

McDonald Dune-Up 2008 flagged off

MUSCAT McDonald Dune-Up 2008, a 'sport with a difference', was flagged off on Saturday.

The six-day event, hosted by the Sultanate for the first time, promises a thrilling, entertaining journey for all the 23 participants.

Addressing a press conference, Stefanie Trier, organiser of the event, said that participants from Germany, England, Switzerland and Holland will explore the country on bicycle on the gravel tracks from Wadi Bani Awf, through the fascinating landscape of the Jebel Shams, and Jebel Akhdar area through canyons, along water ways and

across wadis.

Dune-up is an extreme event which covers a 100km mountain bicycle trial to an altitude of 2200m at Jebel Shams and a 110km run through the barren wilderness of the Wahiba sands over a period of four days.

"Sand, extreme heat, wind and the uncertainty about which track to take, all these serve to take the athletes to the utmost limits," Trier added.

"This event contains both the sports and tourism elements. Physical fitness for sports and exploring Oman in the form of tourism," said Ali Daud, president of the McDonald, adding that the

company is proud to be the sponsor of the event.

Hilal Ali Al Sinani, Secretary General of the Oman Olympic Committee, pepped up the participants with encouraging words.

The next big task for the athletes is to run on the Wahiba sands and deserts from the highway at Shiraykhah, followed by Raha Camp, close to Al Mintirib.

There would be back-up cars to transport the participants who are unable to bear up the stress and strain.

The participants, who complete the whole distance, will receive the McDonald Dune-up 2008 medals. Recognised by the International Ultra Triathlon Athletics (IUTA), Dune-up is slowly becoming popular world over.

The next big event will be held in China under the theme 'Run the Wall'.

The present world champion Susanne Beisenherz of Germany looked confident of repeating her feat here again.

