

Issy-les-Moulineaux, 14th of January 2008

## BOONEN ON HIS SOIL

The roads of Qatar are now used to the regular parade of World elite's cycling pack at the beginning of the year. Favourable for long efforts and covering kilometres, the Tour of Qatar mainly offers the champions the possibility to put a finishing touch to their preparation with the rhythm and intensity of competitions that they will witness in the months to come. The long straights that favour massive bunched sprints are perfect terrain for the finish specialists. Tom Boonen regularly chooses to give a tone to his season in the Middle-East: his four stage victories in 2007 had indeed allowed him to validate his tactical choices developed with his team mates and test out his speed. For 2008, the former Belgian World Champion will again try to prove his lead over the 'remaining part of the World' on the record book of the Tour of Qatar. With a total of 11 stage successes, the green jersey of last year's Tour de France will want to carry on impressing!

In the pack that will be travelling up and down the country from the 27th of January to the 1st of February, Boonen and his men including the likes of Cretskens, winner of last year's golden jersey, will have to keep a close eye on dangerous candidates starting with compatriots Hoste, Van Avermaet (SIL) or Eeckhout (TSV). But the threat could also come from France - Engoulvent (C.A), Geslin or Voeckler (BTL) - or Italy - Napolitano, Righi (LAM), Chicchi (LIQ) -. In a discipline where its representatives have often triumphed, the Australians who will be sending on Qatari soil a team of promising riders will be carefully watched, especially possible upcoming star Mitch Docker. Finally it'll be time for the first competition kilometres for the members of new team Slip Stream. For the occasion, Julian Dean, Magnus Backstedt and David Millar will be present under their new colours.

In a previous edition of this press release we omitted to inform you of the participation of the BMC team with the promising Swiss rider, Martin Kholer, stage winner in the last Tour de l'Avenir.

## THE 17 TEAMS AND THEIR FAVOURITES

### **Australia**

*Drapac – Porsche* : Docker, Bates (Aus)

### **Belgium**

*TopSport Vlaanderen* : Eeckhout (Bel)

*Quick Step* : Boonen, Cretskens (Bel)

*Silence – Lotto* : Van Avermaet, Hoste (Bel),

Tjallingii (Hol)

### **Spain**

*Saunier Duval* : Passeron (Fra), Belhovosciks (Let)

### **United-States**

*BMC Racing Team* : Cruz (Usa), Kholer (Sui)

*Slipstream Chipotle* : Dean (Nzl), Backstedt (Sue),

Millar (Gbr)

### **France**

*Bouygues Telecom* : Geslin, Voeckler, Gaudin (Fra)

*Crédit Agricole* : Engoulvent, Bonnet (Fra)

*Cofidis* : Nuyens (Bel), Hoj (Dan)

### **Iran**

*Iran Cycling Federation* : team not known yet

### **Italy**

*Lampre – Fondital* : Napolitano, Righi (Ita)

*Liquigas* : Chicchi, Trenti (Ita)

*Team Milram* : Knees, R.Grabsch (All)

### **Netherlands**

*Skill – Shimano* : Rooijackers (Hol), Siedler (All)

### **Qatar**

*Doha Team* : Chtioui (Tun)

### **Russia**

*Tinkoff Credit Systems* : Loddo (Ita)

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