2012 Australian Off-Road Championship

The AORC titles kicks off in Dungog (NSW) on March 10-11 as Chris Hollis begins his title defence on a KTM after winning last year's battle on a Yamaha

A massive field of seasoned supremos, young tyros and starry-eyed upstarts will kickstart another year of Australian Off-Road Championship action in Dungog, NSW on March 10-11.

Forty-one riders will take part in the three pro class categories -- E1, E2 and E3 – in Dungog, featuring names such as Chris Hollis (KTM), multiple world champion and senior figure Stefan Merriman (Yamaha), the prodigiously gifted Matt Phillips (Yamaha), Glenn Kearney (Husqvarna), AJ Roberts (Yamaha), Ben Burrell (KTM), Jarrod Bewley (Yamaha) and Toby Price (KTM).

This weekend's opening two rounds will be played out in an 'enduro' format over a wide range of terrain, with 'Cross Country' and 'Sprint' battles on the menu over the following eight rounds.

Defending AORC outright and E2 champion Chris Hollis will make his national off-road debut with KTM this weekend, after making the switch from Yamaha in the off-season.

Hollis will return to the E2 ranks in 2012, with KTM spreading its attack to the E1 (Burrell) and Price (E3) ranks.

Price is also a former AORC champion, as is AJ Roberts (E2), who has begun a new collaboration with Yamaha alongside Bewley (E2) and Josh Green (E1).

Bewley is a man on a mission. Despite coming close to winning the AORC on a few occasions, the major trophy has eluded him so far. His return to Yamaha has reenergised the 25-year-old New South Welshman and his early season form has been impressive.

Meanwhile, Yamaha's long-time Geoff-Ballard squad will feature Merriman (E3), Phillips (E2) and Daniel Milner (E1).

Phillips was a revelation in 2011 – and not just locally. As well as shaking up the AORC regulars, he stunned the establishment at the ISDE (International Six day Event) where he was in contention for an outright podium finish before he had some issues on the final day. Still, Phillips is a man to watch and with some pre-season training and riding in the US, he is primed to take the next step in his racing career.

Classes at Dungog will also be held for women, juniors, experts, veterans, masters and club riders.

For more information on the championship, visit www.ma.org.au/index.php?id=1415.

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