

The Highlands Motorsport Park is a motor racing circuit and premier tourist destination in Cromwell, Otago, New Zealand. Opened in March 2013, the facility features a 4.100 km (2.548 miles) circuit, designed by drawing inspiration from some of the world's most famous race tracks. The circuit is open seven days a week, and is a 45-minute drive from Queenstown.

ROUND ONE SCHEDULE

FRIDAY JANUARY 14

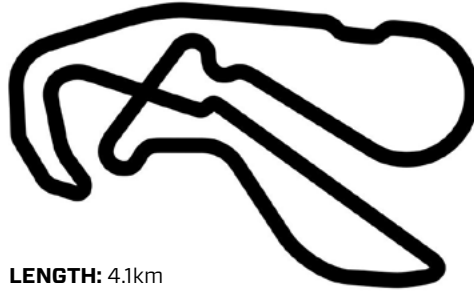
9.50am - Practice 1 - 20 minutes
12.25pm - Practice 2 - 20 minutes
2.15pm - Practice 3 - 20 minutes
4.35pm - Practice 4 - 20 minutes

SATURDAY JANUARY 15

9.40am - Qualifying - 20 minutes
2.05pm - Race 1 - 8 laps

SUNDAY JANUARY 16

10.25am - Race 2 - 12 laps
2.05pm - Race 3 - 10 laps



LENGTH: 4.1km
DIRECTION: Clockwise
SURFACE: Asphalt
TR 86 LAP RECORD: Callum Quinn, 1'52.191, Race 3, 9 November 2013

ROUND PREVIEW

It's been a tough build up to the start of what will be the biggest ever Toyota 86 Championship, but there's no doubt the long wait before the season finally gets underway will be worth it.

A total of twenty two cars should take the start at Highlands on January 14-16 and at stake this season is the biggest ever prize package for a domestic New Zealand motorsport championship. A much sought after test with Supercars icon Triple Eight Engineering tops the \$175,000 prize pool and the drivers are set to fight tooth and nail.

Testing before Christmas simply proved the championship is going to be closer than ever, with just over a second and a half covering the first 16 drivers. Heading the pack impressively was Hugo Allan who was quickly up to speed in his Heart of Racing entry. Hugo debuted at Taupo last season and showed plenty of promise, so will head to Highlands hopeful of a strong showing.

At this early stage it's hard to look past the top two finishers in last year's championship, who are both back for another season of Toyota 86 racing. Champion Rowan Shepherd lines up in the Speed Works entry while Simon Evans returns in his Wet & Forget car. Shepherd was tenth in testing as he got to grips with the different Toyota 86 but Evans' form is unknown as he and Marco Giltrap elected to miss the Hampton Downs test and head to the South Island.

Evans was a consistent points scorer last year and arguably the racer with the best ability to come through the field. In this calibre of field, over the course of a season, that ability may well come to be a very powerful ally for the popular and very experienced Evans. Giltrap too can be expected to shine,

having overcome injury and in his first test back in the car at Hampton Downs, finding a few tenths to lower his personal best.

Watch out too for Brock Gilchrist and Ronan Murphy. Gilchrist bagged his first race win at Taupo and it could be the key to unlocking a very serious championship challenge. Brock knows the circuits and sweet spot of the Toyota 86 as much as anyone and is almost certain to figure strongly. Murphy enters his second season with a podium finish at Manfeild the highlight of his first year. There's no question Ronan has the pace, and with a bit of luck and a good run of results, he too could be in the frame as the season progresses.

These experienced racers will this season be joined by a long list of additional up and coming talent.

Hugo Allan, Matthew McCutcheon, Rianna O'Meara-Hunt, Chelsea Herbert, Zac Stichbury, Clay and brother Fynn Osborne all join the series full time with impressive racing CVs.

John Penny, Mark Mallard, Todd Foster and Christina Orr-West fly the flag for the more experienced racers in the championship, while Todd Prujean, William Morton, Dion Pitt, and Sam Cotterill will all be eyeing up rookie honours.

Picking a winner? Impossible. But with perhaps 20 of the drivers likely to be covered by the smallest of margins on outright pace, the championship is all set to be a classic.

RACE FORMATS

RACE 1: Scratch grid based on times achieved in qualifying

RACE 2: Grid is a reverse top ten of race 1 finishers followed by 11-21 in race 1 finishing order

RACE 3: Grid based on points accrued over weekend

TYRE ALLOCATION: Two sets of Nexen all-weather tyres

DRIVER ENTRY LIST

1	Rowan Shepherd	2ND YEAR
4	Simon Evans	2ND YEAR
5	Dion Pitt	ROOKIE
8	Mark Mallard	2ND YEAR
9	Sam Cotterill	ROOKIE
10	Brock Gilchrist	3RD YEAR
11	William Morton	ROOKIE
14	Fynn Osborne	ROOKIE
15	Clay Osborne	ROOKIE
22	John Penny	3RD YEAR
23	Hugo Allan	ROOKIE
25	Chelsea Herbert	1ST YEAR
52	Rianna O'Meara-Hunt	ROOKIE
55	Christina Orr-West	2ND YEAR
72	Zac Stichbury	ROOKIE
74	Todd Prujean	ROOKIE
84	Marco Giltrap	2ND YEAR
91	Ronan Murphy	2ND YEAR
96	Matthew McCutcheon	ROOKIE
99	Justin Allen	3RD YEAR
222	Todd Foster	3RD YEAR

FAST FACTS - 2022 FIELD

- The championship features **three female** racers for the first time - Christina Orr-West, Chelsea Herbert and Rianna O'Meara-Hunt. The 21 car field is the biggest in the championship's nine year history
- The 2022 championship features the first two finishers from the 2021 title fight - Rowan Shepherd and Simon Evans.
- Winner of the 2022 Championship bags one of the biggest ever prizes in New Zealand motorsport - **a test with Supercars Champions Triple Eight Race Engineering.**
- The youngest driver in the field this season is Hugo Allan at 17 years old. John Penny is the most mature of the drivers at 54.
- 2021 Rookie of the Year Marco Giltrap is back in the championship after an impressive recovery.

PREVIOUS HIGHLANDS RESULTS

2019/20

POLE POSITION: Peter Vodanovich - 1 minute 53.967
RACE 1: Peter Vodanovich
RACE 2: Peter Vodanovich
RACE 3: Jaden Ransley

2018/19

POLE POSITION: Callum Hedge - 1 minute 52.542
RACE 1: Callum Hedge
RACE 2: Jaden Ransley
RACE 3: Peter Vodanovich

2013/14

POLE POSITION: Angus Fogg - 1 m 52.712
RACE 1: Angus Fogg
RACE 2: Jamie McNee
RACE 3: Angus Fogg

REPLAY - 2021 CHAMPIONSHIP

Rowan Shepherd won the 2021 Best Bars Toyota 86 Championship after a mesmerising final race at the Bruce McLaren Motorsport Park, Taupo.

Shepherd needed to finish second behind race winner Simon Evans and did exactly that, despite Evans trying everything he could to force attacks from third placed Brock Gilchrist and fourth placed Ronan Murphy to try and push Shepherd back to where he wouldn't have enough points to beat Evans to the title.

Shepherd however, held on in style and took the title by just five points - his tally of 973 trumping Evans' 968 after 15 hugely competitive races. Ryan Wood, a pace setter throughout the championship, was a fighting third overall.

All three drivers had been in with a shout of winning the championship title going into the final race, with the closely fought out title only being decided in the closing laps of the final race of 15 in the 2021 championship trail.

2021 CHAMPIONSHIP - TOP FIVE OVERALL SEASON



1st Rowan Shepherd 973 pts



2nd Simon Evans 968 pts



3rd Ryan Wood 894 pts



4th Brock Gilchrist 853 pts



5th Ronan Murphy 705 pts

2022 TOYOTA 86 CHAMPIONSHIP CALENDAR

R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6
14-16 JANUARY	21-23 JANUARY	11-13 FEBRUARY	4-6 MARCH	25-27 MARCH	22-24 APRIL
HIGHLANDS MOTORSPORT PARK	MIKE PERO MOTORSPORT PARK	HAMPTON DOWNS MOTORSPORT PARK	PUKEKOHE PARK RACEWAY	TAUPO INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT PARK	HAMPTON DOWNS MOTORSPORT PARK



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Award winning photographer Bruce Jenkins attends all Championship rounds capturing all the action!

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