

Thursday, 13 December 2007

UNISA TO RACE IN 2008 TOUR DOWN UNDER

The Australian national cycling team has been granted special permission to race in the Tour Down Under when it becomes the first ever UCI ProTour race to be held outside of Europe next year.

The Union Cycliste Internationale's ProTour Council has amended its race regulations, at the request of the South Australian Government, to allow participation of the national team in 2008.

The rule relaxation will allow the national team of a race organiser's country to take part in UCI ProTour events, for the first time in the history of the series.

Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says it's a great achievement for the Australian national team – known fondly as the UniSA team – which attracts a huge local following.

“The UniSA team has been a much-loved part of the Tour Down Under for many years and I'm absolutely delighted that they can continue to race in 2008,” Dr Lomax-Smith says.

“We have been lobbying the UCI since learning of the Tour Down Under's status elevation and it's great that they have responded so positively to our historic request.

“This is yet another way the Tour Down Under is helping to reshape the face of world cycling.”

The UCI ProTour Council announced in September this year that it would expand its ProTour series outside of Europe to include the Tour Down Under – in 2008, a year sooner than planned.

News followed last month that the race was guaranteed for the next four years, bringing the world's best cycling teams to South Australia and taking images of the State around the world.

UniSA Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Høj says the change in regulations by the UCI ProTour Council is the news that all team UniSA cycling supporters have been waiting to hear.

“The Tour Down Under continues to be a great match for the University and we are extremely proud to continue to be part of this fantastic event,” Professor Høj says

“There is something for everyone – it is international, youthful, family-focused, has strong links with the community and promotes good health and wellbeing.

“It has been a great team effort at the University and a culture-building event for staff and friends of UniSA.”

The University of South Australia has been a major sponsor of the Tour Down Under since 2001.

“We are looking forward to continuing a long and rewarding relationship with the Tour Down Under through the sponsorship of the Australian national team,” Professor Høj says.

National selectors from Cycling Australia will select the full UniSA Australian National Team rider line up over the coming week.

The UCI ProTour 2008 Tour Down Under will be staged 22 – 27 January 2008, with the Down Under Classic being held on Sunday 20 January 2008 at Glenelg.

For more information vvisit the official website at www.tourdownunder.com.au