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Attention Sports Editors

Bewley aims to go out in style in PowerNet Tour of Southland

Rotorua cyclist Sam Bewley wants to go out in style when he tackles the 53rd edition of the PowerNet Tour of Southland starting tomorrow (Monday).

Bewley, part of the medal winning team pursuit at the Beijing Olympics, will join Lance Armstrong's new Radio Shack pro tour team in the New Year, ruling him ineligible for the country's premier road tour.

The 22-year-old is a key member of the powerful Zookeepers combination, one of a record 25 teams to line-up for the six-day tour which starts with a prologue in Invercargill.

Bewley believes he is in better shape than last year's Tour of Southland but does not consider himself as a candidate for general classification honours. His goal is to support fellow Olympian Glen Chadwick and powerful US-based kiwi Heath Blackgrove.

"Both Heath and Glen are in great shape and will be really strong this year. So my job is to help them and look after them," Bewley said.

"Of course I'd love to win a stage this year and I will be giving it everything. For the next two years, at least, while I am with a Pro Team it will mean that I won't be able to race in a 2.2 UCI tour like Southland which will be a pity.

"But it will make me more determined to do well this week."

Bewley reckons that he is motivated to ride well, despite a long season.

"I had eight days off after the world championships but aside from that I have pretty much ridden through. I don't feel jaded at all though. I am naturally excited and motivated about next year.

"I am not in my best shape right now but I am ok. I will definitely be looking for the opportunity to get a stage win if I can.

"The conditions are the key. It is likely to blow pretty hard and it can create opportunities for a breakaway. I will need to be attentive to those opportunities to get away in a small break. That will be my best chance."

Bewley won't have much time to rest on his laurels, moving from the Tour of Southland to the Oceania track championships in Invercargill next week and the UCI World Cup in Melbourne, before joining Radio Shack in January.

"I am already nervous about that. It's so exciting to think I am going to be training with Lance Armstrong and racing against the best in the world."

First he has to contend with 125 riders, including 35 from overseas, in the Tour of Southland with the field including defending champion Hayden Roulston (ColourPlus), former winner Gordon McCauley (Subway Avanti), Jeremy Vennell (Team Bissell) and American Floyd Landis (cyclingnzshop.com-Biosport), the initial 2006 Tour de France winner who was dethroned on a doping infraction and returned to racing this year in USA after serving a two-year ban.

Tomorrow first day includes a prologue around Queens Park in Invercargill before the 82km stage to the top of Bluff Hill in the afternoon.

Full information: www.tourofsouthland.com

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Who is PowerNet?

For nearly 100 years the owners of the PowerNet managed networks have provided a safe, efficient and reliable electricity distribution network to the people of the lower South Island. PowerNet was established in 1994 by network owners Electricity Invercargill Limited and The Power Company Limited to develop, manage and maintain their electricity network assets in Invercargill and Southland.

PowerNet provides the same services in North, South and East Otago on behalf of OtagoNet Joint Venture; in Stewart Island on behalf of the Southland District Council; and in the Frankton area of Queenstown on behalf of Electricity Southland Limited. PowerNet is the equivalent of the fourth largest network company in New Zealand, delivering electricity to around 65,000 consumers.