

Issy-les-Moulineaux, 22nd of October 2008

TOUR 2009: THE VENTOUX 24 HOURS BEFORE THE CHAMPS-ELYSÉES

The kick-off of the 96th edition of the Tour de France was symbolically given through the announcement of the course by Christian Prudhomme, at the Palais des Congrès of Paris, in the presence of Prince Albert II of Monaco, the 'Grand Départ' of the 2009 Tour taking place in the Principality. After the international stature of London in 2007, the heart of cycling's roots at Brest in 2008, the riders will look for their energy and inspiration next July in the prestige of Monaco.

The balance of difficulties, the choice of the climbs and the position in the course of each stage, are part of the elements that directly condition the confrontation between the champions. By deciding to spread the mountain stages on over two weeks, the teams of the Tour guarantee an intense battle to the fans until the penultimate day. From the finish at the Andorran resort of Arcalis, Friday the 11th of July to the fearsome climb up the Mont Ventoux, on the eve of the finish in Paris, the yellow jersey could change shoulders on numerous occasions.

To soften the "bonus to the time-trial specialists", the format of stages competed against the clock was thought over. The total of 55 kilometres covered during individual time-trials will be one of the smallest since the systematic introduction of the solitary effort in 1947. The 2009 Tour will also be marked by the return of the team time-trial absent since the 2005 edition.

A showcase of the French territory, the Tour is also keen to help discover the variety of landscapes throughout the country. This year, the theme of the sea will have a key role with the visits of three great lighthouses of the Mediterranean Sea: Monaco, Marseille and Barcelona. The itinerary designed in a clockwise way, will then lead the pack to the Pyrenees, go upwards towards the centre of France then the Vosges and the Alps before a decisive bend to the Giant of Provence.

Discover the course of the 2009 Tour de France and Christian Prudhomme's commentary at www.letour.fr

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