Marshall "Major" Taylor was a multiple world record holder cyclist and the second Black world champion in any sport. Taylor was born in Indianapolis in 1878 and by 1898 had broken seven world records. He was crowned national and world champion in 1899. Taylor competed in races around the globe, including Australia and Europe.

From Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Rider by Andrew Ritchie:

On Sunday, June 30, 1895 at age 18, Taylor won a 75-mile road race from Indianapolis to Matthews... The man who owned the race was George Cramton, who was an ardent lover of athletic sports, taking especially great interest in bicycling... Cramton had invested in real estate and the construction of railroads in the Matthews area and wanted publicity for his enterprises. He was also interested in the bicycle craze himself because word had spread about his being hired from the race in Indianapolis because of his color.

Early on Sunday morning, at the start of the race in Matthews, a crowd of people gathered in the town square, and the race began. Taylor was in the lead and was soon overtaken by other riders. He fell off his bike and was left behind by the other 20 or so competitors. "I pedaled along in the rear for several miles," Taylor recalled, "...and was carrying up great speed before they were aware that I was in the race. They made things difficult for me by crying out "Get out of the way!" at me, but I made no response to this abuse because I was dodging in and out of the hayfield if I did not want to fall. I thought that if I could not get ahead, I might as well try to keep ahead of the bunch of riders, as I jumped through the first opening and went as far out as I could to the right...

When I got to the back, we had passed around the first curve and were on a level stretch of road that was slightly orbited, with some puddles on one side and a smooth roadway on the other side. I had gone through my mind that I must make an effort to get a bit of my composition in order to start those free from the wind. I spread my hands and thought, I opened up the windscreen between my saddle and the frame of the road, and made a steady effort that never failed to get up to me and give me a chance to do in my badly

The race had begun to fall in to men almost immediately, and the short clay turned into a thick mud. "The condition of the road was such as to make it impossible to make any sort of time," a spectator commented. "For a number of miles the windscreen was so strong that it was like a rough of water. We passed the clips or slings to the trees to make it almost impossible for them to run through the mud." Two of the riders almost lost a mower, at about the fifteen-mile distance mark, but were both So intense were exhaustion than they could rest no further. They shook hands and agreed to quit.

At Matthews, where the stroke man left us to walk in the rain, were dripping with water and covered from head to foot in real men of jute. Many Taylor's fans had agreed to meet him in the city, and had taken the southern train to visit him. But, because of the awful conditions, they had given him up and went to dinner when Taylor passed into the place. They hurried out, however, and took

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To Matthews where Taylor arrived at 9:51 PM. In fact, he won the only pedal to finish the race. The first prize was a cooler box worth $20 in the center of Matthews. Taylor tucked the deed in his pocket and walked home to present it to his mother. "I am sure she was dazed over my success, but she made no pretense that I would ride such a long race again. I was only 18 years old at the time."

Matthews

W

E

S

Indiana

Road Major:
Bicycle Race from Indianapolis to Matthews, June 30, 1895