

# WATT A HEADLINE

## Olympic cyclist to compete at Coleraine

BY NATHAN ANDERSON

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OLYMPIC Gold medallist Kathy Watt and champion cyclists Sean Finning and Tim Decker will headline this weekend's Tour of Southern Grampians Cycle Tour.

More than 250 riders have registered for the event, which is being held for the fourth time this weekend.

New road routes this year will again challenge riders on the hills around Coleraine, plus time trials and the criterium will also offer gruelling action based on the township circuits.

The 2007 Australian National Road Race champion, Darren Laphorne, will be closely watched, with 2005 winner Mark O'Brien and 2006 winner Jason Hegert, both returning to defend their honour.

Three professional teams will be represented – Drapac-Porsche, and VIS, with Savings and Loans riders also riding but individually registered.

Ten riders have made the Honour Roll – having lined up for all three previous tours, and the majority of these are returning for further punishment.

Brendan Schulz, of Hamilton, leads the list of the 10 Hamilton club members registered so far, and will attract the interest of local spectators.

All races will begin from the Community Parklands adjacent the old Railway Station Tourist Centre, McConochie St Coleraine. On Saturday, stage one begins from 8.30am onwards and stage two starts from 2pm. Both these races will have a finish line up on the high plateau south of Coleraine, on the Coleraine-Merino Rd – the hill climb up to the finish will be the final sorter.

On Sunday, stage three starts from 8am, and the street circuit criterium begins at 12.30. Both these races finish at the Community Parklands.

Spectators should note these start times and be in place, as road access will be limited, particularly for the criterium.

Competitor Paul Bosch, of Coleraine, said the standard of racing was expected to be high, with an excellent field lined up for the four events, to be held over two days.

The event was good for the town, with most accommodation in Hamilton, Coleraine and Wannon booked out.

"We've billeted quiet a few out in Coleraine, about 45 beds, and all local accommodation is booked out. Hamilton and Wannon (accommodation places) have been inundated."

Southern Grampians Shire's tourism and development manager, Tim Neeson, said the event was a good opportunity to promote Coleraine and the region.

"It's terrific because there are over 250 riders coming and many of them are from out of the shire," he said.

"They certainly get a great opportunity to see what's around Coleraine.

"It's one of the events which has grown and grown and grown."

Mr Neeson said many of the riders would bring their families back to the region after sampling the area during the two-day event.

"It brings people here for the cycling and we hope they can come back (to the Shire) later on."

Southern Grampians Councillor, Coralie Coulson, of Coleraine, said this year's event should be a huge success.

"This event has been supported by Southern Grampians Shire Council under the Events Funding policy, and has grown each year, with riders this year from as distant as Cairns, coming to be punished on the hills of Coleraine," she said.

"Special meals on the Saturday night will be provided for the riders at the Coleraine Bowling Club and local hotels are also open to the public, so if you would like to 'mix it' with the riders, make sure you stay on in town for Saturday evening."

For more information see the race website at [www.colerainetour.com](http://www.colerainetour.com).



HAMILTON Cycling Club members Dean McLaren (left) and Paul Bosch are set for this weekend's Tour of the Southern Grampians Cycle Tour, which takes in some of the spectacular hills around Coleraine.

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