



Rick Denman of Huntington Woods glances over his shoulder to locate his partner as he readies himself for the tag in the Madison Team racing event. (Staff photos by Allan Schlossberg)



Velodrome owner Dale Hughes acts as the starter for Les Barczewski in the Individual Pursuit event.

Bicycle track races

A day at the races — the Velodrome

By C.J. RISAK

Roger Young, Fred Markham, Les Barczewski, Mike Moale, Rick Denman—their names were as unfamiliar to me as was their sport.

I became acquainted with both just a few days before, and now I was at the Southfield Velodrome to watch the athletes display their prowess in their sport—bicycle racing.

I entered the Velodrome, or indoor bicycle track. It was a 300-foot oval-shaped wooden track set up in the Southfield Civic Center Ice Arena. The heat was stifling in the arena, and yet the stands were already crowded with spectators.

I really didn't know what to expect. What would the sport be like? How good were these athletes? Would the fans find this interesting? I scrambled down the sloped track into the infield. The scene there seemed familiar enough. The cyclists wandered about, outwardly calm; yet, I could sense a tension in the air, the same that is present at any important football game or track meet.

THE TRACK straight-aways were sloped at 45-degree angles. The turns were banked more steeply, somewhere between 70 and 80

degrees, making for a faster but more dangerous track. As in car racing, that element of danger made it more exciting to watch.

The first event was the Flying Lap. The cyclists competed in teams of two. In this event, one member from each team was to participate.

The riders raced, one at a time, five laps around the oval. Only the last lap was timed. Markham won with a time of 7:86, less than a tenth of a second off the track record. Eric Moe was second and Young, third.

The next event was the Individual Pursuit. A member from a team would line up on one side of the track, while a member of another would line up opposite him. They started together, racing against each other and the clock.

My standing in the infield proved to be a disappointment. Since the riders were almost always on opposite sides of the track, it was impossible for me to tell who was winning. I needed a neck like Linda Blair had in "The Exorcist," to see the whole race.

Dan Van Haute, Young's teammate, finished first, with Les Barczewski, second, Brent Erney, third, and Mike Malekoff, Markham's partner, fourth.

Team Pursuit Finals

were next. It was the same format as the Individual Pursuit, except it was done in teams, Madison-style. One member of each team was to participate opposite a member of another team. They raced the first four laps of the eight-lap event, then tagged off to their partner, who finished the race.

Markham and Malekoff proved to be fastest, followed by Young and Van Haute, with Barczewski and Scott Miller in third.

So far, I figured bicycle racing was all right but nothing spectacular. It was certainly fast, with the racers at times surpassing 40 m.p.h. I was anxiously awaiting the main event, the Madison bike race with six teams on the track at once.

But first in the preliminaries, one member from each team would participate in heats, with the fastest four qualifying for the finals. After this event, my attention was riveted to the races for the rest of the night.

It may be a sad commentary on society nowadays, but just as people go to auto races to see the drivers crack up, or to hockey games to see the players fight, it was an accident that caught my attention.

Eight cyclists were on the track, jockeying for

position, saving themselves for the final few laps and an all-out sprint. With two laps to go, Barczewski was in the lead, Young and Rick Denman right behind. As they came out of one of the high-banked turns, Barczewski's rear tire blew. He crashed hard onto the track, sliding down the bank into the infield.

I don't know how the other racers, bunched up behind Barczewski, managed to get around him without crashing. But none of them hesitated; Denman swept into the lead, but Young caught him at the finish and just passed him.

Young beat Markham in the finals, and in the preliminary events, the Young-Van Haute team finished first, Markham and Malekoff, second.

Les Barczewski left with his arm in a sling, and burns from the wooden track covered the side of his leg.

I wondered what the other racers were thinking when Barczewski went down. What goes through their minds? "I went up the track, to get out of the way," Young said, "I can't hesitate. I feel bad about it afterwards, but there's nothing I can do about it. I just put it out of my mind and keep going."

"Going up the track" is one of the first rules of bicycle racing. When a rider falls, he will slide

down the bank. The only way to avoid the fallen rider is to go to the top of the track.

Denman's reactions were the same. "I just went up the track and out of the way," he said before pedaling off to his next event. Both Young and Denman felt badly about Barczewski's crash, both knowing the same thing could happen to them. But there was nothing they could do, so there was no sense in worrying about it.

That is as true a definition of sports as you'll get. Skill, hard work, strategy and that certain amount of risk that is present in almost any sport. Barczewski's crash wasn't the exciting thing; it was the possibility that it could happen at any time to any of the riders. But the cyclists raced on, putting incredible strains on their bodies and taking the risk, just to excel at what they do.

The final event started: the Madison Team Race. Six teams, 12 riders in all, were on the track. The race was to last 30 minutes, with three 10-lap sprints, called prems, part of the race. The winner here gets points toward his total and money contributed by the audience.

Young and Van Haute won the first two prems and had the race sewn up. But Markham and Malekoff seemed deter-

mined to win the last prem. The last tagoff took place, Malekoff leading Young by five bike lengths with two laps to go. Young quickly closed the gap and zoomed by Malekoff just 100 feet from the finish line. After racing all night, Young had enough left for that fin-out sprint at the finish.

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Wisconsin cyclist wins chase

Les Barczewski will always remember the Great Birmingham Bike Chase V, held Sunday.

Barczewski, a Wisconsin resident, won his first race ever in the Seniors I and II Division, which is the Grand Prix of outdoor bicycle racing.

He almost quit mid-

way through the race when former Birmingham resident Roger Young crashed after his bike received a flat tire.

After being caught up in the mess of the crash, Barczewski was left in the back of the pack. He kept pumping and eventually won the race.

Just two days before the Birmingham Bike Chase, Barczewski was rushed to the hospital after falling during a race at the Southfield Velodrome. His bike also had a flat tire. Fortunately, he suffered only bruises and a skinned knee, allowing him to compete in Birmingham's Bike Chase.

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GERRY FORNES of Columbus, Ohio turned in a spectacular effort while winning the Junior Division.

He broke away from the pack early in the race. Michigan's top Junior Division rider, James Gesquire, was with

Fornes in the early going, but could not keep up with the Ohioan's frantic pace.

Fornes lapped everyone else in the race, then started to lap everyone again.

Veteran bike race observers say Fornes didn't even look tired after his super effort.

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Bike chase results

- Cycling Schedule:**
 Senior Men III and IV: 1. Bill Griffin, Flint Bicycle Club; 2. Fred Walls, Inner-City Velo; 3. Chuck Hambo, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 4. Paul Wootley, Volo Club; 5. Rick Brown, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 6. Robert Koenig, Cycling Skilldevels; 7. Phil Drenth, of Detroit; 8. Les Cobelli, Windsor Bicycle Club; 9. Robert Burns, Volo Club; 10. Dan Burns, Wyandotte; 11. Todd Papp, Flint Bicycle Club.
- Senior Men I and II:** 1. Les Roberts, Lake Shore Schwinn; 2. Brent Erney, Wisconsin; 3. Tim Oberle, unaffiliated; 4. Rick Denman, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 5. Jeff Pierce, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 6. Eric Hodin, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 7. Mike Moale, Schwinn-Wolverine; 8. Jim Phillips, Florida Fuji; 9. Jan Bowen, Florida Fuji; 10. Steve Wood, New Mexico; 11. Chris Post, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 12. David Reed, Tucson.
- BIRMINGHAM BEE CHASE**
- Intermediate Boys:** 1. Frank Canella, Windsor Bicycle Club; 2. Chris Meltan, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 3. Pierre Quenerville, Windsor Bicycle Club; 4. Lynson Way, Ontario Windsor Bicycle Club; 5. Todd Creek, Dayton Cycle Club; 6. Frank Andrews, Cycling Skilldevels; 7. Andy Terhaim, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 8. Mark Thomas, Gates 84/86.
- Intermediate Girls:** 1. Ann Obermeyer, Rapid Wheelmen Club; 2. Sue Fink, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 3. Lisa Pabst, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 4. Kelley-Ann Way, Windsor Bicycle Club.
- Senior Men:** 1. Douglas Clark, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 2. Elbert Parson, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 3. J. Brian Chappel, Rapid Wheelmen; 4. Thomas J. Hill, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 5. George Vetter, Joseph Olympia.
- Junior and Senior Women:** 1. Sue Norrara, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 2. Nancy Marie, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 3. Marie Walls, Inner-City Wheelmen Cycle Club; 4. Betty Ryterowski, Rapid Wheelmen; 5. Gail Law, Del Slide; 6. Karen Schantz, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 7. Lori Kisthardt, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 8. Marie Vukobrat, Schwinn-Wolverine Cycle Club; 9. Dina Vazquez, Skilldevels Fuji; 10. Rose Aligarski.