

Issy-Les Moulineaux, 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2007.

## SEASON KICK-OFF

The Paris-Nice 'rendez-vous' is a sort of kick-off to the season for the elite cycling pack. Since 1933, the 'race to the sun' has become the first major stage race of the professional circuit. For the ambitious, the famous diagonal that will this year for the first time head round the Massif Central mountains by the western side, is more than just a preparation and one will need to be at his best on a demanding course.

On the eight days of racing, the riders will have to deal with a digest of difficulties that they will witness throughout the year. With weather conditions that can be rough, the first three stages often made for sprinters, will however give attacking riders the opportunity to outsmart the team strategies. On these stages, the "Boonen Boys" who have already prepared themselves during the Tour of Qatar, will need to give all they have to control all solo efforts and allow their leader to head back home with a harvest of successes as satisfying as in 2006 (three stage victories).

The stage profiles will probably favour attacking riders and climbers during the second part of the week, especially with the demanding climb before the finish in Mende. The hill heading to the airport, renamed 'Montée Laurent Jalabert' since the Frenchman's win in 1995, will be covered for the first time in the Paris-Nice race. At that stage of the race, the contenders for final overall victory will be known. Cyril Dessel, the best placed French rider of the last Tour de France, could be among the favourites. Two stages will still remain with a series of relentless climbs (Bourrigaille, Tanneron, La Turbie and to finish the Col D'Eze), to decide on the hierarchy or make a difference during the last weekend.

### The program of stages

**Sunday 11th of March:** Issy-les-Moulineaux (Prologue, ind. TT, 4.7 km)

**Monday 12th of March:** Cloyes-sur-le-Loir – Buzançais (186 km)

**Tuesday 13th of March:** Vatan – Limoges (177 km)

**Wednesday 14th of March:** Limoges – Maurs (215.5 km)

**Thursday 15th of March:** Maurs – Mende (169.5 km)

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> of March:** Sorgues – Manosque (178 km)

**Saturday 17th of March:** Brignoles – Cannes (200 km)

**Sunday 18th of March:** Nice – Nice (129.5 km)

### The starting teams

**Germany:** Gerolsteiner (GST), T-Mobile Team (TMO)

**Belgium:** Predictor-Lotto (PRL), Quick Step – Innergetic (QSI)

**Denmark:** Team CSC (CSC)

**France:** AG2R Prevoyance (A2R), Bouygues Telecom (BTL), Cofidis le crédit par téléphone (COF), Crédit Agricole (C.A), Française des Jeux (FDJ), Agritubel (AGR)

**Spain:** Caisse d'Epargne (GCE), Euskaltel-Euskadi (EUS), Saunier Duval – Prodir (SDV)

**United States:** Discovery Channel Pro Cycling Team (DSC)

**Italy:** Lampre-Fondital (LAM), Liquigas (LIQ), Team Milram (MRM)

**Netherlands:** Rabobank (RAB)

**Switzerland:** Astana (AST)

#### Press Contact

Matthieu Desplats

[mdesplats@aso.fr](mailto:mdesplats@aso.fr) / 00 33 (0)6 75 37 11 03