

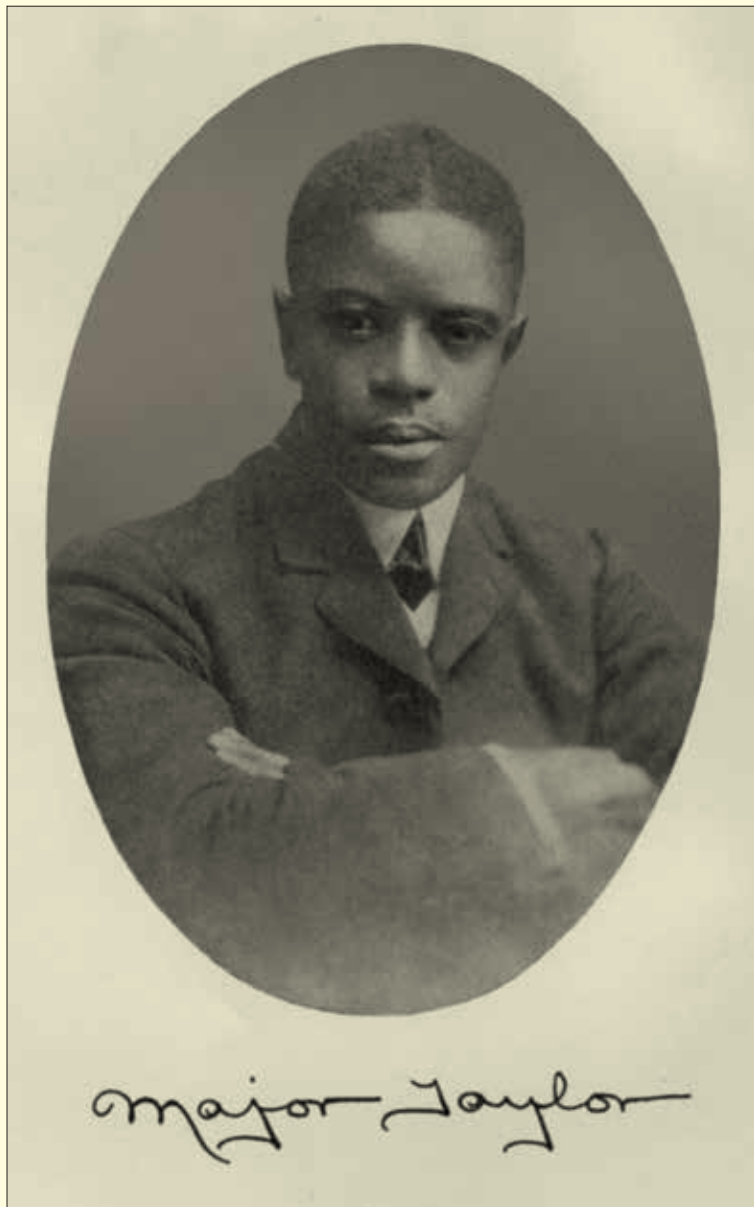
# THE WHEELMEN



DEDICATED TO THE  
ENJOYMENT AND PRESERVATION OF OUR  
BICYCLING HERITAGE

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# Major Taylor's Forgotten Race Reveals Lonely Path to Glory

by LYNNE TOLMAN, Worcester, Massachusetts

**T**HE BOSTON BIKE race that Major Taylor entered in late February 1908 was an unusual choice for the superstar sprinter, and it played out in an unexpected way. Yet the race went unmentioned in his autobiography, *The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World*, and in all the books and articles published about him in the century since the trailblazing African-American athlete hung up his wheels.<sup>1</sup>

In the retrospectives of a black man renowned for breaking through the color barrier during the Jim Crow era (i.e., the 1890s and early 20th Century), it might seem glaring to omit a closely-watched event that put a swerve in his storyline. But Taylor's many successes crowded this episode out of the chronicles. Still, the race helped to steer a remarkable athlete on a singular trajectory. Newspaper and magazine accounts of the race at the time illuminate an uncomfortable truth about the avenues open to an African-American, even one who already had transcended boundaries and become a world champion. [Figure 1. Also, see the image on the Front Cover.]

The 1908 wintertime race at Boston's indoor Park Square track was out of the ordinary for the 29-year-old Major Taylor for two reasons. It was a six-day race, not one of the short-distance matches that had made



FIGURE 1. PORTRAIT OF MARSHALL W. "MAJOR" TAYLOR *in Paris with his Special Iver Johnson Racing Bicycle from the front cover of La Vie aux Grand Air, 18 Septembre 1901.*

(See Gary W. Sanderson & Robert McCullough. "Iver Johnson and His Bicycles," *Cycle History 29: The Proceedings of the 29th International Cycling History Conference (ICHC)*, p. 11-21. *The ICHC Publishing Committee: Verona, NJ, U.S.A., 2018*)

him famous in the previous decade. His forte was sprinting. He'd earned his world championship title in 1899 in the one-mile

rode to the very end, finishing in eighth place, with 1,732 miles. Taylor was promptly invited to another 'six-day', but he never

event, measured in a minute and change, not in days. He wasn't expected to stand out in a long grind.

Moreover, the Boston 'six-day' was for two-man teams. It was not characteristic of Taylor to ally himself with any other bike racer on the track. "Combinations" were frequently formed against "the Worcester Whirlwind," while Major Taylor relied on no one else. Singlehandedly, he could find a slipstream and maneuver himself into an advantageous position to ignite his signature burst of speed in the nick of time.

Six-day bicycle races were grueling endurance contests and popular entertainment, with racers circling the track 24 hours a day, only taking breaks to nap or eat. Whoever completed the longest distance was the winner. Intermediate sprints for prize money kept the action lively for spectators, who attended for select hours each day or evening.

Major Taylor's only other 'six-day' had been his professional debut at age 18 at Madison Square Garden in New York, in December 1896. Riding solo, he followed a pattern of eight hours of riding, one hour of sleep. His speed and aggressive sprinting endeared him to the crowd. Despite hallucinating from fatigue, he

competed in another one<sup>2</sup> — until 1908.

By 1908, racing solo for 24 hours a day had been deemed cruel and dangerous. As governor of New York, Teddy Roosevelt had signed a health law banning anyone from competing more than 12 hours a day. Now riders on two-person tag teams took turns on the track, in a format called “The Madison”, named after the New York arena where it was invented in response to the regulation. Over time, the round-the-clock hours for six-day races were phased out as well.

Purists would not consider Major Taylor’s forgotten race to be a true six-day race. While ‘sixes’ earlier that season had gone eight or ten hours a day, the Boston event in 1908 was set to run just 2½ hours a day, Monday through Friday, and then eight hours on the final day, Saturday.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Boston ‘six-day’ would be a departure from his trademark races, Taylor might have viewed both the length and the teamwork as means to an end. He needed to get in shape for another overseas tour in 1908, and forming a partnership might unlock a new way for him to remain competitive as he aged.

Major Taylor was enjoying a comeback after three summers in “retirement”. In June 1904 he had come home from his second tour in Australia on the verge of a nervous breakdown.<sup>4</sup> Openly racist American rivals Floyd McFarland [Figure 2a] and Floyd’s protege Iver Lawson [Figure 2b]

had followed him Down Under, and these two thwarted him at every turn.<sup>5</sup> In Melbourne, Taylor was badly injured in a fall on the track, and it was determined that Lawson had caused the spill on purpose. The biggest race on the calendar, the Sydney Thousand, was marred by scandal, and the whole season left Taylor soured on the sport. Afterward, back in Worcester, Massachusetts, with his wife and their new baby

girl, who was named Sydney for her birthplace, he tried to relax.

But he remained hungry for competition, and bike racing was the surest way he knew how to make a living. For the 1907 season, he secured a contract to compete in France, where he was still a star attraction. [Figure 3] Having not raced at all in 1905 and 1906, Taylor struggled to lose weight and regain his form. Gradually he shed the excess pounds and started winning. He racked up victories against European champions including Thorvald Ellegaard, Emil Friol, and Gabriel Poulain; and enjoyed the red-carpet treatment he’d tasted during his earlier seasons on the Continent.



FIGURE 2A. FLOYD MACFARLAND WHEN RACING IN FRANCE IN 1901.

Photo from

[www.common.wikipedia.com](http://www.common.wikipedia.com).

See article by Renate Franze at

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/FloydMacFarland>



FIGURE 2B. IVER LAWSON CIRCA 1906

(Sport-Album der Rad-Welt, 5. Jahrgang, 1906)

his role in Taylor’s crash in Melbourne, so Lawson couldn’t compete in the Sydney Thousand in 1904. The big meet at the Sydney Cricket Ground, with its purse of £750 (Australian pounds which was nearly US\$100,000 in today’s money), was to be a definitive showdown. But with Lawson absent — and collusion among the racers and corruption among the officials leading to numerous disqualifications and a lengthy delay in declaring a winner — the Sydney Thousand did not provide the final answer to the burning question of who was the greatest cyclist.<sup>6</sup>

Four years later in Boston, Taylor and Lawson were matched in a series of sprints at Park Square on February 8, 1908. It was Taylor’s first racing appearance on American soil in five years.<sup>7</sup> “It was known that the contest between Major Taylor and Iver Lawson would be a hard [fought] one, for the pair have been on bad terms since four years ago, when they met in Australia,” *The Boston Sunday Globe* reported. The newspaper contained errors in its recap of the events Down Under, mixing up the sequence of the 1904 races and mistakenly placing Lawson in the Sydney Thousand, but the gist of it was true: Lawson had been penalized that season in Australia, and animosity still simmered.

The format was best of three heats, but it took four to determine a winner. Lawson won the first heat, and Taylor the second. “When they faced the starter for the deciding heat they were induced to bury the hatchet, the pair shaking hands,” the *Globe* reported. Lawson was ahead with one and a half laps to go when Taylor “got alongside and crowded Lawson, so that the latter lost his stride, and Taylor shot to the front while the Swede sat up.” The referee was about to award the race to Lawson, “but Taylor maintained that his crowding was unintentional, and they were called up” to do it over. “The hatchet,” the *Globe* said,

At the end of the 1907 season he decided to go out on top, and he again announced his retirement — then changed his mind again, and entered the 1908 ‘six-day’.

He needed to stay fit over the winter. The Boston track provided opportunities for that, and also for Taylor to go head to head with Lawson, who had tormented him in Australia. Lawson had been suspended from racing for three months for

“was immediately dug up again,” and the fight was on. Lawson won by a length.

Then came the six-day race. Less than two weeks after losing to Lawson, Taylor would have another chance to get the better of his old rival. The announcement January 11 in *Bicycling World* that Major Taylor would participate in the Boston ‘six-day’ said “it is not stated who will team up with the negro”.<sup>8</sup> On February 1, the weekly publication revealed that Major Taylor’s partner would be Nat Butler.<sup>9</sup> [Figure 4]

Taylor and Butler, a white man about eight years older than Taylor, had been teammates back in 1897 and remained friendly over the years. The two were on a five-man team created for a Boston vs. Philadelphia pursuit match in July 1897, one of the first racially integrated professional sports teams in the United States. [Figure 5] Nat Butler’s brother Frank was on the team, too, and a third Butler brother, Tom, had trained with the Boston riders<sup>10</sup> before the five men were selected for the July 21 pursuit race, which Boston won.

Nat Butler, born in Nova Scotia, had followed his brothers to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the late 1880s, and the three quickly gained fame as winning bicycle racers.<sup>11</sup> Both before and after the 1897 pursuit race against Philadelphia, the Butlers competed against Taylor for prize after prize — it was Tom Butler whom Taylor edged out for the 1-mile world championship. Through all of this, Nat Butler in particular stayed amicable with Major Taylor. In 1899, Butler was one of a handful of white racers who shared Taylor’s hesitation to leave the League of American Wheelmen and join the rebel American Racing Cyclists Union.<sup>12</sup> In 1899 Nat Butler and Major Taylor rode tandem together, “a good indi-

cation of the men’s friendship,” wrote biographer Andrew Ritchie.<sup>13</sup> The Butlers and Eddie McDuffie, another man who had been on the 1897 pursuit team, were Taylor’s strong rivals athletically, but “never questioned his fundamental right to be in the sport,” Ritchie wrote.

In combination, the Butler brothers deployed great tactical advantage against Taylor. “As a black world champion and world record holder, Taylor was a doubly marked man,” Ritchie wrote. “The white riders, led by the Butlers, continued to pocket and obstruct him ... Whereas the

It was a balancing act familiar to blacks in America before and since (witness the current (i.e., 2018) backlash to football player Colin Kaepernick’s taking a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality and racial injustice). Racist exceptionalism, an aspect of American culture even during slavery, meant that whites could recognize and respect exceptional characteristics of individual black men that were contrary to the stereotypes that underpinned notions of white superiority. However, to earn the respect of whites, black men’s positive traits “must not be used to challenge the established order or White privilege.”<sup>15</sup>

Major Taylor hewed to this script. During his career, he did not often get on a soapbox about racial injustice on a broad scale, although he did not mince words when he felt himself specifically targeted. Later, when Major Taylor wrote his autobiography in the 1920s, he did put it plainly on the record that he had been treated unfairly, time and again, because of “that dreadful monster prejudice.” And he stated up front, in the book’s foreword, that his success was certainly a rebuke, and should serve as challenge, to the *status quo*: “Judging by the manner in which

colored athletes have repeatedly demonstrated their skill and prowess in the athletic world, it is quite obvious what might well be accomplished on a whole as a race in other pursuits of life if granted a square deal and a fair field.” Writing his memoirs, he said, was “calculated to solicit simple justice, equal rights, and a square deal for the posterity of my down-trodden but brave people, not only in athletic games and sports, but in every honorable game of human endeavor.”<sup>16</sup>

While he was a professional cyclist, though, he focused on the more imminent finish lines. He let his legs do the talk-

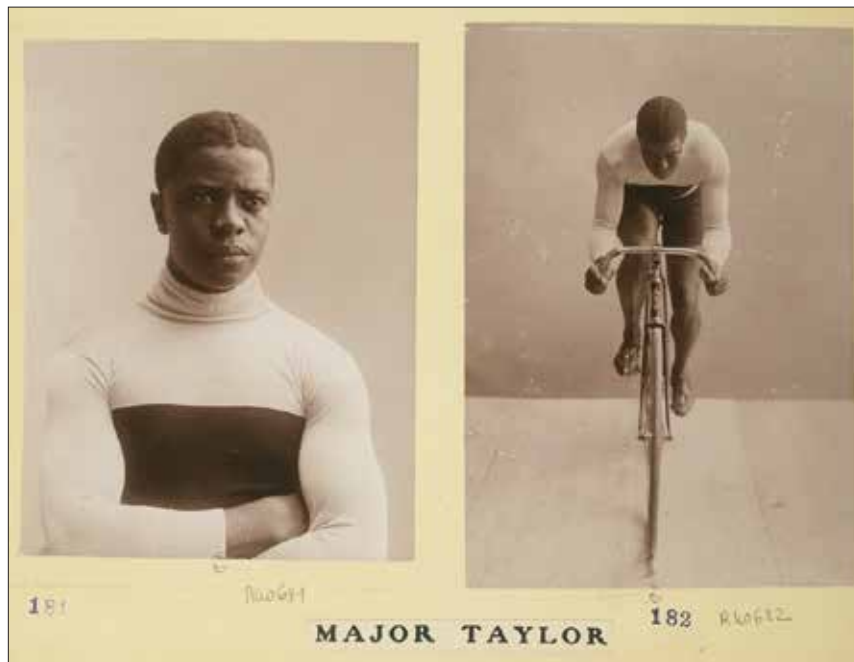


FIGURE 3. MAJOR TAYLOR CIRCA 1907: a ‘portrait’ and ‘in racing position’ by Jules Beau, photos taken in his studio in Paris, France. (Jules Beau Photographie sportive, Gallica Digital Library/Bibliothèque nationale de France)

white riders could always find an ally ... Taylor was always alone.”<sup>14</sup>

Throughout his career, Major Taylor had embodied the role carved out for him by promoters, the press, and the fans, who fed off each other’s desires for drama and dollars. The “black cyclone” was allowed on the starting line because of his exceptional talent, but he was constantly reminded, on and off the bike, of his place in the racial order. He could compete against white riders as long as he didn’t act “uppity.” His elite position was not to be used as a platform to overtly demand that equality be extended to all African-Americans.

ing. Still, for talented black athletes during the Jim Crow era, the abilities that gained them admittance to top-level sporting contests, bringing about interracial competition, were a double-edged sword, says Louis Moore, associate professor of history at Grand Valley State University (Allendale, Michigan) and author of *We Will Win the Day: The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Athlete and the Quest for Equality*. When exceptional black athletes kept winning, it spawned a backlash against racial integration in sports, lest it lead to integration in other spheres. “Sports is about manhood and superiority,” Moore said in a recent interview, and for the white establishment “to see someone like Taylor, who beats white folks at their own game ... they’re looking at this like, ‘Oh no, we can’t have that,’ ” he said. In boxing, for example, cities and states began to ban interracial fights after black boxers like Joe Gans notched victory after victory against white opponents.<sup>17</sup> Thus the same exceptional skills that propelled a black athlete’s rise could also limit his career. “You get that opportunity, and it’s not Major’s fault, but that’s the reaction,” Moore said. Taylor had seen this first-hand earlier in his career, when he was lured away from the L.A.W. and into the ascendant American Racing Cyclists Union, then excluded when the ARCU drew the color line.<sup>18</sup>

Black athletes knew or quickly learned that their opportunities came with strings attached, with unwritten rules about how they must behave. They navigated this landscape with an ethos that was later termed the politics of respectability, adhering to the dominant culture’s standards of dress and manners in the hope of being recognized as worthy of fair treatment. Acceptable behavior, Moore said, consisted of “being deferential ... dressed nice but not showing off ... not dating white women ... not boasting, not bragging ... and being humble when you win.” The idea was that “if you behave a certain way, white folks will see you’re not a problem and they’ll give you your rights,” Moore said. “It’s both how white folks look

at it and also it’s black folks’ political strategy.” This aligned with the approach of prominent black leader Booker T. Washington, who had seen Taylor’s ship off to Europe in 1902<sup>19</sup> and whose portrait hung in Taylor’s home in Worcester.<sup>20</sup> Washington urged blacks to concentrate on ele-

badge of respectability was his commitment to his Baptist religion, which included refusing to race on Sundays.

Respectability also dictated that Taylor take extra care that his cycling victories could not be disputed or qualified with any sort of asterisk. If something went wrong or the judges’ call was questionable, he was willing to do a race over. For example, in his initial 1901 match with Edmond Jacquelin, the French champion had a mechanical problem and Taylor won over the crowd with his sportsmanship, stopping to allow the heat to be rerun. Also, because working in combination with another racer could lead to the perception that he cut corners or didn’t really have what it took to win, Taylor would forgo such tactics.

Any competitor on the track could speed up, slow down, or maneuver into a space in a way that might allow someone else to get into an advantageous position. Riders sometimes literally bought that kind of assistance

by secretly promising to share the winnings with the helpers. Major Taylor steered clear of any such plots. The one time Major Taylor “made an arrangement” — though not for money — was in a one-mile race in February 1904 at the Adelaide Oval, 10 days after he was injured in Melbourne.<sup>21</sup> A rider from West Australia named Bill MacDonald offered to help Taylor fend off a plot led by Floyd McFarland. According to his autobiography, Major Taylor at first demurred, then offered a suggestion to MacDonald: “If you really want to see me bring that bunch into camp, all I want you to do is go to the last lap at top speed, and be sure to hold the black line [the pole position] all the way, regardless of what position I am in.” MacDonald complied, and Taylor got in his slipstream on the final lap. Hardy Downing pulled alongside MacDonald, with McFarland drafting right behind him and Fred Scheps on their tail. This put Taylor “in a very bad pocket,” tightly blocked in.

“Seeing my predicament McFarland made a terrific bolt for the tape,” Taylor wrote. But MacDonald moved out slight-



FIGURE 4. NAT BUTLER IN 1909  
(Agence Meurisse, Gallica Digital Library/Bibliothèque nationale de France)



FIGURE 5. THE INTEGRATED BOSTON PURSUIT TEAM of 1897: (left to right) Frank Butler, Burns Pierce, Major Taylor, Nat Butler, & Eddie McDuffie  
(Bearings, July 29, 1897/Library of Congress)

vating themselves through hard work and material prosperity as a way to advance their status in society. Taylor’s brightest

ly, and Taylor launched his own sprint at the same moment, shooting past MacDonald on the inside and coming out of the final turn just inches ahead of McFarland. In the home stretch, Taylor increased his lead and won by three-quarters of a length. McFarland cried collusion but the judges ignored him.

Taylor wrote that it was the first and only time in Australia he “entered into a scheme with any other rider to assist me in any way. I always fought out my own battles, single-handed, and I would have done so this time except for the fact that the Adelaide group ... were bent upon injuring me again, let alone bring about my defeat by unfair methods.”

Taylor took immense satisfaction in having bested his nemesis, calling it “by far the greatest personal victory of my life.”<sup>22</sup> But Taylor’s win failed to even the score with McFarland, Jim Fitzpatrick wrote in the book *Major Taylor in Australia*, because “the victory wasn’t achieved alone.” As the rivals next set their sights on the high-stakes Sydney Thousand, McFarland appeared unshaken by his loss in Adelaide, where Taylor “had help and McFarland knew it.”

It was this paradox that ensnared Major Taylor. It was increasingly hard to win if he could not use the same tactics as his opponents. Having an ally in Adelaide had gotten him across the finish line first, but it violated an unwritten condition of his acceptance among whites. Any victory had to be earned entirely on his own. Though he cast his trait of competing “single-handed” as a matter of preference, his own chosen style, the reaction to his Adelaide win showed that he essentially had no other choice, for his success would be devalued if he took any other path.

Major Taylor had turned down a partnership before, when McFarland had proposed that they team up for the December 1900 ‘six-day’ at Madison Square Garden. The surprising offer from his sworn rival was tempting, according to biographer Todd Balf, for the pairing could be a box-office draw and make money for both of them. McFarland also dangled the possibility of helping Taylor navigate the bike racing landscape of Europe, where McFarland had experience.<sup>23</sup> But Taylor’s new sponsor, the Iver Johnson bicycle company, wanted Taylor to focus on sprint records.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Taylor also smelled a rat:

He declined the offer.

It is not known how it came about that Taylor and Butler were paired for the 1908 Boston ‘six-day’. For Taylor, the opportunity to ride with Butler instead of against him certainly held promise. Despite Taylor’s relative inexperience with long races and with working as a team, he and Butler appeared to make a smooth go of it, at least for the first three days.

Worthington Mitten, a rider from Davenport, Iowa, who finished the race in third place with teammate Floyd Krebs of Newark, New Jersey, kept newspaper clippings about the Boston ‘six-day’ in his scrapbooks.<sup>25</sup> Taylor did not. Writing his autobiography about 20 years later and quoting heavily from the newspaper clippings that he did have on hand, Taylor conflated and condensed his three “comeback” seasons, 1907, 1908, and 1909, with no mention of the Boston six-day race. At that point in his chronicle, he had already written more than 400 pages, and was under financial and domestic pressure to complete the book. (He did recount that the Park Square track burned down<sup>27</sup> the morning after his last appearance there, when he beat Australian champion Jackie Clark “handily” in the deciding heat of a best-of-three match on Saturday night, January 16, 1909. Many other cyclists lost their bicycles in the pre-dawn fire, but not Taylor. Taylor was “fleeced out of a \$500 purse” after Clark was persuaded to file a post-race protest against Taylor on Saturday night. Taylor had “vowed I would never ride in the Park Square Garden again” and immediately took all his belongings home safely.<sup>28</sup>) [Figure 6]

Individually, Taylor and Butler did get off to a rocky start in the Boston ‘six-day’ at Park Square. The two were in separate crashes on opening night, February 17, resulting in “stiff necks,” *The Boston Daily*

*Globe* reported. There were \$15 cash prizes for sprints at the end of each hour, and awards for the first three to cross the finish line at the end of each night. But after Taylor’s crash in the first hour, he did not push it in Monday’s finish. [Figure 7]

The second night of this ‘six-day’, “the crowd did not think the negro had a finishing sprint in him,” according to *Bicycling World*, but Taylor surprised them.<sup>29</sup> With one lap to go, Taylor “jumped Walter Bardgett, who was leading, and like a flash he dashed ahead crossing the tape a winner,” the *Globe* said. For overall distance,

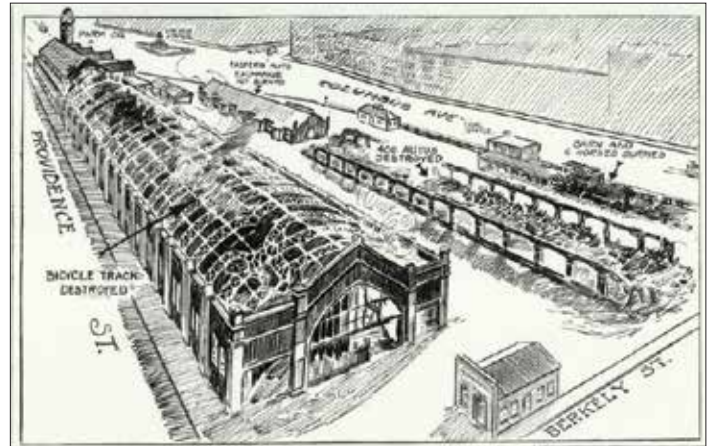


FIGURE 6. A NEWSPAPER ILLUSTRATION showing the location and damage of the fire that hit Boston’s Park Square on January 17, 1909. (The Boston Post, January 18, 1909, page 1)

the 10 teams in the race remained tied at the end of Tuesday’s racing.

Wednesday, the overall standings were unchanged. “Major Taylor was lost in the shuffle” in the evening’s final sprint, *The Boston Post* reported, “but felt entirely satisfied, for on the sprint at the end of the second hour he had been a winner in a hard mile, with (Matt) Downey second.”

On Thursday, Major Taylor won the first hour’s sprint over Bardgett, but fell back in the overall standings. “Field gets lap on Taylor and Butler,” read *The Boston Post* headline. In the second hour, as riders accelerated one by one and competitors pushed to keep up the pace, “Nat Butler was in trouble and Major Taylor was slow in being sent to the rescue,” the newspaper said. “On top of that he did not have his speed when he relieved Nat and was quickly half a lap behind the field.” The *Globe* attributed the pair’s fumbled exchange to “bad judgment on somebody’s part in their

camp” and noted that Butler already “was about a third of a lap behind before Taylor picked him up.” After the ‘six-day’ Taylor explained to a reporter from his hometown newspaper, *The Worcester Telegram*, that he was being careful to do the pickup properly, as he had been warned by the referee that the wheels of the two bikes must overlap during the exchange.<sup>30</sup>

On Friday the pair lost another lap, but they couldn’t be counted out. Taylor made a “brilliant sprint” in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to regain ground, the *Post* said.

team was two laps behind and that Taylor did not go after the sprint prizes.<sup>33</sup>

The *Post* lamented Taylor’s absence from the final mile, a “banner finish” in which Iver Lawson outsprinted John Bedell and Krebs, with Joe Fogler of Brooklyn, New York, close behind, to capture the overall six-day victory. “The one unfortunate feature that marred the race was the absence of Major Taylor, the colored whirlwind, who had been forced through friction between himself and his partner, Nat Butler, to quit the contest at 6 o’clock,” the *Post* said.

riding, so he quit after hinting to Taylor that the latter should divide the bonus.” As the newspapers suggested, Taylor felt Butler had not done a fair share of the work. On top of that, the idea of paying Butler for his cooperation must have made him bristle. The champion who typically shunned “arrangements” was getting another bitter taste of the difficulty of teaming up with anyone.

In his post-race interview with the *Telegram*, Taylor blamed Butler for the team’s defeat. “But from his talk it is evident that

Butler blames Taylor,” the newspaper said.<sup>36</sup> After explaining the matter of the forfeited bonus, the story noted that Taylor came out a financial winner nonetheless, collecting “four of the hour prizes and one for leading at the finish one night, with one second prize for being second at one finish. Butler got in second once.” Then Taylor is quoted describing how Butler couldn’t or wouldn’t execute



FIGURE 7. ONE OF THE SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS ARTICLES that covered the six-day race in detail. (The Boston Post, February 18, 1908, page 8)

Then came the final day of the contest and the longest, with eight hours of racing on tap Saturday, starting at 2 p.m. Taylor won the first hour’s sprint, giving “the delighted spectators a chance to see Major Taylor at his best,” the *Post* reported, “in fierce competition with (Floyd) Krebs and (John) Bedell.” Then, sometime after 4 p.m., Taylor got a flat tire, and Butler would not relieve him. Taylor got back in the race, but was too exhausted to continue for long. The team withdrew from the race at 6 o’clock “after some little dispute,” *Bicycling World* reported, without saying what the disagreement was.<sup>31</sup> The *Globe* said diplomatically that the tiff was that “Nat and Taylor could not agree as to which was doing the greater share of the riding.”<sup>32</sup> The *Post* said Butler “sullenly declined to appear on the track, chagrined at the fact that his

“Had Taylor been able to get a few minutes’ relief at any time during the day, undoubtedly he would have finished the race out and given the rest of the field a battle royal for first money.”

*Bicycling World* pointed out that at the time Taylor and Butler withdrew from the race, “they were then two laps behind, so it would not have made any difference in the final placing” for them to keep riding until the finish at 10:30 p.m.<sup>34</sup> But to Taylor it did make a difference. Taylor was to get a bonus for finishing the race, it was explained the following Monday in the *Worcester Telegram*. “Taylor was the only rider of the lot to get a bonus, the management figuring out that he would be worth the money as a drawing card.”<sup>35</sup> Butler, with no such payout at stake, “saw little money coming his way for eight hours’

the strategy Taylor wanted: “The trouble with Butler’s riding was that he stayed back all the time instead of being up there with the leaders where they couldn’t shake him. I kept telling him all through the racing to keep up near the lead, but he persisted in staying back near the tail end where he was switched this way and that, just like the tailender when boys are playing snap-the-whip.”

As for Taylor’s rivalry with Lawson, the ‘six-day’ left unfinished business. Immediately after the race, Taylor challenged Lawson to a one-on-one match, but Lawson was under no obligation to accept and already stood the winner from their previous match and now the six-day race. Fogler, however, who had finished fourth in the ‘six-day’ with teammate Hugh McLean of Chelsea, agreed to race Tay-



lor. The prize in that match, set for February 29 at Park Square, was \$1,000: Taylor, reverting to his tried-and-true type of racing, was the victor.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, at least for the newspaper-reading public, Taylor put a positive spin on his own performance in the Boston ‘six-day’, noting that he’d exceeded expectations. “I was surprised myself by the great riding I did,” he told the *Telegram* reporter. “I hadn’t been on a wheel since I was in Paris last summer, and have been training for this race only three weeks, once a day, at that. Butler and myself were considered the weak team in the race, and I was the weakling. I am satisfied from the work I did against men who have been riding all the time that I can beat any of them right in their own game. I did not expect to do as well as I did.” After all, the ‘six-day’ was only a pre-season warmup for Major Taylor’s main objective, another season in Europe, his trusty escape from American racism. If he had harbored any hopes that the two-man format might be a way to sharpen his edge in the United States, the Boston six-day experience proved otherwise. The blowup with Butler, no matter how the blame was apportioned, only reinforced what Taylor already knew: He would always have to go it alone. 🌐

[LYNNE TOLMAN, the author of this article on Major Taylor, is President of the Major Taylor Association in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the article appears here at the invitation of The Wheelmen Magazine’s Editor Gary W. Sanderson.]

## ENDNOTES

1. EDITOR’S NOTE: *The following are useful as a sampling of the books written about Marshall ‘Major’ Taylor and his marvelous bicycle racing career:*  
 Andrew Ritchie (1996), *Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer*, 300 pp.  
 Conrad Kerber & Terry Kerber (2014). *Major Taylor: The inspiring story of a black cyclist and the men who helped him achieve worldwide fame*, 418 pp.  
 Michael Kranish (2019). *Major Taylor: The fastest bicycle rider in the world*, (to be published on 5/7/2019)
2. Andrew Ritchie (1996), *Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer*, p. 68. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, USA). Original edition 1988 (Bicycle Books; San Francisco, CA, USA)
3. “Ten Teams for Six Days Race.” *The Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*, February 1, 1908, p. 671. (The Bicycling World Company; New York, NY, USA)
4. Marshall W. “Major” Taylor (1928), *The Fastest Bicycle Rider In the World*, p. 410. (Wormley Publishing Company, Worcester, MA, USA)
5. Jim Fitzpatrick (2011), *Major Taylor in Australia*, p. vi. (Star Hill Studio, Kilcoy, Queensland, Australia)
6. See Endnote 5.
7. “Iver Lawson Beats Taylor.” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, February 9, 1908, p. 10. (The Globe Newspaper Company, Boston, MA, USA)
8. “Major Taylor to Race Again.” *The Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*, January 11, 1908, p. 547. (The Bicycling World Company; New York, NY, USA)
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