

Monday, July 3, 1978

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Squatting to gain more speed, Scott Dailey gets ready to speed up the side of the Velodrome track and into one of his many freestyle stunts. (Staff Photo by Gary Friedman)

Skateboarding attracts kids as new sport craze

By C.J. RISAK

Speed, balance, skill, even a little danger—is that what makes skateboarding the newest sport sensation? "I do it to keep out of trouble," was the answer I got from Scott Dailey, a local enthusiast. "I guess it's like any other sport, I want to excel at it. It's a challenge."

Skateboarding isn't exactly new. It first appeared in the sixties, but then it was considered little more than a toy. But with the advent of skateboarding parks and better boards, the toy has become a sport.

In the Detroit area, there are two places where skateboarders can go. One is Skateboard City, located in Warren and the other is the Velodrome, which is in the Ice Arena at the Southfield Civic Center.

"We wanted to have skateboarding here because the kids had nowhere to do it except in the street," Mike Batel, the assistant manager at the civic center told me. "We were going to build some ramps, but this group of men wanted to put in the bicycle track. So, we worked out a deal with them to use the bicycle racing track for skateboarding, too."

The skateboarding club opened last year. The program was a successful one, despite the fact that the bike track was no comparison to normal tracks, like the ones found at Skateboard City.

"This track is OK for learning on,

but it's nothing compared to the parks they have in California," Scott said, referring to the Velodrome track. "Membership for this club isn't very much, so I think it's a good deal."

The charge for the summer-long club is \$10 for Southfield residents and \$13 for non-residents. At Skateboard City, the charge for a session of four hours is \$4 in the mornings and \$5 in the afternoons and evenings.

"Our track isn't the normal skateboarding track, but the kids get a good deal," Mike told me. "We sponsored a tournament last year for freestyle competition, and we had some really good skaters. We'll have it again this year, on the third Saturday in July, the 15th."

But none of this explains why skateboarding has become the new sport sensation. What kind of a challenge is there? Can it be that hard to stay on a flat piece of wood on wheels?

"C'mon, why don't you give it a try?" Scott asked me. "I'll show you." He cruised down the 45 degree slanted ramp, across the flat floor in the middle of the track, and up the slant on the other side of the track. His momentum carried him to the top of the track, where he leaped on the back wheels of the board, lifting the front wheels off the track. He then pivoted the board and cruised down the ramp and back to where I stood.

"Wanna try it?" Mark asked, smiling.

"That?" I answered.

This was my big chance—the reporter becoming one of the athletes, experiencing what they experience. True, it wasn't exactly like George Plimpton in the "Paper Lion," but it was a start.

"Sure, why not?" I said casually. I grabbed a board that one of the kids offered me and stepped to the side of the ramp.

"Here, you better put these on," Scott said, offering me a helmet and some elbow and knee pads.

"I don't need those," I told him. I set the board down on the top of the ramp and started skating down.

To say I was skating down might be misleading; I only made it about half way. I tumbled the rest of the way.

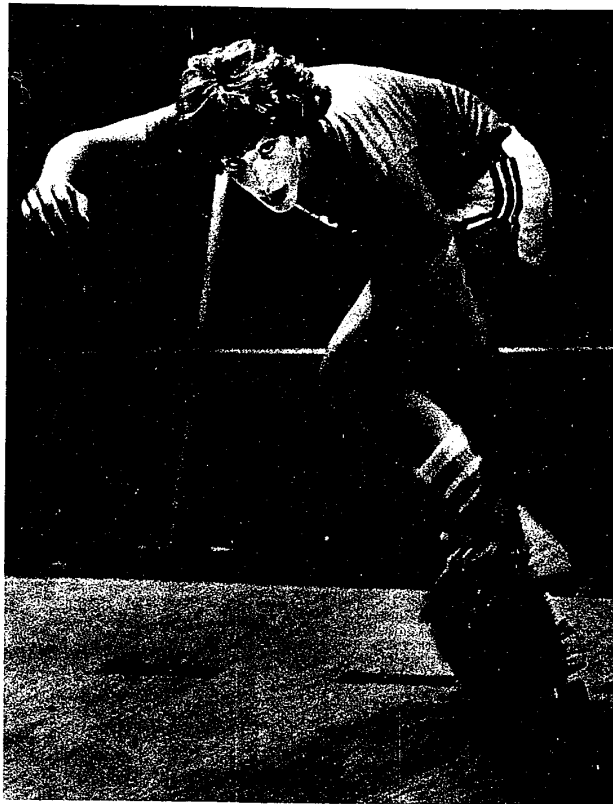
Scott was grinning as I returned to the top of the ramp.

"That's why it's a rule that everyone wears protective equipment," he told me.

"And Skateboard City is faster than this?" I asked.

He nodded. "And it's cement, too. A fall like the one you just took would scrape a lot of skin. Now I'll teach you how to do this right."

"No thanks," I answered. "I've learned enough for today. For one, I learned I'm not George Plimpton." Scott stared at me with a puzzled look as I turned and hobbled away.



Concentrating on keeping his balance, Brian Hordes turns his board at the top of the ramp and prepares for another trip down. (Staff Photo by Gary Friedman)

Birmingham bike race slated

In 1928, 18,000 people jammed into Detroit's Olympia Stadium for a velodrome championship. Cyclists raced around a banked wooden track and spectators were part of an enthusiastic following for the sport of bicycle racing.

Just five years ago, a 15-year-old Birmingham cyclist, Chris Marling, dreamed of organizing a road race for amateur American cyclists. Perhaps the most famous international race of this type is the annual Tour de France.

Once a dream, the race, in its fifth year, has become an annual event. It will be held Sunday, when more than 200 U.S. Cycling Federation (USCF) sanctioned racers meet in downtown Birmingham for Birmingham's Great Birmingham Bicycle Chase.

Even though crowds are smaller for these modern day competitions, the sport of cycle racing continues to expand since its birth in the 1880s. The July 9 race is the third consecutive

day of racing in the Detroit area.

Two days before the Bike Chase in Birmingham, the State Team Championships and an Open Omnium are being run at 8 p.m. on the velodrome track in the Southfield Ice Arena at Ten-and-One-Half Mile and Evergreen.

OPEN OMNIUM races are for two-man teams and combine both sprinting and pursuit maneuvers. The State Team Championships is governed by Madison Track rules.

This second form of racing, named for Madison Square Garden where it originated, requires both teams to be on the track simultaneously. While one races down on the lower part of the track, the other drifts along the top, out of the action, waiting to replace his teammate.

Michigan teams are pitted against other teams from the U.S. The winner of the team championship will qualify for the national championships and could even

tually make the journey to Moscow in 1980 for the Olympics.

On Saturday, the Davis Velodrome will have an outdoor race. The banked cement track is on Detroit's east side at Mound and Outer Drive.

The Great Birmingham Bicycle Chase will have eight U.S. Cycling Federation sanctioned races.

To enter, a cyclist must be a federation member. In addition, pre-race inspections insure proper racing safety. All competing bikes must have free wheel, two working handbrakes, plugged handlebars and racers must wear protective headgear.

FOR NON-MEMBER racers, applications to the federation will be available from officials the day of the races. Local bike shops also have the membership applications which require an \$18 membership fee.

"We are always happy to promote this very unique race in Birmingham," said Mike Walden, a federation official.

"By organizing this race which helps create more interest in cycling, they promote not only a sport, but a very healthy, recreational alternative."

Prizes totaling \$3,000 will be awarded in the following categories: a seven-mile race for intermediates, age 12-14 with a \$125 purse; a 10-mile race for veteran men older than 25, with \$125 in prizes; a 15-mile race for women age 15-17 and women older than 18 (run simultaneously) for a total of \$250 in prizes; a 30-mile race for junior men age 15-17 with \$600 in prizes awarded.

In the senior men class, older than 18, the III and IV group will compete in a 25-mile race for \$500 in prizes. The big race of the day, senior I and II will end the competition with a gruelling 40-mile race for \$1,200 in prize merchandise.

"Our races, using the city streets, give spectators the closest possible perspective for understanding the strategies that play such a big part in cycle racing," said Andy Blinder, race coordinator at Common Ground. "Only with tremendous endurance can an inexperienced racer keep pace with the rest of the field."

ALL RACES at the Bike Chase are scored with a system called criterion points. The race is run over a closed circuit. During the race, cyclists score points by doing well on specified sprint laps. At the end of the race the final lap is a sprint and is scored double.

In a criterion point race, there is the possibility of finishing first but being outscored by another racer who performed well on the sprint laps.

The Great Birmingham Bicycle Chase is organized by Common Ground as part of its youth alternatives program. Blinder expects more than 200 racers and 1,000 spectators.

Applications for the Great Birmingham Bicycle Chase are available at Common Ground and at area bike shops.

"We try to provide a chance for novice cyclists and inexperienced racers to discover first hand the grueling pace of competitive cycling," Blinder said. "We always have several local riders who figure they can cut the mustard. However, after eight miles at 20-25 miles per hour in the hot sun they lose all their gusto. It is a very competitive sport because you must have good fitness in all of your races to improve your ranking."

Common Ground is a multi-service agency located at Lincoln Road, east of Woodward at Adams. The mostly free services provided by Common Ground include a medical clinic on Monday and Thursday evenings.

Free legal aid is available on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Crisis counseling is available daily. Finally, Common Ground is the new central agency for information and referral services in Oakland County. To receive services or volunteer at Common Ground call 645-9676.

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New golf course opens

Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission opened its newest recreational facility, the Red Oaks Golf Course, on June 30.

The 2,615-yard nine hole course has a par of 33. Located on John R between 12 and 13 Mile in Madison Heights, Red Oaks is the commission's first facility in the densely populated southwestern portion of the county.

Weekday greens fees for county residents will be \$3 for nine holes and \$5 for 18. For non-residents, the fees will be \$3.25 for nine holes and \$5.50 for 18. Twilight rates are \$2 for unlimited play after 7 p.m. Weekend rates will be \$3.50 for nine holes and \$5.50 for 18,

resident fee; non-residents, \$3.75 for nine holes and \$5 for 18 holes.

Special rates have been established for resident youths and senior citizens. Youths may play nine holes for \$1.50 and 18 for \$3 before 4 p.m. Senior citizens can play for the same price of \$1.50 for nine holes, or can play 18 for \$2.50. Non-resident retirees will pay an additional \$.25 for nine holes and \$.50 for 18. Retirees are defined as fully retired with no active work income.

Also provided at the course will be pull carts, power carts and clubs at rental fees. A 25-station driving range is now under construction across from the golf course and will be completed later this year.