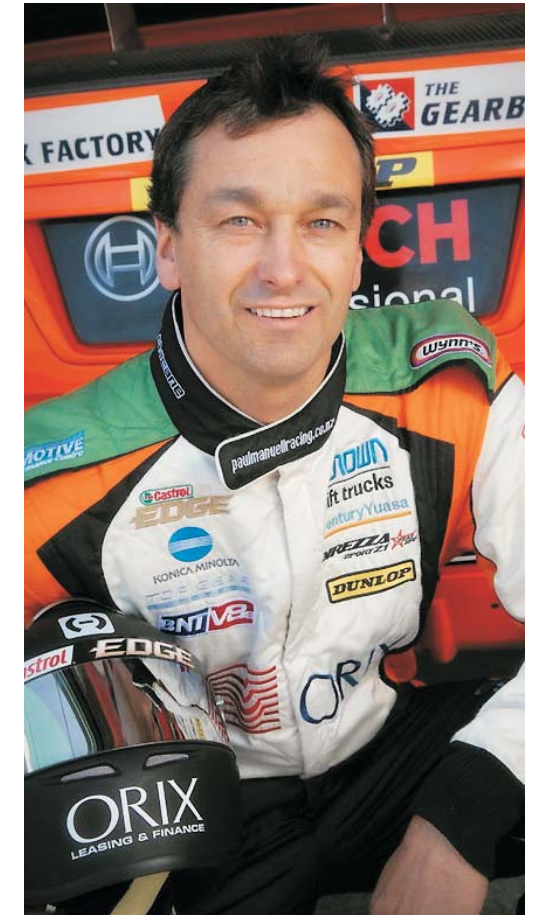


ORIX Team Racing enjoys podium finish at Pukekohe season opener



The opening round of the BNT V8's Championship at Pukekohe saw a record number of ORIX guests gather to enjoy a first-class weekend of racing in sunny conditions. Over 700 guests, plus around 100 children, made the most of ORIX's warm hospitality atop the hill overlooking Pukekohe Park Raceway. ORIX New Zealand's Manager Operations Glenn Middleton says it was an absolute delight to welcome guests from both ORIX and the collec-

tive sponsor group including Crown Equipment, Castrol Edge, Century Yuasa Batteries, Konica Minolta, Dunlop Direzza, New Balance, Smith & Smith Glass, The Gearbox Factory, Wynns, Top Gear Autotech and PWR who all support the team's long-time driver Paul Manuel. Adding to the weekend's great atmosphere, Paul, a former champion in the NZV8 class, finished the weekend as the best placed Holden driver in sixth position on the championship

leader-board. "This year we are thrilled to again host guests of Andy Booth Motorsport, Andrew Anderson's ITM Racing, and for the first time, we also welcomed guests of John McIntyre Racing. With people following the fortunes of four of the most popular NZV8 drivers throughout the day, there was always plenty of action to talk about." Making sure the entertainment didn't lag for an instant, the ORIX Hospitality Team bought along

four racing simulators for guests to test their skills on a virtual version of the high speed Pukekohe circuit. A bouncy castle, kid's activity packs and a special visit from a magician helped keep the children entertained. At lunchtime, the drivers all visited the ORIX suite to say a few words to the large group of assembled guests, draw some quality prizes and encourage everyone to enjoy a phenomenal display of 21 muscle cars specially gathered for the day. Collectively





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valued at more than \$1.5 million, the display highlighted the amazing cars Kiwi enthusiasts collect and restore.

A unique highlight of the ORIX hospitality camp is the opportunity to take a live AV feed direct from Paul Manuell from within the #15 ORIX Commodore during the warm-up laps for each race. Having the opportunity for Paul to address guests in the hospitality venue live is still a world-first, as far as the ORIX team knows, having first introduced it in the 2008-09 season.

"Everyone within ORIX Team Racing appreciates

our guests taking the time to come and join us out at Pukekohe. It's exciting to have raised the bar once again with a record number of guests supporting four drivers this season and we look forward to providing a quality hospitality product nationally as the NZV8 series continues in Christchurch, Invercargill, Timaru, Feilding and Taupo. We really enjoy welcoming everyone to the comfortable, friendly, family-focussed ORIX Team Racing hospitality venue and engaging in a subtle degree of business networking as we go," said Glenn.

Gentlemen, start your engines!

On the racing side of things, ORIX Racing's Paul Manuell has re-established his own team this season after having had his car run by another motorsport team for the past three years. Paul has been racing in the NZV8's since the series started 16 years ago as a Holden-only category and, other than a brief deviation when he sampled a Ford at one round last year, he's been loyal to the Holden brand.

Lining up for his 17th NZV8 season, Paul's results just kept getting better and better throughout

the weekend, except for his unfortunate demise from the second race due to a delaminating tyre. Despite that, Paul finished the weekend with 114 points – just 56 less than the series' leader – in a handy sixth place.

Lap times are everything, of course, in circuit racing and from the two initial practice sessions on Saturday morning, Paul's times placed him eighth and 12th among his competitors. The one and only qualifying session saw Paul take the ORIX-Castrol Edge Commodore around the 2.8km Pukekohe circuit in a time of 1:01.738,



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The legendary ORIX hospitality kicked in again for the season opener at Pukekohe treating over 700 guests to a superb family day out. To compliment the on-track racing excitement, kids were entertained by a magician, a bouncy castle and color-in competition. Big kids could check out the impressive display of muscle cars and, all the while, an endless supply of food and refreshments kept everyone happy.



the sixth-fastest time. This ensured Paul got the opportunity for one flying lap during the top ten shootout when he set a time of 1:01.438 to secure fourth position on the starting grid for the first race. The intensity of competition is every bit as fierce this season with Paul making sure the Ford drivers didn't have it all their own way. He finished the first 12-lapper in fourth position and therefore started the second 12-lapper in the same place. After a massive tussle with Angus Fogg, the Commodore suffered a delaminated front tyre, meaning Paul was out of the race.

The one positive aspect of not finishing the second race is that it put Paul in a better position to start the weekend's third race, which uses a reverse starting order based on points earned in the first two races. Drivers commonly regard the reverse grid race as something of a lottery – there is a strong element of luck as to whether or not you can get the right lines to weave through slower cars for a good finish. The ORIX-Castrol Edge Commodore was on song with Paul coming home in a strong third place to finish the weekend in sixth overall.

Paul said he was absolutely rapt to be in sixth position after the opening round. "And next we've got the tight, twisty Ruapuna circuit outside Christchurch. We always go well there. It's a technical circuit and I've won there on numerous occasions, so we'll be hunting down some more podium finishes." Paul adds that he's taken a new focus on the engineering side of things this season. "We've moved everything in-house at Eastern Automotive Performance Centre [Paul's business in East Tamaki], and can see the benefits of this in our

on-track performance. "I'm really delighted for the team and our sponsors to come out of this weekend as the quickest Holden. Long may it continue and we'll keep chasing down those Fords!" Stay tuned for more news on the ORIX-Castrol Edge Commodore.

For further information contact: Glenn Middleton, ORIX Team Racing. Tel 09 524 1410. Mob 027 221 8876. High resolution files of photographs are available on request

