

TELEGRAM&GAZETTE

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All cranked up

Nearly 100 turn low gear on George Street

By Melanie Mangum

TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

WORCESTER — For Harrison F. McCann, 15, of Rutland, the strategy was simple — make it to the top of the hill.

When the hill is George Street — the 500-foot “quad-buster” that is one of Worcester’s steepest streets — that strategy needs to be backed up with a lot of leg muscle and sheer force of will to get to the top on a bike.

Nearly 100 people showed up yesterday to take on the fourth annual George Street Bike Challenge for Major Taylor, competing to turn in the best time on a course, while short, that presents a grueling elevation gain of 89 feet and an average grade of 18 percent.

Harrison, No. 59 in the order, munched on a bagel for energy as he watched other riders attempt the climb.

“I’m just planning to pedal hard all the way, hoping to get up there,” the teenager said.

The annual event, sponsored by Barney’s Bicycle and the Seven Hills Wheelmen, is named for the first African-American world-champion cyclist, Marshall W. “Major” Taylor, who lived and trained in Worcester. Yesterday’s event was expected to raise between \$6,000 and \$7,000, the proceeds going to the construction of a monument to honor Mr. Taylor, who held seven world records in 1898.

Yesterday’s bike climb was dedicated to Mr. Taylor’s daughter, Sydney Taylor Brown, who died in May at the age of 101.

“She had a remarkable life in her own right,” said event co-organizer Lynne Tolman, spokeswoman for the Major Taylor Association. “She was a teacher and social worker, and her children and their children cherish her memory and the stories of her famous bike rider father.”

Mr. Taylor, once called the “Worcester Whirlwind,” won the world 1-mile championship in Montreal in 1899. Having lived in Worcester since 1895, he trained on the city’s streets — even tackling the then-unpaved George Street on a one-speed bike.

There were bicycles of all kinds at yesterday’s event, everything from fixed-gear bicycles to a BMX bike.

Patrick Scalley, 15, of Worcester, turned in a time of 30.44 seconds on a mountain bike and captured the gold medal in the Juniors 12-15 Division.

In a first for the event, husband and wife team Mark and Diane Shelley of Holden completed the time trial on a tandem bike. Riding as No. 8 in the lineup, the couple finished in a respectable sub-one minute time of 59.22 seconds.

“It’s a lot of effort,” said Mrs. Shelley, who said the extra push that could be added by standing up just isn’t feasible with a tandem bike on a hill as steep as George Street.

So the strategy was to “spin and spin,” as they made their way up, encouraging each other as they went.

Mr. Shelley said he wanted to try the George Street Bike Challenge because he was put on a waiting list for the Mount Washington Auto Road Bicycle Climb. That event costs \$300 to register, compared with the George Street event, which costs \$15.

“This one is more money per linear foot travel,” Mr. Shelley joked, “and it’s over in somewhere between 24 and 59 seconds.”

Thomas Carr, 27, of Worcester, took home the gold medal in the men’s 18-34 division and the top time for this year’s event, mastering the ascent in 24.09 seconds, beating last year’s time of 24.13 seconds, set by Brian Chapman, of Providence, who won the bronze medal in the men’s 18-34 division this year. The course record of 23.56 seconds, was set in 2002.

Scott Dolmat-Connell, 18, of Princeton, a junior gold medalist at age 16 in the event, took home the silver medal in the men’s 18-34 division yesterday, recording a time of 24.28 seconds.

Daniel R. Harrington of West Newbury, who has participated in the Mount Washington bike climb, said yesterday’s event is “as fun, if not more so.”

The 46-year-old was competing in his fourth George Street Bike Challenge, hoping to beat his best time of 30.12 seconds on his Cannondale road bike.

“I’m two seconds better each year,” Mr. Harrington said. “I get better as I get older.”

He said he enjoys the challenge at this unique event.

“Where else can you see the top and the bottom of the race from the start?” he said.

The medalists and their times:

Greg Raber, of Sterling, signals “ready” during the fourth annual George Street Bike Challenge for Major Taylor. Mr. Raber was timekeeper and also competed.

Below, Ben Merva, 18, of Worcester, grinds his way up the hill during the fourth annual George Street Bike Challenge for Major Taylor yesterday. Mr. Merva finished fifth in the men’s 18-34 division and eighth overall.

T&G Staff Photos/CHRISTINE PETERSON



Scott Dolmat-Connell, 18, of Princeton, cranks to a second place overall finish.

Men’s 18-34 division — First: Thomas Carr, 27, Worcester, 24.09; second: Scott Dolmat-Connell, 18, Princeton, 24.28; third: Brian Chapman, 31, Providence, 24.44.

Men’s 35-49 division — First: Eric deRivera, 48, West Boylston, 25.40; second, Pat Convery, 42, Shrewsbury, 26.13; third: Jason Pare, 36, Leominster, 27.91.

Juniors 16-17 division — First: Corey Graves, 17, Worcester, 25.60; second: Matt Barton, 17, Auburn, 26.10; third: Michael Metzmacher, 17, Rutland, 30.00.

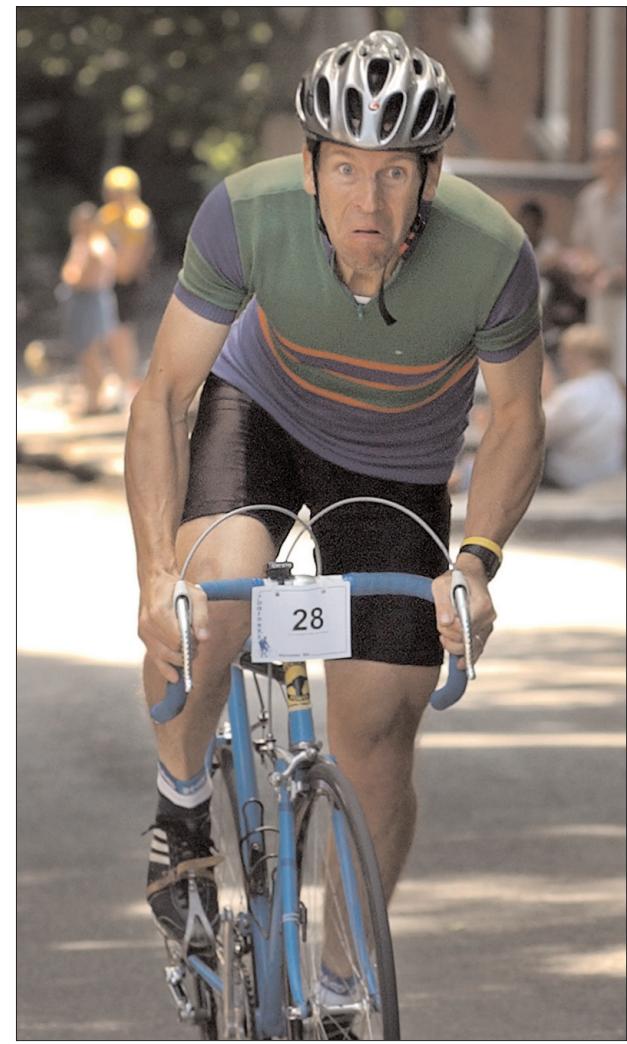
Men’s 50+ division — First: Jonathan Rourke, 50, Worcester, 32.81; second: Jack Whiteley, age not listed, Somers, Conn., 33.03; third: Mieczyslaus “Mickey” Burzynski, 53, Newburyport, 33.13.

Juniors 12-15 division: First: Patrick Scalley, 15, Worcester, 30.44; second: Alexander LaRose, 15, Webster, 33.97; third: Paul Lynch, 12, Colchester, Conn., 38.38.

Women’s 18-34 division — First: Kyrsten Koebach, 31, Ayer, 41.53; second: Jennie Allen, 33, Worcester, 52.12.

Women’s 35+ division — First: Margaret Kadlick, 40, Holliston, 48.56; second: Cynthia Rup, 44, Boylston, 50.00; third: Melissa Houston, 36, Oxford, 52.43.

Tandem division: First: Mark Shelley, 43, & Diane Shelley, 52, Holden, 59.22.



Eric deRivera, 48, of West Boylston, raced to first place in the men’s 35-49 division and fifth overall.