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tain bike trail that rises to an altitude of 2,200 metres on Jabal Shams, followed by a gruelling 120 km run through the barren wilderness of the Rimal al Sharqiya Sands — a punishing feat that must be undertaken over a period of three days.

Significantly, the 'bike and run' combination is the equivalent of about three marathons all together," says Trier. "Although the McDonald's Dune-up is not considered to be a race, it makes high demands

on both physical and mental stamina. Sand, extreme heat, wind and the uncertainty about which track to follow, all serve to take the athletes to the utmost limits of their abilities."

Following a reconnaissance visit made earlier this year, the organisers have identified a track for the 'Mountain Bike Altitude' event. The trail runs along gravel tracks from Wadi Bani Awf in Wilayat Rustaq through the delightful landscapes of Jabal Shams and Al Jabal al Akhdar via a series of canyons and wadis.

Dune-Up 2008 is an extreme sports "bike-and-run" event involving a mix of gravel, mountain and desert tracks covering hundreds of kilometres through the Interior and Sharqiyah regions of Oman



Top endurance athletes from Europe, as well as Oman, will take part

The track for the Rimal al Sharqiya Sands endurance event starts from the highway at Shiraykha, veers east and then north to the Raha Camp near Al Mintirib. Starting with firm soil, the track gradually softens underfoot and ends in dune country, making progress harder for the athletes

with every kilometre.

Endurance skills

A number of European marathon and endurance runners have already signed up to participate in the event. Also expected to enlist are several Omanis and expatriate resi-

dents. Anyone between 18 and 60 years can sign up for the endurance run as long as he or she is fit and has sufficient experience in marathons or half marathons, says Trier.

Headlining the event is one of Europe's most famous endurance stars: Susanne Beisenherz. Thirty-five-year-

old Susanne has amassed a hoard of world records and championship trophies over the past six years. She was the 2007 World Champion in the Double and Triple Iron events — a race which covers 11.4 km of swimming, 154 km on a bike and 126 km of running. She is also the winner of the RAK



Susanne Beisenherz, one of Europe's best-known endurance athletes, who will be taking part in Dune-Up Oman 2008