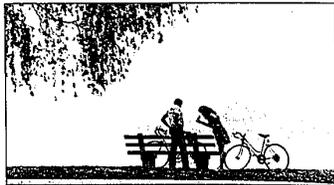


# Biking's Tour de Michigan

## tour de force

Can the sport make it here?



Dale Hughes checks off a young rider's lap during the Wolverine 200.

**D**ale Hughes was out of college, armed with a business degree and heading into the economic recession of the early '70s. He had been rejected by several prospective employers and had little idea what he wanted to do.

He visited his sister who was attending school in Germany and discovered a sport, a business and a way of life.

"We were touring in a VW bus, living on the \$5 a day book on the Riviera in Nice, France," Hughes said. "It was the middle of the day, a beautiful sunny day on the Mediterranean. Suddenly, traffic stopped. Everyone got out of their cars and walked a block and a half over to the Mediterranean. I was panicking, I

didn't know what was going on. We walked over with everyone else, we couldn't go anywhere.

"I saw motorcycles, cars, TV vans and then this pack of bike racers coming down a mountain into the city. The people were cheering for their favorites as they sped by. Then they got back into their cars. I thought wow, wait till they find out about this back in the States."

This was the Tour de France, a 21-day road race around France that draws hundreds of thousands of spectators along the roads and 25 million on worldwide television.

When Hughes returned home he and a friend opened a bicycle shop in Rochester. Eventually Hughes sold the bicycle shop and pursued his interest in racing as a promoter of professional and amateur races. He is on the executive committee and secretary of the U.S. Cycling Federation.

Hughes is promoting a Tour de Michigan. This year the tour features five races over five days. Next year, Hughes wants to tie in the tour with Michigan's sesquicentennial and make it a promotional venture throughout the state.

"I'm trying to create a major tourist attraction like the Tour de France," Hughes said.

Hughes predicts that in the next few years bicycling will become a major minor sport on the level of golf and tennis. He foresees a time when every major city will have a cycling team as European cities do.

"Bicycling has all the elements to make it a major minor sport — speed, an element of danger, strategy and the venue for racing is always different. There are different kinds of racing and each race has its own uniqueness to it like the Grand Prix," Hughes said.

Bicycling has a built-in audience. The physical fitness enthusiasm of recent years has made bicycling the second most popular participatory activity in the country after swimming and number one among women. Seventy-two million Americans cycle. It is also the second most popular spectator sport worldwide after soccer.

"It has the tradition of baseball and a few other sports. From 1900 to the 1920s, bicycling was a major sport in the United States with a pro circuit of indoor bike racing. In 1928 Jimmy Walkhour had qualified for the Olympic team and a professional league approached him to turn pro. He turned pro for \$100,000 for five years," Hughes said.

The advent of the Model T and other inexpensive automobiles changed bicycling from a necessary adult activity and preoccupation to a means of transportation for children. The trend is changing back and now the majority of bicycle sales are in adult bicycles.

The Tour de Michigan for 1986 runs July 23-27. The event offers \$15,000 in prize money. On July 23 a 25 mile time trial will be run on Hines Drive. A road race covering 65 to 75 miles will be run from Lansing to Brighton on July 24. Criteriums, races around half to three-quarter mile outdoor tracks, will be run July 25-27 in Detroit's Greektown, Troy and Wyandotte. The races are open to professionals and amateurs from novice to experienced.

For 1987 Hughes is proposing a program of two time trials, five road races and six criteriums over nine days.

The tour will begin in Marquette and include races covering Sault Ste. Marie to St. Ignace, Mackinac Island, Mackinac Bridge, Cheboygan to Traverse City, Muskegon to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo to Battle Creek, Lansing, Lansing to Ann Arbor, Greektown, Wyandotte and Troy. Hughes wants to include exhibitions on Michigan commerce, classic auto displays, charity tri-cycle races and

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Pro racer Tom Schuler takes a practice spin.

Call it chess on a 14-speed

**T**om Schuler calls it high-speed chess. The object of this game is to play the wind and the other riders, conserve your energy for the final sprint but don't get too far behind, know where your teammates are and where your opponents are, know their strengths and weaknesses and use them to cut the wind.

It's a chess game called cycling, and Schuler plays it well and aggressively. A member of the 1980 Olympic team.

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