

Bicycle racer takes his sport seriously



By DOUG FUNKE

There are bicycle riders and then there are bicycle racers.

There isn't too much difference between the two, one might suppose.

However, there are great differences ranging from the tangible, such as equipment, to the more subliminal, such as the frame of mind of the racer compared to the rider.

Jeff Pierce, 19, from Livonia, is a racer who has been at it six years. He started off by entering a marathon not too long after he had purchased his first 10-speed bike.

From there, Pierce went into racing. His idea of a good time is to bicycle up to 20 miles per day. As a result of all that training, Pierce will enter and complete races of 100 miles in four hours.

Pierce races nearly every weekend from March to September. On any given weekend, he's likely to be racing anywhere in the Midwest.

IT IS EXPENSIVE to become a serious racing bicyclist. A good bicycle will range in price from \$500-\$700, said Pierce. The reason? Fine engineering and machining and the types of metal used in construction.

Racing bikes weigh approximately 20 pounds, about half the weight of the average touring 10-speed. The racing bicycle weighs less so that less energy will be needed to peddle it over long distances.

The tires on the racer are even thinner than those on a regular 10-speed bicycle and the racing tire is actually glued to the rim. When a new tire is needed, the entire wheel must be replaced.

Special alloys—combinations of metals—are used to build a racer to provide strength but still keep the cycle as light as possible.

Other special equipment used by the racer is a light, usually open-aired helmet, a pair of gloves to protect against callouses and scrapes, and special shoes.

"The shoes have a slot in the bottom that fits over the pedal. Then you strap in the foot so that it's locked in," said Pierce.

The purpose of locking the feet to the pedals is to get even pressure on the peddle stroke for the best utilization of energy over long distances.

WHY DOES he do it? Pierce said he is not a physical fitness nut who substitutes jogging for long distance running or cycling to keep in peak condition. He races as a manner of exercise, but primarily because he enjoys it.

"It is not monotonous," said Pierce.

"There are always things to look at, things to see. And, you have to keep alert, too, for people and cars."

There are several things which must be considered when planning strategy for a race, and the constant thinking sets the racer apart from the rider, said Pierce.

"The first part of the race, you're just sitting in and analyzing the competition. The first thing you have to consider is what kind of rider you are."

"If you're a sprinter, you save your energy and hope the outcome comes down to a field sprint the last 200 meters or so. If you're strong, you go out by yourself and a few other people and grind away."

"If you're strong climbing hills, you may break away there," Pierce continued, adding that the hope is that weak or average hill climbers will tire themselves out trying to keep up.

The other side of the coin is that those who break away from the pack during a race risk tiring themselves out.

"Most people are combinations of riders," Pierce concluded.

Drafting, racing directly behind another rider to take advantage of him breaking the wind, is as common in bicycle racing as auto racing.

The type of course also influences strategy. "There is a difference if you're riding a one-mile flat loop as opposed to a 10-mile course with hills and sharp turns," said Pierce.

"There's also the wind and who else is in the race. You know you only have so much energy so if you go out and use it all up (early), you're not going to do well."

ENERGY is as important to the bicycle racer as it is to the long distance runner. Like marathoners, Pierce said he loads up on carbohydrates prior to a long race. Carbohydrates break down to form glycogen, a stored energy source.

Sources of carbohydrates are pastas, spaghetti, bread and pancakes.

Because carbohydrates take time to break down and transform to an energy source, Pierce says they do no good unless a race lasts at least two hours.

Pierce said he prefers non-processed foods such as fruits and vegetables while training.

He said he avoids beef in large amounts because beef contains fat which the body can't break down as easily as it does other good protein sources like fish and poultry.

WATER BOTTLES are attached to the bicycle for quick drinks along the way and there is generally a feed area

along the course where fruit can be tossed to riders as an energy boost.

All that is done on the run because Pierce said he never stops once a race gets underway.

Pierce acknowledges he has a lot of time to think during a long race. "I fantasize about the race, think about problems at home, what to do after the race—just fantasize," he said.

Then, of course, there is always the strategy of the race at hand to consider.

PIERCE SUGGESTED that beginners learn their limitations and progress at a reasonable pace if they decide to take up bicycle racing.

"You should set up a good training schedule and a reasonable schedule," said Pierce. "You can't go out and ride 400 miles in a week. You must be honest with yourself. Ask yourself, 'What kind of time do I have and what can my body do?'"

Expect to be more some of the time during the first several weeks of conscientious training.

In time, thigh muscles will probably expand and calf muscles will flatten, Pierce said. Also, anticipate a sore back, neck and arms during the early training period.

The best way to get started, Pierce suggested, is to attend a marathon or a race and talk to some of the people involved with the activity.

Pierce said the difference between marathon riding and racing is that marathoners try to ride as far as they can in a specified time period, often 24 hours, while racers attempt to cover a specific distance in as fast a time as possible.

Southfield Rotary Olympics scheduled

The annual Rotary Club Olympics will be held Tuesday, July 18, at Southfield Lathrup High School.

The events, for resident youths from 6 to 15 years of age, will include dashes, chinning, softball throws, and relay races. The winners will represent the city of Southfield in the Youth Fitness Meet at Kensington Metro Park on July 27.

Registration for the events can be made at the 13 area playground centers throughout the city. Their hours are 9:30 a.m. until noon, and 1 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Jeff Pierce (right) cycles along during one of his frequent long-distance races. Note the headgear, distinctive gloves and special shoes. (Photo by Lori Fishman)

Stars will compete

Cyclists to race at Velodrome

By C.J. RISAK

The nation's top bicycle racers will invade the Southfield Velodrome Friday for an evening of high speed competition, including state championships and a multi-event open omnium.

"Last year we sponsored the Madison (two-man relay) National Championships here at the Velodrome," Dale Hughes, one of the track's owners, said. "And, for the first time since then, last year's winner, Roger Young, and the runnerup, Fred Markum, will be racing against each other. It should be very exciting. Madison racing always is."

Hughes is not alone in his enthusiasm. The sport, long a favorite in

Europe, is rapidly growing in popularity in the United States. One reason could be that unlike other racing sports, cycling is more than simple sprinting or endurance. Competition involves teamwork and strategy along with speed and skill.

Madison racing is a prime example. The event got its name from Madison Square Garden, where the race was originated. Between eight and ten two-man teams are involved; one member of the team races around the track at top speed, while his partner cruises, or "orbits," the outer rim. When the racing member tires, he switches with the resting member by grabbing his teammate's bike and propelling it into the race. Strategies are em-

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—Dale Hughes

ployed in how often to switch, with the more skilled riders changing more often at the end of the race.

But this is only part of the event. Eight lap sprints can be called anytime during the race. The winners of the sprints will get points toward their total and will collect the "prize," which is money collected from the crowd. In all, the Madison is an intricate race in which the competitors speed full-

blast around the track at all times.

But how did Southfield become a center for bicycle racing?

Hughes, who owned a bicycle shop in Rochester, joined with Bill Jacobson, Dave Staugaard, and Larry Monasterski to build the velodrome two years ago. The 300-foot oval-shaped track is the only indoor track in the country. It is made of wood and is completely portable.

The track is currently in place at the Southfield Civic Center Ice Arena.

"With a portable track, we can take cycling to more people," Hughes explained.

"We'll be in Kalamazoo at Wing's Stadium for the National Championships on Sept. 4. We're trying to bring Madison racing back, as well as cycling in general."

To understand what Hughes meant, you have to know that in the first third of the century, cycling was the sport, with a following as large as baseball's and a professional tour. It was so popular that when the cold weather struck and there could be no outdoor cycling, promoters moved the sport indoors and the velodrome was born. In these early days

of racing, endurance was considered more important than speed, and so the six-day marathon was devised. In this predecessor to the Madison, at least one member of the team rode for six days straight.

With the beginning of World War II, bicycling declined. Motor racing gained prominence, and cycling just about disappeared.

"Back in it's heyday, cyclists were making a lot of money," Hughes said. "One pro back in the '20s made \$100,000 in one season."

"You know, in 1928 there was a cycling event at Olympia that drew a crowd of 12,000 fans. And cyclists paid \$150 for their bikes back then. That's more than most people made in a month."

In recent years, cycling has been making a comeback, first in Europe and now spreading into the North American continent.

"I think people will really enjoy it, once they get a taste of it," Hughes reflected. "It's really a great spectator sport. And there are a number of local stars: Roger Young (brother of Olympian Sheila Young) is from Detroit, and Rick Denman of Huntington Woods is a rising star. So is Jeff Pierce of Livonia."

The events will get underway at the velodrome at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children under 12. The Southfield Civic Center Ice Arena is at 26500 Evergreen.



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Swim meet results

Farmington Glen Athletic Club outswam traditional rival Beechview Swim Club Thursday, breaking a number of Beechview's pool records enroute to a 295-266 victory.

Glen, competing for the first time in the Northwest Suburban Swim League's upper division, broke five Beechview pool records and set two new team marks. Beechview's Paula King also got into the record-breaking act, establishing two new pool marks in her individual events and a team record in her relay event.

Six swimmers were double winners for Glen. Alec Campbell won the boys' 11-12 100-meter IM and 50-meter fly, setting pool and team records in both with times of 1:12.5 and 22.5. Cindy Whell was victorious in both the girls' 11-12 50-meter breast and the 13-14 50-

meter breast, establishing a new record in the latter with a time of 39.5.

Farmington Glen's Terese Burton set a pool record in the girls' 15-17 50-meter breast (38.1) and also won the girls' 15-17 50-meter free. Jim Pogue won the boys' 15-17 50-meter fly in record time (27.5) and was victorious in the boys' 15-17 100-meter IM. Other double winners for Farmington included Margaret Richards (13-14 50-meter free and 13-14 50-meter back) and Tami Richardson (girls' 15-17 100-meter IM and 50-meter fly).

Paula King's victories for Beechview came in the 9-10 girls' 50-meter fly (37.0) and 9-10 50-meter back (46.6). The only other double winner for Beechview was Mary Wik, who won the 7-8 girls' 25-meter back and the 25-meter free.

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