



MEDIA RELEASE

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New commentary line-up a great call for new season

Up-and-coming talent will join the country's premier race-callers as part of changes to Trackside's commentary line-up for the 2013/14 racing season.

The new season, commencing August 1, will see changes to Trackside's team with a view to realigning the core premier calling team and further developing the next generation of New Zealand race-calling talent with guidance from established veterans.

George Simon, an internationally-renowned caller with a career spanning more than 20 years, will take the reins as the North Island's premier thoroughbred racing commentator. Aaron White has been elevated to call the North Island's premier harness meetings, including those at Alexandra Park.

Mark McNamara remains as the voice of the South as caller at premier thoroughbred and harness meetings in the South Island.

But it is the introduction and promotion of the next generation of New Zealand race-calling talent that is most exciting, says Trackside boss and NZ Racing Board General Manager of Broadcasting Glen Broomhall.

Trackside's first Broadcasting Cadet, Tom Wood, will take a big step in his career by leaving Dunedin to become a regular caller on the Central Districts circuit. Wood will be mentored by Simon. South Island caller Dave McDonald will take on the Dunedin area in Wood's absence while a recruitment drive is undertaken.

After a long and successful commentating career, Mike O'Sullivan will step aside from regular commentating duties in the new season. O'Sullivan will continue to be an integral part of the Trackside team as an announcer on Radio Trackside and will also continue to call trials in the Central Districts and provide support to Wood and the wider team.

"Mike's made a tremendous contribution to our team and the racing industry over more than three decades," said Broomhall. "We're pleased he'll be staying on to support our new season changes and help build our commentating team across the country."

A new Broadcasting Cadet will be joining the Christchurch-based team under the guidance of McNamara.

"We're investing in the future by developing the next generation of calling talent," said Broomhall.

“Our focus has been on ensuring we have the best callers representing New Zealand racing at our premier events and on the international stage, and George Simon, Aaron White and Mark McNamara will certainly do that as our premier team.

“Alongside that we created a cadetship programme a number of years ago, with Tom Wood coming through that. He’s grabbed his opportunity to become a fulltime caller and now he’s taking the next step up.”

Broomhall said planning for the future was of prime importance.

“The legends of the industry, guys like Keith Haub and Reon Murtha, all called for 40-plus years, so succession planning wasn’t something that had really been addressed.

“With the NZ Racing Board in charge of commentators, it’s our duty to develop future talent. As well as continuing the Broadcasting Cadetship programme, we’re launching a recruitment drive to bring aspiring and experienced commentators to our team.”

Recruitment of a Central Districts greyhounds caller is underway and members of the regular commentating team continue in their existing roles throughout the country in the new season.

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