

Euronews – Tour Time Again – Riders Sign Charter - Petacchi In Trouble – Obree Film

Subject to further intra-sport disputes, terrorist attacks and Acts of God, The Tour de France will start in Londres (London) Royaume Uni (UK) on July 7th at 11.50 SBS time. (Generally add 20 minutes for fillers and ads). The Prologue will start at Whitehall and finish almost on the steps of Buck House. SBS will provide daily coverage from 10.30pm (some days earlier than this) an update at 7.20am and a highlights package at 6.00pm. This is the biggest SBS coverage ever and if you've looked at their lacklustre June schedule they have obviously had to make big savings to afford it. So long as everyone remembers to take off their testosterone patches before falling asleep, it should be a great Tour with several riders in with a chance – what a change from the **Lance Armstrong** era. These include two Australians **Cadel Evans** (Predictor-Lotto) and **Michael Rogers**(T-Mobile). If there is any favourite it is **Alexander Vinoukourov**(Astana) but he is not a sensational climber so if he has suddenly acquired mountain goat abilities the cynics' tongues will be wagging again. The UCI has asked all riders to sign a charter in which they declare themselves clean of doping products, promise to give their DNA to the Operation Puerto investigation and agree to give up a year's salary in addition to any other penalties if found to have tested positive for illegal doping products. Riders who refuse to sign will not be permitted to start in the Tour de France and their names will be published on the UCI website. **Mark Cavendish**(T-Mobile) and **Sandy Casar**(FDJ) flanked UCI President **Pat McQuaid** for the first signing photo-op. **Alessandro Petacchi**(Milram) who was back in vintage form at the Giro may miss the Tour if he cannot convince the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) that he did not overuse his Ventolin puffer on the May 23rd stage. Petacchi, an asthmatic, has a dispensation for Salbutamol but tested way over his prescribed limit. He has already been suspended by Milram who were facing the Tour without another sprinter **Eric Zabel** after his admission of EPO use. Petacchi is also tied up in another CONI investigation centred on **Dr Carlo Santuccioni** and evidence from the 2004 Giro which allegedly implicates this years winner **Danilo Di Luca**(Liquigas) and **Eddy Mazzoleni**(Astana). The Carabinieri's special drugs commandos raided the 2004 Giro twice targeting Dr Santuccioni's clients which include several other leading Italian riders. After all the problems confronting cycle sport at the moment it's almost a relief to turn to the release of a film, *The Flying Scotsman*, that starts with an attempted suicide. The film is about the eccentric Scottish pursuiter and hour record holder **Graeme Obree** who astounded the world by breaking Francesco Moser's nine year old hour record with his tuck position then, when that was banned, came up with the superman position. Obree swapped the world hour record with **Chris Boardman** until the latter put it on the shelf and then the UCI banned the use of all funny bikes. If you do get to see the film, be prepared for a non-authentic rainbow jersey. Presumably the UCI withheld permission for a realistic touch.