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[**YOKOHAMA’s**](http://www.yokohamatire.com/) **Formula Drift Title Defence Begins at Long Beach, April 4-5**

2013 Champion Michael Essa, along with Kuniaki Takahashi and Ryan Kado, will compete on ADVAN Neova AD08R tyres

FULLERTON, CA (April 2, 2014) – The 2014 Formula Drift season starts April 4-5 in Long Beach, California, and [Yokohama Tire Corporation](http://www.yokohamatire.com/) (YTC) is ready to defend its title with reigning champion Michael Essa. YOKOHAMA and Essa captured the 2013 Formula D crown on [ADVAN Neova AD08R](http://www.yokohamatire.com/tires/detail/advan_neova_ad08_r) tyres.

Essa will be piloting the Essa Autosport BMW E46 M3 on a segment of the Long Beach Grand Prix street course. YOKOHAMA is also partnering with D1 veteran Kuniaki Takahashi in his A’PEXi Lexus SC430, as well as up-and-coming Ryan Kado in his Gryphon AutoLab Nissan 350Z.

“We have an extremely talented line-up this season,” said Matt Johnson, Yokohama Tire Corporation´s performance marketing supervisor. “Essa is looking to repeat, Takahashi brings a wealth of drifting experience to the YOKOHAMA team and Kado is a definite name to watch.”

In addition, all three YOKOHAMA-sponsored teams are scheduled to participate in the Motegi Racing Super Drift Challenge during the Long Beach Grand Prix weekend, April 10-11.  The cars will compete under the lights on Friday and Saturday evening and be on display throughout the weekend.

“Formula Drift is a very competitive series and the capabilities of the AD08 R tyres are a key component for success,” said Johnson. “It’s a world-class extreme performance summer tyre and utilizes our breakthrough orange oil compound, found both in our ADVAN ENV-R2™ race slick and consumer tyre products.”

Yokohama Tire Corporation is the North American manufacturing and marketing arm of Tokyo, Japan-based The Yokohama Rubber Co., Ltd., a global manufacturing and sales company of premium tyres since 1917. Servicing a network of more than 4,500 points of sale in the U.S., Yokohama Tire Corporation is a leader in technology and innovation. The company’s complete product line includes tyres for high-performance, light truck, passenger car, commercial truck and bus, and off-the-road mining and construction applications. For more information on Yokohama’s extensive product line, visit [www.yokohamatire.com](http://www.yokohamatire.com).