

## Sales keep climbing

# Bicycle takes on new meaning

By C.J. RISAK

The bicycle. For Americans, it is utilized in two ways, by two different groups. Those under 16 use it for transportation; those over 16 consider it a two-wheel recreational vehicle, a nice way to burn off a few calories after a summer evening's meal.

But a third utilization is gradually pushing its way into view. Out of a simple machine, for years used primarily as recreation or transportation, are evolving sophisticated sports requiring highly technical equipment.

The most popular of these sports is the Bicycle Motocross. It originated on the West Coast "about six or seven years ago," according to Larry Spicer, manager of the Bicycle Hut on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills.

"Motocross, without a doubt, is our biggest seller," Spicer said when questioned about his hottest selling items. "We just can't keep them in stock."

The sport is an offshoot of motorcycle dirt track racing. Youths from 5 to 15 are competing in bicycle motocrosses, held in different places every summer weekend throughout the state.

"It's the hottest thing going," said Steve Reed, manager of Farmington Bike and Repair shop, on Orchard Lake Road. "There's really a good interest. I think it's the greatest thing going."

"The sport is keyed to the youngster, with him definitely in mind. They learn something from it, how to maintain something."

WHAT YOUNGSTERS LEARN from it is more than just how to oil the bike's chain after a winter-long storage. The motocross bike is specially designed, with a sturdy frame to withstand the rough terrain of the dirt tracks and special tires for additional traction. The cost of these bikes starts at \$119.95.

And most of the youths know what is the best, and most necessary, equipment on motocross bikes. "After a while, they know what the best gear ratio and metal alloys are. Schwinn's line of motocross bicycles goes to \$375, but the average is about \$150, Reed said.

However, motocross bicycles aren't the only sellers for the Farmington merchants. Both Spicer and Reed said business in their respective shops was up this year, with the biggest problem being a shortage of bikes.

"Bikes are hard to come by," Reed said. "It's a problem at the manufacturer's level."

Spicer agreed. "I ordered 50 bikes a week ago, but I'll only be getting 24."

More business stems from repair work. Bikes that "haven't been ridden in five or six years" are being brought in for repair work, according to Spicer.

Exercise, due to the recent increased attention being given to health in America, is the reason for the renewed interest in bicycling, Reed says. He doesn't think the bicycle is being used as an alternate form of transportation by adults.

"THE GAS CRISIS isn't affecting us much," he said. "Not yet, anyway. If we lived closer to a major city, people might use it to commute."

But it (the gas crisis) has made people more conscious that it exists as a secondary mode of transportation."

Despite increased business, a shortage of bicycles and new sport developments, Reed says price increases have been moderate during the past few years.

Prices for 10-speed bicycles, at Spicer's shop, begin at \$129.95. The ma-

jority of his sales come "in the \$130 to \$180 range. Not racing bikes, touring bicycles."

Although prices go much higher, Spicer feels that "if you're just going to ride around the neighborhood, not do any real racing, you'll find one within that price range (\$130-\$180) to fit your needs."

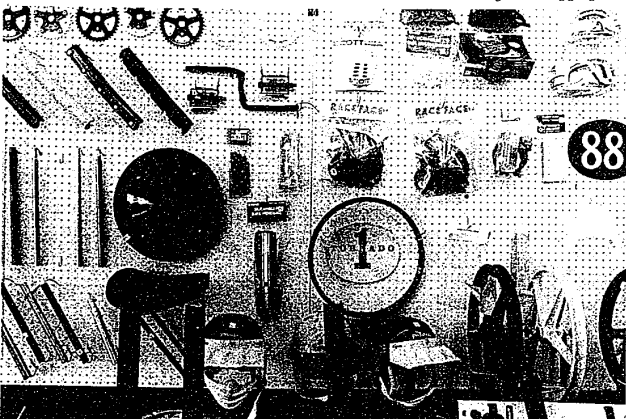
When purchasing a bicycle, it is important to size it to you, according to Spicer. This is done in two ways: First, size the frame by straddling it and standing with feet flat on the ground. There should be a half-inch of clearance in the crotch.

Second, size the seat by sitting on the bike and pushing the pedal to its lowest point. There should still remain a slight bend in the knee.

The size of the bicycle is important if the rider is going to use it efficiently and safely. The bike may never be used as extensively here as it is in Europe, where it is considered a mode of transportation for adults as well as children, but it isn't just a recreational toy anymore, either.



"We're seeing bikes in for repair that haven't been ridden in five or six years." — Larry Spicer, manager of the Bicycle Hut in Farmington Hills.



Some of the many accessories that go along with the fast-growing sport of Bicycle Motocross. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)



Steve Reed, manager of the Farmington Bike and Repair shop, on Motocross: "It's the hottest thing going."

## State aid is available

By CRAIG PIECHURA

The Michigan Crime Victim Compensation Commission has a kitty of \$1.5 million set aside for payment to injured victims, but few in Oakland County are applying for payment.

"We don't do much business in Oakland County," says Tom Woods, executive director of the agency and chairman of the three-member state compensation board.

"I don't think there's any crime in Oakland County," Woods said facetiously. "It certainly couldn't be because the prosecutor's office and law enforcement (officials) aren't informing the public."

No forms for filing for compensation were available at Southfield police headquarters Tuesday, lending credence to Woods' claim.

Since the program was established in October of 1977, 957 persons have qualified as crime victims and received cash awards totaling \$1.2 million. Another 1,291 applicants' appeals were denied.

Awards are determined based on the severity of a person's injury, the presence of insurance and the amount of wages or supplemental earnings the victim makes. Wage figures are used to determine how "serious" the financial hardship was and to judge much money the crime victim lost as a result of the injury. Maximum award for lost pay is \$100 per week.

As executive director of the state crime victim compensation commission, Woods has made it clear in the past that he is upset with Oakland County's "low participation" in the program. Southfield police and city legal department, for example, explained they haven't had any citizens inquire about how to file for state benefits for crime victims.

But Woods said police and prosecutors have an obligation to promptly inform crime victims of their right to apply for a possible award. While law states claims must be filed within 30 days of the incident, Woods said he's accepted claims filed after that.

"(They haven't) any obligation to help the victim of a crime do anything," Woods said. "But in counties like Wayne, Genesee, Ingham and Kent, the prosecutor's office is a leader in law enforcement. They help the victims directly. I don't think Oakland has the resources to do that."

MIKE IZZO, assistant prosecutor for Oakland County, said he's heard the accusations before and thinks Woods "created the controversy." Further, Izzo said most citizens are aware of the program and will apply if they need financial assistance.

"His gripe was they weren't getting the amount applying that he projected. I don't buy that."

Izzo admitted Oakland County residents have submitted only 15 compensation claims to the state agency but says anyone interested in applying can get the information from the county prosecutor's staff or a local police department.

"If a person says 'How can I be reimbursed' we tell them their rights to possible compensation. But some say they don't want that type of assistance. This is basically an affluent county. The state should take it on a county-by-county basis."

Woods said prosecutors rarely come into contact with crime victims and said local police should be informing the public of their rights to apply for compensation.

"When this law was enacted," Izzo said, "there was no funding for anyone on a local basis (to administer the program). We agreed to distribute the applications for compensation and that's what I do. I give people the necessary forms which are self-explanatory and self-filing. All they have to do is mail it in to the state."

After Southfield police said they didn't have the compensation claim forms available, one officer suggested that people try the county prosecutor's office.

"Sure, that's the only way the game of 'cover-your-ass' is played," Woods responded.

TO QUALIFY for compensation victims cannot be personally responsible for, or make "substantial contribution" to the injuries they suffered. Victims also must fully cooperate with law enforcement officials investigating the crime.

Woods said many claims are rejected because the persons are responsible for their injuries. But the most graphic example, Woods said, is the bank robber who applied for compensation after he was shot during a hold-up attempt. He was denied an award.

Funds for the awards come from state appropriations. Woods estimated that only \$50 a month is repaid to the state by paroled prisoners.

The maximum award possible is \$15,000. Nine have received that sum or installments toward the full amount.

Pat Poole, assistant attorney for the city of Southfield, admitted that police "probably don't advise these victims. They should be told about the program at the time they're filing a complaint."

Poole said he, like many in law enforcement circles, originally opposed the idea of compensating crime victims.

"It's subject to abuse for one thing," Poole said. "The public has no say on who gets compensation."

"It's like an insurance policy that reimburses people for damages inflicted by somebody else, not necessarily the government, yet the government ends up paying for it."



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