

Brendon J Gledhill
PO Box 156
Dareton, NSW 2717
Australia

ABN 53 296 414 304
Ph: 03 5027 4225
Mob: 0419 174 225
Email: gledhill@hotmail.net.au

Motor Sports Commentator, Event Presenter and Publicist

SPEEDWAY TURNS UP HEAT

Mildura speedway fans are in for a treat with two high class meetings at Olympic Park inside of one week, when the Mildura Club plays host to the Coomealla Memorial Sporting Club's 2010 Australian Solo Speedway Championships, with the vital Qualifying round to be held on Wednesday 30th December and then the second round of the Championship series to be held on Sunday 3rd January 2010.

Motorcycling Australia's Speedway and Track Racing Commission have selected the top ten riders in the country and have seeded them directly into the three round series, however, the final six riders will come from the Qualifying meeting, which will be a very cut throat affair.

Qualifying meetings are always a torrid meeting as the aspirants are keen to show why the selectors should have chosen them in the first place and it is a meeting which brings out the very best in the younger group of riders, all of whom, want to improve their world standing with a solid performance and so as they can do well in the Championship series.

The selectors had a massive list of hopefuls, with thirty – five riders nominating for a chance to win the National crown, so there is even disappointment for some already, as there are only places for the ten seeded riders and the final six to come from the next sixteen riders who have nominated.

Many of the riders selected into the Qualifying are lads who currently ride in the British Premier or Conference Leagues or are hopeful of using the Australian titles to make good their chances of selection in one of the British League teams for the forthcoming British summer. The focus of the world in speedway will be on these Mildura meetings, especially as our European colleagues are so closed in with a bitter winter at the moment.

A strong contingent of riders will come from NSW, with Kozza Smith, James Holder, Jay Herne, Alex Davies, Todd Kurtz, Ricky Wallace and Michael Penfold all keen to move into the Title series. Amongst this group are some well credentialed riders, with Holder being the brother of past Australian Champion, Chris and Herne being one of the talented sons of former International Phil Herne who was a team mate of the Mildura great, Phil Crump. Alex Davies has a strong pedigree too, as the son of former International Steven Davies, who had an excellent career, representing Australian many times. Alex's grandfather Keith, will be hoping to watch his grandson ride in the third and final round of the series, working as the meeting Clerk of Course, when the series gets to the Newcastle Showgrounds, which is Alex's home track.

Quality comes from Queensland too, with Josh Grajczonek and Mitchell Davey both engaged. Grajczonek is a well credentialed rider, who has ridden Mildura on previous occasions and he should use that experience to his advantage, especially as he would have been in consideration for one of the seeded positions in the main Title field. Davey is not as well known, but he has some good scalps under his belt and it would not be surprising to see him make it through to the Title meetings as he has shown excellent recent form at home.

South Australia's Robert Ksiezak, should be one rider who should move through to the series, just given his experience. Ksiezak should have the talent to show the selectors that his name should have been further up the list, so qualifying for him will be important.

His State team mate Arlo Bugeja is a skilled rider, although he is less inclined to travel around the country to gather track experience.

That leaves the home State representatives and the fireworks should come from this group too, as Justin and Ryan Sedgmen, Jake Anderson, Mark Jones and Shepparton's former Australian Junior Champion, Dakota North, should all use what home track advantage they have over the interstate riders. Anderson has had plenty of track time at Mildura, which he will be keen to use to his benefit, but many Mildura eyes will be on the Sedgmen pair, with the boys being the third generation of riders to ride successfully at Olympic Park. There will be a very proud grandfather Phil, sitting up on the Merbein hill, hoping that both the lads can make it into the Championship series. Justin, in particular has had a wonderful start to his International career during this past year, with some success in the very tough rounds of the World Under 21 Titles. These meetings are difficult for the young Australians as they are mostly held in some of the former Eastern block countries or in Scandinavia, where tracks are unknown and the language barrier makes it difficult as well. Locals and family will be keen to see both boys do well.

Dakota North and Mark Jones might be quite surprising, as neither of them have done much riding of late, choosing to have some time off to freshen up, although North has had a couple of good seasons in UK, following his father Rod, who rode in England back in the 1970's and who was always a popular rider at Olympic Park.

The scene is set for any six of this group of riders to make their way through to the Title series and is why the Mildura Club was so keen to host the meeting, as the chances will be plenty, but the opportunities few, for some of the riders. The riding will be fast and furious and will test the visiting Referee to the maximum. Rob Perks is a recent immigrant to Australia from the UK where, he was a member of the British League Referee panel, often taking charge of British Elite League matches and taking his turn at officiating at FIM International meetings around UK and Europe.

Perks will have seen all sorts of antics and actions on the track, so he will be able to regulate the meeting from an experience standpoint. Riders who worry about the side issues might quickly get left behind, as the requirement is to collect good points from each of the five heats available to each rider, thus guaranteeing them of a passage into the Title series.

A solid score will be required to move on, so riders will need to arrive with the "race face" on and get into scoring mode right from the times the tapes fly in heat one.

Olympic Park gates will open to the public at 4:00pm on Wednesday, with the senior meeting being preceded by the 2010 Victorian Junior Speedway Championships, which will commence at 5:00pm. The Junior meeting will be split to enable senior practice and the track preparation will take place whilst the second half of the Junior Title is being conducted. Patrons will be keen to watch the upcoming Victorian talent on display, so are advised to be early to the venue to take in the junior action. The Qualifying meet will start at 7:30pm.

Grandstand seating accommodation is provided, courtesy of Mildura Rural City Council and can be used on a first come basis. Patrons are asked not to take chairs onto the stands to allow maximum use of the public facilities.

Olympic Park has a full catering service operating and patrons are advised that there must be no BYO by law. The Olympic Park circuit can be found straight out 11th Street West.

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26th December 2009

For further information contact

Brendon Gledhill, Publicist

Ph: 03 5027 4225

Mob: 0419 174 225

Email: gledhill@hotmail.net.au