



New Zealand seventh in Czech Republic A1GP feature race October 9, 2006

The New Zealand A1GP team, with racer Jonny Reid, managed to get seventh in A1GP feature race and picking up four championship points in the second round at Brno track, Czech Republic.

After New Zealand managing to secure themselves first place in the qualifying race by being fastest in all four qualifying segments with a time of 3:30.053, Germany second with 3:30.524. This put New Zealand in the pole position to start the sprint race.

When racing for the 20 minute sprint race started Germany and New Zealand 'locked horns' in before the very first corner. It ended with both cars crashing out of the race.

This crash made both New Zealand and Germany start from the end of the track for the feature race.

New Zealand managed to crawl their way back to get seventh place, but drops to fourteenth place from twelfth, out of 23 competing nations, on the leader board with only five points.

David Sears, Engineering Team Director for both Germany and New Zealand, said: "Reid and his German counterpart Nico Hülkenberg were warned about keeping apart...but still ended up making life difficult for themselves."

Sears added: "To finish first you must

first finish and the track is incredibly wide here at Brno, so why New Zealand and Germany should be rubbing wheels on the very first corner is anyone's guess. To recover and finish strongly was encouraging for Jonny and the car certainly has the raw speed and looks to be one of the quickest going around. That's the pleasing part amid the disappointment and we now need to refocus and prepare for the next month's round in China."

"We were so much quicker than the other teams in qualifying that it would be criminal to be banging wheels when a great result is there for the taking."

The next A1GP race takes place on November 12 in Beijing.

Vodafone New Zealand buys Internet provider ihug October 10, 2006

In a NZ\$41 million deal announced Monday night, the New Zealand telecommunications company, Vodafone has bought Internet service provider (ISP) ihug New Zealand Ltd. Ihug will remain a separate company however.

Vodafone said that one of the reasons that they bought ihug was because of their strength in fixed line broadband. Vodafone say that this purchase will give them a much better access to broadband technology.

However when ihug was put up for sale by Australian owner, iiNet, Vodafone denied in July that they were

interested in buying ihug.

Paul Budde, telecommunication analyst, said that the buy was excellent. "The unique combination of a mobile and fixed based operator makes sense considering both their futures lie in broadband. The deal is writing new history and will be watched around the world. It really sets the direction Vodafone wants to go for services, new applications and new content."

Russell Stanners, CEO for Vodafone, said they are "looking to consolidate their broadband plans as they increase their 3G output. Over the next two years Vodafone is looking to double their 3G output and will double it again. On top of that there is 4G technology and there is growing confidence in the wireless network to deliver real broadband."

Stanners is very confident that their company will be able to exceed their customers expectations and needs. And that this purchase is an important step in evolving Vodafone.

"It's a perfect fit. Right now, we are the leaders in mobile, however we only have 20% share of the telecommunications market. When combined with ihug's strength in fixed line broadband and calling, we can develop and deliver even more compelling propositions for our customers. It's a very exciting time, with two strong challengers coming together to take on the competition," he said.

CEO for ihug, Mark Rushworth said:

"We're thrilled with this news. A strong and dynamic parent company like Vodafone is just what we need at this stage of our growth."

New Zealand Government announces record surplus October 11, 2006

Today the New Zealand Government announced that they had a record surplus of NZ\$11.5 billion for the 2005 and 2006 financial year. This amount was \$2.5 billion more than the government expected to get, however \$1.8 billion of the surplus was because of a change to the recording of the tax take.

However the surplus is now going to put more pressure on the government to put tax cuts on the cards. Both the Labour and United Future parties are reviewing cutting business tax. But the National party says that with the big surplus they can afford to cut both business tax and personal tax.

However finance minister, Doctor Michael Cullen, said the amount of cash available for tax cuts will be clearer in December.

John Key, finance spokesman for National, said: "The surplus makes a mockery of claims made by Michael Cullen before the last election that tax cuts were unaffordable and would put at risk core primary services. When surpluses are this enormous, any veiled hope the government had that it is not overtaxing people will rapidly evaporate."

Cullen said: "The Government's "robust" financial position was a firm base for the future, but it was not an indication of how much room he had for tax cuts or spending."

Phil O'Reilly, Chief Executive of Business New Zealand said: "The business tax reduction from 33 to 30 cents planned for April 2008 could be

brought forward to April 2007. The last time the business rate was cut, in 1989, business tax revenue actually went up. In the decade before 1989, revenue averaged around \$1 billion a year, while in the decade after, it averaged nearly \$3 billion a year - in other words, revenue nearly tripled.

"It [tax] should be put to use in a way that truly benefits New Zealand," O'Reilly added.

"Corrupt" New Zealand government to repay \$768,000 October 12, 2006

The New Zealand Labour Party today joined National, the Greens, ACT and the Maori Party in saying they would pay back the money received from Parliamentary Services that the Auditor-General says was wrongly used for electioneering.

The Auditor-General report, tabled today, found \$1.17 million of taxpayer-funded parliamentary funding was misspent over all political parties. Labour was found to have overspent \$768,000.

The Prime Minister is adamant the Labour Party did not break any rules, but she is still going to pay back money spent unlawfully in the lead up to the election.

Labour "strongly maintains" that its spending was within the rules as they were understood but given the new ruling it would refund the money.

"Labour has strongly stated its case as was its right...The party welcomes the Auditor-General's findings that inadequate guidance has been available to MPs and parliamentary parties on what constitutes appropriate advertising, particular in the pre-election period." Clark said

The Government will now follow

through with plans to pass retrospective legislation on election spending. Deputy Prime Minister and finance minister, Dr Michael Cullen says legislation will be introduced into Parliament next week to validate spending by parties dating back some years.

He argues the only legal remedy for the breaches identified by the Auditor General is for them to be validated by an act of Parliament.

Meanwhile National Leader Dr Don Brash is viewing the Auditor General's report on election overspending as a victory for National.

Dr Brash says it is only public, political and media pressure that is making the Prime Minister repay the money that Labour spent.

He claims she led a dirty campaign punctuated by threats, bullying and diversionary tactics, and he says she is clearly paying the money back with great reluctance.

Dr Brash says the Prime Minister should also apologise to the Auditor General, as she bullied him publicly to try to get him to change his report.

Dr Brash said it had taken a year to persuade Labour to "admit its guilt".

"I am delighted they have finally done it... after trying every trick known."

Trial of New Zealand teacher murderer still months away October 12, 2006

The accused murderer of Tokoroa, New Zealand teacher Lois Dear, Whetu Te Hiko, has appeared at the High Court in Rotorua but was remanded further into custody.

Only written evidence was given while in court.

Dear, 66-years-old, was found mur-

dered in her class at Strathmore School a day before term 3 started, July 16.

Hiko, 23-years-old, was remanded in custody until November 9 when he will be indicted, but it is unsure when the trial date will be set.

While in the dock Hiko, who has pleaded not guilty, hung his head and only showed his back to the crowded public gallery. He occasionally looked up to look at Justice Paul Heath, the residing judge. Heath said that they would not arraign Hiko yet because it is too soon after the depositions hearing.

Kevin McNeil, son of Dear, was also present at the high court. "I am here today for Mum. She would have been here for us. Nearly three months on, the evidence in the murder case was still being withheld, and a lot of it probably will be for some time." He was however confident that justice would be served. While wiping his eyes he added: "It's bloody hard. You have your bad days when the tears come. You never know when it is going to happen."

Hiko was in the Tokoroa District Court just under a month ago for the depositions hearing.

Brother of Hiko, Piri Te Hiko, said to McNeil: "She sounded like a real good lady. She taught a lot of my nieces and nephews."

The two men then shook hands and McNeil said that his family does not hold any animosity at Hiko's family.

Heath has rule that the media cannot publish the written depositions but may read them. The media cannot also view photographs or exhibitions that are evidence. Heath was concerned that it would become an unfair trial.

New Zealand bank manager robbed own bank October 13, 2006

Mark Andrew Scott, 39-years-old, and his partner, Vanessa Ada Scott, 27-years-old, both pleaded guilty near the end of the hearing to a charge of aggravated robbery and two charges of kidnapping after June 20 when they tried to rob the bank Mark Scott had been managing for a year.

Mark Scott, former US marine and veteran of the Gulf War, was the manager of the BNZ (Bank of New Zealand) Wellsford bank in Auckland.

During the pre-trial hearing, or more correctly depositions hearing, at North Shore, Auckland's district court, Mark Scott asked about the NYC plane crash, and then criticizing the inefficiency of the court system and then alleged that police stole from him. The police had in fact taken a silver pin from his jacket which was used as evidence.

The couple could face a maximum of fourteen years in jail.

When Mark Scott went to work early he left the side door open so his partner and two other men, Richard Simon Cowell and Lewis Blackwood-Manukau, could gain entrance into the bank. During the robbery all female employees were tied up. Mark Scott, however, was not bound until he gave NZ\$136,000 in cash to the robbers.

Deborah Poa, employee for BNZ, tried to escape but was attacked in the face but she did manage to gain attention of a passerby who contacted the police. She told the court that she did not trust Mark Scott. "[There was] just something about him. One minute he would be all calm ... the next, all aggressive."

The two men who helped with the robbery were found outside the bank and

the couple were formally charged that day by police.

To date \$2,860 is yet to be recovered and \$370 had already been used on groceries. The couple had some of the money found at their home by police.

After being calm all morning the couple returned to the court upset and then started shouting and swearing the justices of the peace when they learned that the hearing would adjourn part heard and postponed until December. "Two months here, two months there ... all that bull ... you know?" Mark Scott said.

On Tuesday the robbers and the Scotts will appear in court.

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