



TOYOTA

Racing

SERIES

2016 MEDIA GUIDE

Toyota Racing Series:

TOP INTERNATIONALS CHALLENGE LEADING KIWI DRIVERS

New Zealand's premier single-seater championship has once more attracted a top field of international drivers to this country to do battle with New Zealand drivers for the most prestigious trophies in New Zealand motor racing.

The championship, now in its 12th season, and in the second season for the new FT50 race car, the series was established to help young New Zealanders to advance their racing careers by giving them experience in modern composite-based 'wings and slicks' race cars. It has launched Kiwis into international racing careers. New Zealand graduates of the series include 2015 FIA World Endurance Champion Brendon Hartley, Le Mans 24-Hour race winner Earl Bamber, GP2 racers Mitch Evans and Richie Stanaway, Japanese Formula Three champion Nick Cassidy, Chinese Formula Masters champion James Munro, Porsche Carrera Cup Asia champion Chris van der Drift and V8 Supercars driver Shane van Gisbergen. This year three Kiwis are racing – James Munro (Christchurch), 2015 national Formula Ford champion Taylor Cockerton (Pukekohe) and 2015 Spirit of a Nation TRS feature race winner Brendon Leitch.

Munro is having his third shot at winning the TRS championship as is Leitch, while it is Cockerton's first year in the top category.

The international talent they will race against is considerable.

Brazilian 17-year-old Pedro Piquet, son of three-time world Formula One champion Nelson (1981, 1983, 1987), is returning to the TRS after contesting the opening rounds in 2014. In the intervening period he has won the Brazilian Formula Three Championship for the last two years and will be using the TRS series as a springboard into the FIA European Formula Three Championship where he will team up with British driver and 2015 TRS graduate Callum Iloft at Van Amersfoort racing.

Canadian Kami Lalibertè follows in the wheel tracks of his countryman and 2015 TRS champion Lance Stroll. In 2015 Lalibertè has been racing in the new Formula 4 category in France and Germany. In the latter part of the season he was team-mates with Mick

Schumacher (son of multiple F1 world champion Michael) and Harrison Newey (son of respected F1 designer Adrian Newey) at Van Amersfoort Racing. Lalibertè will use TRS to hone his speed and racecraft going into the 2016 European campaign with Van Amersfoort. British driver Lando Norris, 16, became the youngest ever world karting champion two years ago and has just won the British Formula 4 championship, Mitch Evans' 2015 GP2 teammate Artem Markelov is one of three internationals returning for a second run at a TRS title. The 21-year-old is the second-oldest driver in the field is looking for race wins and a strong push for the title.

Elite academies have once more directed their rising stars to the championship.

Indian driver Jehan Daruvala is a protégé of the driver development academy set up by Vijay Mallya's F1 team Force India and is coached by Oliver Rowland, who recently won the Renault 3.5 litre title in Europe.

Chinese driver Guanyu 'Joe' Zhou is a Ferrari Driver Academy driver who finished second in the Italian Formula 4 championship and also contested rounds of the German Formula 4 championship.

Canadian Devlin DeFrancesco is a member of the Chip Ganassi Racing driver development squad in North America. The world-renowned Ganassi outfit enjoys a strong Kiwi connection with Kiwi Scott Dixon: the Aucklander has won the Indy championship four times for the team.

There are four teams in the championship: M2 Competition, Giles Motorsport, Victory Motor Racing and ETEC Motorsport.

Information about the Toyota Racing Series, including live lap timing, is available on the championship website, www.toyotaracing.co.nz and racing is updated live on Facebook and Twitter. The championship has its own TV coverage with a one-hour programme on TV3 a week after each round. Coverage also screens on New Zealand's SKY TV and in more than 70 overseas countries.

Calendar of events

2015-2016 Toyota Finance 86 Championship

Round 1, 16 -17 January 2016 Mike Pero Motorsport Park, Ruapuna, Christchurch

Lady Wigram Trophy

Round 2, 23 - 24 January 2016 Teretonga Park, Invercargill

Spirit of a Nation Cup

Round 3, 30-31 January 2016 Hampton Downs, north Waikato

NZ Motor Cup

Round 4, 6-7 February Taupo

Denny Hulme Memorial Cup

Round 5, 13 – 14 February 2016 Manfeild, Feilding

New Zealand Grand Prix (with Dan Higgins Trophy and Dorothy Smith Memorial Cup)

2015-2016 championship driver profiles

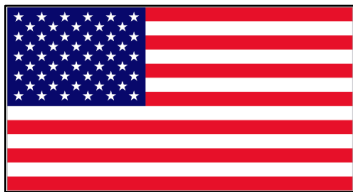
Drivers are listed by order of car number

#4 Theo Bean

USA

Born: 16 November 1992 (23)

Team: ETEC Motorsport



Theo Bean, 23, is making his single-seater debut in this year's Toyota Racing Series. He has an unusual motor racing background compared to his rivals.

While most of the field started their careers in karts, often before their teenage years, Bean's back ground is sports car racing.

Recent success has come in a 2009 Oreca Courage LMP1 and Chevy Intrepid GTP, cars which were competing in the Daytona 24 Hours and Sebring 12 Hours sports car races only a few years before.

Bean hails from Athens, Georgia and is the oldest on the starting grid. He is currently studying Business Management full time at the University of Georgia.

#5 Pedro Piquet

Brazil

Born: 3 July 1998 (17)

Team: M2 Competition



Pedro Piquet raced the opening rounds of the 2014 Toyota Racing Series and returns this year as 2014 and 2015 Brazil Formula 3 champion.

The youngest son of three times Formula One World Champion Nelson Piquet, the quietly-spoken 17 year old knows his famous surname precedes him into any championship but prefers to be judged on his pace and racecraft.

His first trip to New Zealand gave him valuable experience on the southern circuits. Heading back to his homeland, Piquet dominated the national F3 championship, winning 11 of the 16 events in 2014 and 12 of the 14 races this year. He now returns to New Zealand for a full-on challenge for the TRS title.

Piquet will drive for the Hamilton based M2 Competition team which oversaw his appearance in 2014. M2 are the current TRS championship-winning team who ran Canadian Lance Stroll to victory in the 2015 championship. After TRS, Piquet heads for Europe to contest the 2016 FIA European F3 Championship with Van Amersfoort Racing

Pedro Piquet's father, multiple F1 champion Nelson Piquet, is now a successful businessman in Brazil and also manages his son's racing career.

#6 Jehan Daruvala

India

Born: 12 July 1995 (19)

Team: M2 Competition



A member of Vijay Mallya's Force India Academy, Jehan Daruvala has his sights firmly set on reaching Formula One. Daruvala caught Mallya's eye after delivering consistent performances at the karting level. After initial karting success in Asia in 2011 and 2012, the Mumbai resident headed north.

"Once you attain a decent level of karting in Asia you need to move to Europe," said Daruvala. "That is where you can truly gauge your potential and push yourself to improve, racing against the best karters in the world."

He has been based in Britain since he was 13 years old to further his racing career. In Europe, Daruvala finished second in the German Kart Championship and third in the World Championship in 2014.

The 17-year-old Daruvala is a recent graduate to formula cars and in 2015 moved up to Formula Renault, competing throughout Europe, but concentrating on the Northern European Championship where he finished fifth and second rookie. Daruvala impressed in this maiden single seater outing by securing three podium finishes in the 2015 Formula Renault 2.0 NEC series. His best results were second at the Nurburgring and third places at the Red Bull Ring and Hockenheim in the seven round, 14 race series.

"I am looking forward to an early start with the New Zealand Toyota series in 2016. It's great that I have a very competitive teammate [Lando Norris]. I am sure that we will be able to push each other to keep improving."

#10 Artem Markelov

Russia

Born: 10 September 1994 (21)

Team: M2 Competition



Russian 21 year old Artem Markelov is out to win and looking forward to the competition and driving in the Toyota Racing Series again.

“It’s New Zealand’s premier single-seater category. The standard is good too: as well as the best local talent proving themselves before they go racing internationally, you also have top foreign drivers such as Pedro Piquet, son of three-time F1 world champion Nelson and winner of the last two Brazilian F3 titles.”

Markelov’s 2015 TRS campaign was thwarted by five retirements, not all of his own making, including a spectacular crash at Taupo. He showed good speed with a third in the feature race for the Lady Wigram Trophy in the opening round at Ruapuna, along with second places at Teretonga and in the feature race for the Denny Hulme Memorial Trophy at Taupo. For the past two seasons Markelov has been Mitch Evans’ team-mate at Russian Time in GP2.

The Muscovite’s best result has been a third place at Spa. Both Markelov and Evans showed increasing pace as the 2015 season ended.

GP2 is considered the main feeder category for Formula 1 and most of its racing is held on the same tracks in support of the main Grand Prix events.

Like many of his contemporaries, Markelov is a graduate from karting. He spent two seasons in the German Formula 3 Championship, finishing runner-up in the title race in 2013, before moving to GP2.

#11 Taylor Cockerton

Pukekohe

Born: 18 September 1997 (18)

Team: ETEC Motorsport



Taylor Cockerton was the first driver to commit to the 2016 TRS, all the way back in July 2015.

Graduating from Formula Ford as the 2015 champion Cockerton is primed and ready for the 2016 Toyota Racing Series.

Having just re-signed McDonalds as the primary sponsor the teenager is looking forward to the five intense weeks of racing with a very competitive international field.

“I’m looking forward to the learning experience against some of the best young drivers in the world. It’s going to be a massive learning curve, particularly with the much superior acceleration, braking and down-force that the Toyotas have.”

Cockerton has been focusing on both physical and mental preparation.

“There’s been a lot of focus on fitness, strength and conditioning at the gym as well as seeing a sports psychologist for mental preparation. I am expecting it to be very mentally draining.”

Before committing to TRS, Cockerton evaluated the Australian Formula Ford and Formula 4 championships, testing cars in both categories.

#13 Rodrigo Baptista

Brazil

Born: 13 September 1996 (19)

Team: ETEC Motorsport



Rodrigo Baptista finished fourth in the 2015 Brazilian Formula 3 Championship, where he was one of only two drivers to win against Pedro Piquet, who won 12 of the 14 rounds on his way to the title. Rodrigo Baptista also recorded two second placings and a third placing on his way to fourth. At the start of the year he teamed up with cousin Bruno to win the GT class of the Fara Endurance Championship at the Homestead-Miami Speedway, Florida in an Aston Martin GT4.

#15 Kami Lalibertè

Canada

Born: 13 September 1999 (16)

Team: M2 Competition



Kami Lalibertè from Quebec has spent this year racing in the French Formula 4 Championship, where he finished ninth overall, with a best place of third at the Magny-Cours round.

He also did three rounds of the German Formula 4 series, which he will contest in full in 2016 with Van Amersfoort Racing.

#17 Devlin DeFrancesco

Canada

Born: 17 January 2000 (15)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Devlin DeFrancesco, who is originally from Toronto but grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, is a member of the Chip Ganassi Racing talent identification programme in North America. He is contesting TRS before moving on to the UK to race with leading formula team Carlin's MSA Formula squad.

DeFrancesco was the Canadian junior karting champion in 2013, and in 2014 he finished third in the European Championship. Stepping up from his karting career, DeFrancesco has spent 2015 competing in Britain's Ginetta Junior Championship, learning the circuits he will race on when he returns to the UK this year.

#18 Julian Haneses

Germany

Born: 31 August 1997 (18)

Team: Victory Motor Racing



Haneses is making his single seater formula car racing debut in TRS, although he has tested both Formula Renault and Formula 4 cars in the last few months. He will contest a season of Formula 4 racing in a team run by German touring car championship driver Timo Scheider when he returns home after the Toyota Racing Series.

From Hilden in the Rhineland, Haneses has been a regular podium place getter in German karting events since 2011, winning the national title in 2014 and this year he finished ninth in the World Championships.

#21 Nicolas Dapero

Argentina

Born: 31 January 1998 (17)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Nicolas Dapero, 17, has followed a traditional path into motor racing with four years in karting that culminated in winning the Argentina title in 2014, the same year he also started racing Formula Renault.

In 2015 he finished sixth in the Brazilian Formula Three Championship, even though he only did 12 of the 16 races, finishing second twice and third three times.

In New Zealand he will race against two Brazilians who finished in front of him, Pedro Piquet, who won 14 of the 16 races to take the title and Rodrigo Baptista who was fourth overall.

Dapero already has his sights set on racing in the American Pro Mazda category which is a feeder to IndyCar in 2016. He - like most of the TRS field - will be using the 15 races and associated practice and qualifying sessions here as preparation for his North American season.

#23 Will Owen

USA

Born: 23 March 1995 (20)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Owen, started his motorsport career relatively late as a 15 year old, and by 2012 was winning karting events nationally. He progressed to US Formula 2000 and scored his first win at the Indianapolis road course in 2014.

In 2015 he moved up to the Pro Mazda single seater championship and scored three podiums including two second places, to finish seventh overall.

“I was looking for some winter racing experience,” said Owen from his Fort Worth Texas base where he is studying business administration finance.

“Race craft is what I need to improve the most. This will do the trick. It’s my first international endeavour. I’ve never done anything like this,” said Owen, who is originally from Denver, Colorado.

“The amount of track time combined with the talent from around the globe is the combination that makes this series unlike any other.”

#25 Bruno Baptista

Brazil

Born: 24 March 1997 (18)

Team: Victory Motor Racing



Cousins Bruno and Rodrigo Baptista will bring a strong Brazilian influence to this summer's Toyota Racing Series. The pair join fellow Brazilian Pedro Piquet to contest the five round, 15 race championship which culminates with the New Zealand Grand Prix at Manfeild on February 13 and 14.

With three drivers in the field, Brazil has the strongest international representation in the series.

Stepping up from karting, 18 year old Bruno won the 2014 South American Formula 4 series with four wins and 15 podium places. This year the Sao Paulo driver has raced in Formula Renault in Europe contesting some rounds of the Northern European, Alps and the main Eurocup series

At the start of the year Bruno combined with cousin Rodrigo to win the GT class of the Fara Endurance Championship at the Homestead-Miami Speedway, Florida in an Aston Martin GT4.

#26 Timothe Buret

France

Born: 31 May 1995 (20)

Team: ETEC Motorsport



Buret, who was born in Montpellier, France but based himself in Indianapolis this year, raced the 10 round, 16 race American Pro Mazda Indy car series - the third rung on the Road to Indy ladder for the Indy Car Championship in 2015.

After winning a round on the Indianapolis road course and finishing in the top five of seven other races, Buret finished the season in fifth place.

Twenty year old Buret had two seasons of racing in France in 2013 and 2014 after graduating from karts, which he started in 2010. He scored seven wins and 12 podiums in Caterham sports cars and Formula Renault last year.

#31 Lando Norris

Great Britain

Born: 13 November 1999 (16)

Team: M2 Competition



Lando Norris, the youngest ever winner of the World Karting Championship, will use the Toyota Racing Series as a stepping stone into a season of European Formula Three or Formula Renault in 2016.

As a 14 year old, he won the 2014 World Karting title in France, surpassing the record for the youngest champion previously held by current triple Formula One World Champion Lewis Hamilton.

Norris graduated to single seaters at the start of this year competing in the British Motorsport Association Formula 4 category which is now becoming recognised around the world as the 21st century replacement for Formula Ford.

He won the opening round and by the end of the season had amassed an impressive eight wins and six second places in the 30 race series to take the title.

From Bristol in England, Norris started karting as a seven year old in the cadet class and progressed through the ranks to win three major Junior European titles in 2013 before stepping up to the open class and his world title winning season last year.

#33 Guanyu Zhou

China

Born: 30 May 1999 (16)

Team: M2 Competition



Ferrari Driver Academy protégé Guanyu Zhou will be looking to follow in the tracks of the 2015 TRS winner and fellow FDA member Lance Stroll.

Zhou finished runner-up in the 2015 Italian Formula Four Championship in his first taste of single seater racing, with three wins and 12 podium placings.

The 16 year old has been based in London for the last three years, furthering his motorsport career after starting kart racing in China as an eight year old.

Zhou has been on Ferrari's books since June 2014, his final year of karting when he finished runner-up in the Rotax Senior Euro Challenge and the Rotax Max Senior Winter Cup. In 2013 Zhou won the Junior Rotax European Championship.

#40 James Munro

Christchurch

Born: 20 January 1997 (18)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Christchurch racing driver James Munro is stepping up the pace in his third foray into TRS. He is seeking redemption in this summer's Toyota Racing Series after a frustrating run in the 2015 championship. The 18 year old finished ninth overall, scoring one podium in the five round series – a second place during round two at Teretonga, Invercargill.

Munro knows what he has to do to improve on 2015, and knows he can do it.

“The main thing is to finish every race and if you can't win or take a podium you must still be as consistent as possible. I think we can be competitive at the front of the field.”

Munro spent five years in karting, having started as a 10 year old. That culminated in runner-up in the national Rotax Max Challenge Championship, by a single point. He came to TRS having won the New Zealand Formula Ford Championship in 2013 with victory in 10 of the 15 races in his first year in the class, only the second ever rookie driver to win the title in the more than 40 years the series has been run.

After his TRS debut, Munro competed in the Formula Masters China series in 2014 winning the championship with victory in eight of the 18 races. In 2015 he has spent time coaching budding race drivers in China and came away with a fourth placing in the Japanese Formula 4 series. He also won the GT Am class in the Asian Le Mans series driving a Porsche Carrera Cup car.

#62 Ferdinand Habsburg

Austria

Born: 21 June 1997 (18)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Ferdinand Habsburg of Austria is returning for a second tilt at the Toyota Racing Series.

He contested the 2015 TRS championship with Victory Motor Racing, finishing 11th with a best result of second place in the second race at the Hampton Downs round.

For 2016 the 18 year old will move to Giles Motorsport who won the teams championship in 2014.

“I can’t wait to return to the Toyota Racing Series,” said Habsburg from his Vienna home.

“Last year I had a lot to learn and was splitting my time between studying and racing.”

“This year I can return more focused. It’s the best way to spend the winter season – the driving standards are really high, the learning curve is steep.”

“TRS is a great way to hone speed and racing skills before the northern season starts. Last year it gave me a great boost going into my 2015 European season and I can’t wait to get that boost again!”

His 2015 TRS experience taught him the value of consistent performance. “This time I am looking forward to being competitive from the start. I want to fight for the title and I know that with the points system we have to finish every race!”

Habsburg is a recent graduate from the world of karting, having moved up to single-seaters in 2014.

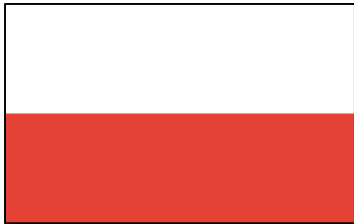
In 2015 he raced in Formula Renault in Europe where he was regularly the fastest rookie racer and beat off tough competition from many of the seasoned drivers to finish as high as fourth overall in just his third weekend in the 2.0-litre machine.

#67 Antoni Ptak

Poland

Born: 7 April 1997 (18)

Team: Giles Motorsport



Like many of his contemporaries, Ptak from Tuszyn in central Poland, started his motorsport career in karting, culminating in victory in the Polish Championship in 2014, his fourth season of racing.

In 2015 he competed in the EuroFormula Open championship with RP Motorsport. The championship is for F3 cars using Toyota engines and Michelin tyres; it has replaced the Spanish national F3 series.

86 Brendon Leitch

Invercargill

Born: 28 November 1995 (20)

Team: Victory Motor Racing



Brendon Leitch has taken aim at the TRS title this year. The 20 year old Southlander has become the last of three Kiwis to grid up for this year's championship, which will be his third.

A solid background in karting and top results in the New Zealand Formula Ford championship brought Leitch to TRS in 2014, where he showed dogged determination and raw speed all the while scraping together financing to complete the series.

Fast-forward a year and things were a little smoother for the talented racer: in the 2015 championship he became the first Kiwi in years to win his home event's feature race for the Spirit of a Nation Cup.