

Wednesday, July 11, 2007



An historic moment in sporting history

By **BEN WELCH**
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GREENWICH was awash with cycling fans at the weekend as millions turned out to watch the capital's first ever Grand Départ of the Tour de France.

It has been estimated that more than two million people visited London to see 189 of the world's top cyclists begin three weeks of racing.

Riders set off from The Mall in central London and finished in Canterbury. On the way they travelled 11 km through the borough of Greenwich, entering at Deptford and

leaving at Abbey Wood.

They passed through Charlton and rode close to the Greenwich Peninsula and The O2, before speeding on to pass the Woolwich Ferry and the Royal Arsenal.

The race continues into Belgium and finishes on Sunday, July 29, where the riders will cross the finish line at the Champs Elysées in Paris.

To celebrate the Grand Départ Greenwich Council hosted "Greenwich en Fête" – an all-day street carnival in Greenwich town centre.

The event included street performers and an open air picnic, all with a distinct French flavour.

There was also a giant screen in the Cutty Sark Gardens which broadcast live coverage of the race.

Greenwich Council deputy leader Peter Brooks said: "The arrival of the

Tour de France was a unique moment for Greenwich, and we were very proud to support such an important sporting event."

Following a nail-biting prologue on Saturday won by Fabian Cancellara, more than one million spectators lined the 203 km stage one route to watch the riders speed through a picturesque countryside on their way from London to Canterbury for the end of stage one.

The arrival of the Tour de France is expected to have generated more than £115 million worth of economic benefit to the region, and promoted the capital to a worldwide audience of two billion.

This weekend London also hosted the Live Earth concert at Wembley stadium and the Wimbledon finals.

THE papers are full of the recent failed terrorist attacks.

The same questions about security and integration have been raised, the same people are dispensing the same advice, and the same community is being vilified.

I read a letter in a popular paper last week asking why the Muslim community were not more vocal in their disgust and disappointment of the recent developments.

My question is: how can they do this? How does the average Muslim person sitting at home voice his or her opinion? Sure, they can write a letter to a national but, more than likely, they will be deemed as a lone voice of reason rather than a representative of the wider Muslim community.

It seems that we have to prove that we are "normal" but how can we do this when, more often than not, any time a Muslim is featured on television, it is in direct relation to terrorism? It seems that any person in the public eye that happens to be Muslim must discuss this part of their identity in order to help change public opinion.

I know that Muslims can often be over zealous (see my column last week about Salman Rushdie) but most of "us" are "normal".

I may not be the quintessential young Muslim woman – I don't wear a hijab and I'm pretty damn sure I sin every day – but I AM Muslim and I am here, and to every single person that has killed another in a misguided attempt at martyrdom, I say this: you deserve to burn in hell.

Is that vocal enough for everyone?

Kia Abdullah is a 24-year-old author from Limehouse.

Her first novel, *Life, Love and Assimilation*, was a huge success and she has already embarked on her second book, a crime thriller. Send your comments to kia.abdullah@gmail.com

DID YOU KNOW..

Once of the last uses for the Wapping Hydraulic station was powering the revolving stage at the Palladium Theatre.

The outfits worn by pearly kings and queens was invented by a road sweeper in 1885.

It became a tradition among cost mongers who collected money for local hospitals.

In 1293 there was an abbey called the Abbey of Nuns of the Order of St Claire.

They were known as the Minoreses and this led to the name of the Minorities.

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