



INVERCARGILL FEELS THE NEED FOR **SPEED**

By Nick Jeffrey, Chief Executive of Cycling Southland

It started with a casual conversation at the **ILT Velodrome** in Invercargill in March. A couple of blokes by the name of Carswell and Cheatley were about to take their charges to Copenhagen for the **World Track Cycling Championships**. In between their tortuous final training sessions down on the track we collared the two of them to unashamedly mine them for information on the types of track events which really pack in the crowds around the world.

We talked about the Revolution Series and Europe's Six Day events, their ideas were coming thick and fast. Then the one called Tim piped up, "There's a window of opportunity later in the year between World Cups," he said. "When we're over at the Worlds, why don't I tap a few guys on the shoulders and see if there's any interest in some of them coming over for an event between the Melbourne and Cali World Cups in December."

"Righto," we said, while at the same time wondering how he'd ever find the time to follow through with that statement. Now, any of you who know Tim Carswell, know that when he says he'll do something, well – you know the rest. A few weeks after he'd returned from his successful Worlds campaign he phones and said, "Mate, the response was huge."

And so the **ILT Festival of Speed** was born.

Over the last four years the **ILT Velodrome** has been privileged to host some top international talent, but nothing like what we have planned for December. Thanks largely to the work of Tim, Dayle, Justin Grace and co, we have a tremendous opportunity to bring together one of the best international track cycling fields ever assembled in New Zealand. Interest is already being fielded from Europe, America, Asia, Australia and of course here at home, guaranteeing some of the best endurance and sprint racing imaginable. We've lined up three full nights of full-on racing from December 7th to 9th including the **National Madison Championships** on the first night of competition. But the **ILT Festival of Speed** is about more than just what's happening on the track.

Our aim is to turn this into one major party for three nights. I'm preaching to the choir here I know, but being a long time sports fan and a relative newcomer to cycling, I don't think I've found a more addictive spectator sport. Certainly the world class facility we are lucky enough to call home in Invercargill helps, but when the gun goes, few sports can match the thrill of track cycling. The **Festival of Speed** offers a unique opportunity to get up close with some of the world's best.

Add the international field of riders to a thumping atmosphere, live music, corporate

hospitality options in the track centre, lighting, prize draws and more and you've got the perfect combination to launch the sport as a true spectacle to the wider sporting public.

I know the exact amount of time it took me to become hooked on the sport. 44.632 seconds. Back in February at the **Elite Track Champs**, Ethan Mitchell, Sam Webster and Eddie Dawkins got suited up in the black skin-suit with the fern and smashed the then **New Zealand Team Sprint** record. There might have been 700 or 800 people there that night but they lifted the roof off the place to roar those boys home. Right there, I knew we had something special and I know this event will showcase the sport and our riders to a slice of the population who have yet to experience just how exhilarating the sport is. I can't wait to hear how loud twice as many people are, as they roar for Eddie against some of the fastest men on wheels in the **ILT Festival of Speed**.

Tickets will go on sale over the next month so keep an eye on www.cyclingsouth.org.nz or www.facebook.com/cyclingsouthland. You can also register to stay up to date with the **ILT Festival of Speed** by emailing

office@cyclingsouth.org.nz or phoning 03 2173215. ●

THE ILT FESTIVAL OF SPEED, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL MADISON CHAMPIONSHIPS WILL BE HELD AT THE ILT VELODROME IN INVERCARGILL FROM DECEMBER 7TH TO 9TH.