 allow Class 3's to be 1650cc and several drivers have rebuilt engines or imported cars to this spec. We are still running 1598cc and lack the horsepower of the top cars. But if we get a wet track, we will be up there. I love the rain". Third on the podium for the North Island series Wayne Rowe is back defending his Class C title and hopes the mechanical issues that thwarted his campaign have all been sorted. "Perhaps I should take it a bit easier on the equipment this year!"

Real excitement is expected from the Offroader classes with a new year, new rules, new cars and new teams facing the most populated grids in the search for class points. Top teams from all round the North Island will be here with some exotic machinery including a newly imported Hustler Class 3 for Devlin Hill, Big Black's Nissan in Class 8, a new Class 1 car from ShoreNZ for Gregg Carrington-Hogg, a rumour that Nick Leahy has found more horsepower out of his Challenger and ex NZ1 driver Tony McCall attempts a comeback in a new BSL Class 1 car.

Class 1 should produce the fastest races of the day with top cars being pushed by up to 500hp. While normally there can be no substitute for cubic capacity the nimble handling and race tuned engines of the Super1600's keep the bigger cars honest and often carry the day in respect of race times. Class 5 Super1300's are always there just waiting for the bigger machines to err to seize the opportunity. The Challenger class cars always produce

some of the hardest fought races in the sport running restricted 1600cc VW motors and componentry makes races in this class tight and guys like Wayne Rowe and Nick Leahy take no prisoners as they work their way to the front.

The sport's youth development series, Kiwi Trucks, will participate in their first full National series event as an ORANZ class. Keep an eye out for Fergus Crabb (J95), Colby Langley (M12) and Dyson Delahunty (J03) as they continue battles fought out every time they meet.

Truck racing fans will be satisfied with all classes for trucks from John Gray's little Suzuki (227) to Raana Horan's (899) fire breathing Nissan monster. Although usually down on numbers the trucks are nothing if not entertaining on a technical track with tight turns and formidable high speed jumps, both natural enemies of the species.

Racing starts at 10:00am and racing is expected to be over by 4:00pm when the teams move to the Weymouth Cossie Club for prizegiving at 7:00pm.

Anyone wanting more information on Counties Manukau Offroad Racing Club or offroad racing can visit www.countiesoffroad.co.nz or email president@countiesoffroad.co.nz.