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Sports-Cycling (LTdL)

DE NARDI DUO OUT TO SPRING A FEW SURPRISES

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 1 (Bernama) -- Former Mapei Quick-Step's Charly Wegelius, who finished a creditable 14th overall last year and Andrus Aug will spearhead De Nardi-Colpack in their debut at the Telekom Malaysia's Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL) 2003.

Wegelius, who is a notable climber, brings along a wealth of experience to the Slovakian team who are made up of riders from four nations for the 8th edition of the LTdL which starts Jan 31.

The trade two outfit, to be managed by Antonio Bevilacqua, were formed following the merger of teams De Nardi-Montegrappa and Astro-Colpack.

De Nardi Montegrappa finished 9th overall in the 2002 LTdL while Astro Colpack ended theirs in the 19th spot.

Apart from aiming for a good outing in the climbs stage at Genting Highlands, the 25-year-old Wegelius will be going all out to stake his claim in the time-trial event.

In the presence of some of the world's best sprinters, Wegelius managed to place himself 8th in last year's race against the clock in Putrajaya.

His other notable result last year was claiming third spot in Stage 4 of Tour de Suisse.

"Apart from Wegelius, De Nardi will also be aiming for some stage wins with Estonian rider Andrus Aug, who has had a fruitful season with De Nardi last year, taking up the task as the team's sprinter".

LTdL's organiser, First Cartel, said this in a statement here today.

Despite joining the professional ranks at the relatively late age of 28, Aug had so far accumulated a total of 14 victories, some of it coming from top-rank races.

Aug's major achievements last year include stage wins in the Grand Premio Nobili Rubinetterie (ranked 1.3), Trophy Porec (1.5), Sprints Competition in Settimana Ciclista Lombarda (2.3), Tour of Poland (2.2), Peace Race (2.2), Course de la Solidarite Olympique (2.3), Tour of Slovakia (2.5) and Croatia's Jadranska Magistrala (2.5).

A total of 154 riders from 22 teams are expected to see action in the 8th edition of the LTdL which covers a distance of 1,343km.

The LTdL starts off Jan 31 with the individual time-trial event which takes riders on a 9.5km journey on Langkawi.

LTdL, held under the patronage of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, is sanctioned by the sport's international body UCI, Asian Cycling Confederation (ACC) and Malaysian National Cycling Federation (MNCF).

-- BERNAMA

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