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A proper tribute

Major Taylor Boulevard honors cycling champ

The former Worcester Center Boulevard now officially is Major Taylor Boulevard. It is a fitting tribute to a once world-famous Worcesterite who for decades was all but forgotten.

Marshall W. Taylor dominated cycling for the decade around the turn of the 19th century when the worldwide mania for professional cycling was at its peak. A young man of prodigious talent, he overcame not only his racing rivals, but racial taunts, assaults and death threats off the track as well. At age 13, he left the intolerance of his native Midwest behind and made Worcester his home.

At the dedication ceremony yesterday, Mayor Timothy P. Murray aptly compared Major Taylor to Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong rolled into one. Mr. Murray, who proposed the name change last fall, added that Major Taylor really was the Jackie Robinson of the early 1900s, having broken the race barrier in cycling as would Mr. Robinson in pro baseball a half-century later.

The Rev. Roosevelt Hughes, pastor of the John Street Baptist Church, which Major Taylor attended, sees him as a role model: "He knew who he was. He knew what he wanted to do. And he had the courage to do it."

Well said. The naming of Major Taylor Boulevard is a fitting tribute to a champion who illuminates an often forgotten period in American history with his shining example of courage, fortitude and perseverance.



T&G Staff / MARK C. IDE

Major name change

WORCESTER— Lynne Tolman, a board member of the Major Taylor Association, and the Rev. Roosevelt Hughes, president of the Worcester Black Clergy Alliance and pastor of John Street Baptist Church, help unveil a sign yesterday renaming a portion of Worcester Center Boulevard Major Taylor Boulevard. Marshall W. "Major" Taylor, the 1899 world cycling champion known as the "Worcester Whirlwind," lived most of his life in Worcester. He overcame prejudice to become one of the first internationally acclaimed black sports superstars. The Massachusetts Legislature and Gov. Mitt Romney recently approved \$205,000 for a Major Taylor statue to be built outside the Worcester Public Library. Major Taylor Boulevard extends from Lincoln Square to the DCU Center box office.