

Lesotho Cycling Association
04/05/2010



Proposal for

Tour de Lesotho

Cycle Race

Africa's Toughest Cycle Race



I. Summary

- This proposal seeks to outline the steps Lesotho Cycling Association wants to take in order to reinstate the Tour de Lesotho as Africa's toughest cycle race. The race has not materialized since 2006.
- The reinstatement of the Tour de Lesotho race will have great benefits to local cyclists, businesses and to the awareness of Lesotho as a tourist destination.
- The Tour de Lesotho is planned to be reinstated in 4 phases, starting from a position that is easily achieved and building it to a true international race, which is a higher level than it was in the past.
- The proposal is flexible enough to allow the Tour de Lesotho race to cover other areas of the country, which have not yet had much exposure to cycling as a sport.
- We plan to start immediately, working towards a pro-level race in 2011 and an international race from 2012 or 2013.

II. Introduction

The Tour de Lesotho means a lot to Basotho cyclists. It has always been the focus of the cycling year and an event to train hard for. The loss of the race for the past 4 years has been devastating on the morale of cyclists.

The Tour de Lesotho takes its name from the prestigious Tour de France race, which stands head-and-shoulders above all others as the greatest cycling race in the world. Our race may never reach such heights but for many of the local riders who dare to challenge and conquer the race, it will remain as their greatest cycling achievement.

From the years 2000 to 2006, the Tour de Lesotho was an annual race, very popular with South African pro-level riders as well as so called 'fun riders'. For many of these 'tourists' this was also the highlight of their year – a chance to challenge some of the highest tarred roads in Africa.

The reinstatement of this race will have profound benefits to the state of local cycling, giving our cyclists a chance to rub shoulders with riders of a very high pedigree and to check how they shape up against such competition. The race also has potential to gain ranking points towards Olympic and World qualifying.

The race will also have a benefit on the local economy, raising awareness to what Lesotho can offer as a sporting/ tourism destination.

People from inside and outside the country have long been asking; "What is happening about the Tour de Lesotho? When will it be back?" Well Lesotho cycling Association plans to start right away and with the backing of partners and sponsors, this dream will soon become a reality.

III. Motivation

- **New Deal.** Lesotho Cycling Association has mandated the Executive Committee with a 'New Deal' policy in its approach to the co-ordination and management of cycling in Lesotho. Two of the key points of this policy are: -
 - Maximizing the potential of resources that are already available to us.
 - Ensuring that as many of our members as possible benefit from our planned activities.

Both these key points are satisfied by the re-instatement of the Tour de Lesotho. A top-class cycling race held here in our own country and open to all interested cyclists.

- **Hungry Cyclists.** The Tour de Lesotho was an annual race from 2000 until 2006. It built up a reputation as the pinnacle event for local riders and also the ultimate challenge for riders from outside. Since 2006, riders have become very hungry for such an event to aim for. The absence of this race has been very frustrating and demoralizing for cyclists in Lesotho.

Riders from outside of Lesotho are also hungry for the return of Tour de Lesotho. SA pro riders, 'fun riders' and also officials have lamented the absence of the race and encourage Lesotho Cycling Association to try by all means to reinstate it. There is a market of cycling enthusiasts ready to challenge this race and bring income into our nation.

- **UCI points/ ranking.** The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) is the international federation for cycling, of which Lesotho Cycling Association is a member. Riders and nations are ranked according to performances in internationally accredited races. Most of the top-ranked African riders are from North Africa because this is where most of the African international races are held, especially in former French colonies. North Africans scoop up their local races and gain many points putting them in pole position for qualification to World Championships and Olympic Games. An international race in Lesotho would provide a platform for our athletes to gain points and launch them up the African rankings.
- **Lesotho economy.** As previously stated, there is a ready market of cycling enthusiasts to challenge this race and bring income into our nation. The Lesotho Government Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of 2004 identified the Tour de Lesotho (Maseru-Mohale) bicycle race as a national event worthy of strengthening to increase awareness of the Lesotho brand¹. Lesotho is a beautiful country and combining the experience with one of South Africa's favourite sports is a winning combination for the increase of tourism in the country.

IV. Objectives

1. That the Tour de Lesotho Cycle Race grow to be recognized as the toughest cycle race in Africa.
2. That using the Tour de Lesotho Cycle Race as a stepping stone, local riders will rank amongst the top riders in Africa.
3. To increase awareness of Lesotho as an ideal sporting and tourism destination and thereby increase economic benefits to the country.
4. To give our sponsors the greatest possible exposure to cycle enthusiasts from inside and outside the country.

¹ http://www.lesotho.gov.ls/documents/PRSP_Final.pdf chapter 4 page 21

V. Strategies

- We need to start small with the resources that are easily at hand and build up steadily increasing capacity within our association and forging good relations with sponsors: -
 - Organising such a big race will at some stage become a full-time job for months leading up to the race. We need to identify prospective organizers with a capacity to learn and to handle such a big event. Preferably such organizers should be Basotho, or experienced South Africans willing to hand over to Basotho at a later stage.
 - Keeping up good relations with sponsors is important to ensure quality growth of the event. Being aware of sponsors' exposure is key to this. The race may be varied according to start/ finish points or routes in order to maximize sponsor exposure.
 - For examples: Starting or finishing the race outside, or changing a route to pass by a sponsor's place of business.
 - The race should also be expanded to include other areas of the country, thus exposing sponsors and also inspiring future stars to take up the sport.
 - One idea is to eventually have a Tour de Lesotho Series of races at different times in the year, challenging the toughest mountain passes in the country eg.
 - Maseru-Mohale,
 - Hlotse – Katse,
 - Butha-Buthe – Mokhotlong
 - Quthing – Mphaki/ Qacha's Nek
- To reinstate the race in the 4 phases outlined below.

VI. Implementation

- **Phase 1 - A 'Test run' using resources already at hand. 1st half of 2010.**
 - We will utilize government funds available to us through our LSRC allocation. Also we will seek modest sponsorships for prizes.
 - We have a network of clubs with cyclists of all ability. We will motivate clubs to make this test run a success.
 - We will also approach expatriate cyclists in the country to race.
 - We anticipate up to 50 riders competing.
 - This race will provide in-house training for officials.
 - We will engage the media to understand that this is the start of something bigger for the future.
- **Phase 2 – Building on Phase 1 with a club-level second race inviting neighbouring clubs from South Africa. 2nd half of 2010.**

- We already have contacts with clubs and officials in Free State, who have expressed a desire to see the reinstatement of Tour de Lesotho. We will approach them about joining with us in this second race building towards the real thing.
 - We will need to engage bigger sponsors.
 - Media coverage will be escalated and this will have the feel of an international race due to the proportion of Free State riders competing.
 - The riders from outside will have a positive benefit to the tourism industry.
 - We plan to work together with very experienced officials/ judges from Free State bring an opportunity for on-the-job training for our officials.
 - This event, 50 -100 riders, will help to gauge our readiness for a bigger event.
- **Phase 3 – Reinstatement of Tour de Lesotho at the previous level as a pro-level race in the SADC region. Target = 2011**
 - Major sponsors will be sourced for this event, which will run with a budget in excess of 100,000. The exposure for sponsors will be over a wider audience.
 - The Tour de Lesotho is already recognized as one of Africa's toughest cycle races to SA pro- riders and 'fun riders'. This reputation will be a drawing card for entries. However, in order to draw top pro-level cyclists we will need to offer competitive prize money.
 - The influx of cycling enthusiasts will have a positive benefit to the local economy, especially in the tourism sector.
 - At this stage, we will work hand-in-hand with experienced officials from SA, gaining on-the-job training for our own officials. Year-by-year the reliance on SA officials will diminish in favour of greater roles for our own officials.
 - Up to 300 riders may be expected.
 - Phase 3 may be reached fairly quickly, but we may need to gain a few years of experience at this level before moving on to Phase 4.
 - **Phase 4 – Realising new heights, an internationally accredited race, drawing cycle enthusiasts from all over the world. Target 2012/ 2013**
 - The UCI Africa Tour allows member federations of UCI to stage internationally accredited cycling events in their own countries. These races must follow strict guidelines.
 - The UCI Africa Tour races award points for results in races, which later count towards international rankings and qualification for Olympic/ World championships.
 - This international event will provide the highest level exposure and experience for athletes to reach their full potential.

- UCI Africa Tour uses internationally accredited officials in conjunction with local officials. This will provide our officials with capacity to improve their level until they have reached the required international level.
- Events such as the 'Roof of Africa' motorcycle race have shown that the challenge posed by Lesotho's terrain is a great drawing card even for competitors as far away as Europe, Australia and the Americas.

VII. Budget

- Phase 1 – approximately M10,000
- Phase 2 – approximately M20,000
- Phase 3 – approximately M250,000 per annum
- Phase 4 – approximately M1,000,000 per annum

VIII. Endorsements

- Affiliations: Lesotho Cycling Association is affiliated to: -
 - Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)
 - Lesotho Sports & Recreation Commission (LSRC)
 - Lesotho National Olympic Committee (LNOC)
- References: Lesotho Cycling Association has worked well with the following sponsors.
 - Letseng Diamonds
 - Nedbank Lesotho
 - Telecom Lesotho

IX. Contact Details

- Please see our website for more information about us :
<http://www.lesothocycling.org.ls/>
- Lesotho Cycling Association may be contacted on the following: -
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Signed on behalf of Lesotho Cycling Association:

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