

MEDIA RELEASE

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LEITCH THRIVES ON ACADEMY EXPERIENCE

"A great experience." That is how young Invercargill racing driver Damon Leitch describes his time at the Motorsport Elite Academy in Dunedin last week.

The Academy puts participants through a demanding programme which is run for the Motorsport NZ Scholarship Trust by the New Zealand Academy Of Sport South and Otago University's sports science specialists.

Thirty candidates sought the nine positions available and Leitch was one of those selected to attend. Participants were put into teams and the week featured a variety of challenges, both physical and mental. These included driving on a simulator in a heat chamber, a team run up Baldwin Street (the steepest street in the world), sponsorship presentations, mental skills training plus fitness and nutrition sessions including cooking lessons. The attendees also learnt about aerodynamics in the Academy's flume, holding a rope while huge volumes of water are pumped through the facility.

"It was great fun and very valuable," said Leitch on his return to Invercargill. "The Academy covered all aspects of racing both on and off the track and showed us many different techniques. One of the best activities was the simulator. We were driving on it in 40 degree temperatures with 60% humidity and it was just amazing how much our concentration levels dropped off in the heat. It was really hard to concentrate."

Leitch was teamed with fellow Formula Ford racer Mitch Evans of Auckland and Christchurch rally driver Josh Marston for the week of activity.

Sixteen-year-old Leitch has had a stellar beginning to 2009. Selection for the Academy was the latest success in a year that has already seen him win two of the final three rounds of the MTA Formula Ford Championship in his Zero Fees Stealth, become a finalist for motor racing's prestigious Steel Trophy and gain an invitation to travel to Australia to test for the G Force Mygale Team.

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