

## Audio file

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## Transcript

### Speaker 1

It's time for the outspoken cyclist your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at [outspokencyclists.com](https://outspokencyclists.com) or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host, Diane.

### Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for joining me today. Today's episode is about one man and his life as told in a new documentary, as well as a new biographical novel. Marshall Major Taylor is the name so many of us know. Yet what do we really know about the man? Todd Gould is an Emmy award-winning producer and author who lives and works in Bloomington IN. He's also the executive producer of Major Taylor's champion of the race, a one hour documentary that will air Monday, February 26th at 8:00 PM Eastern Time on WTIU Bloomington IN's PBS station. It will also stream on your PBS Passport app and be available. Later on this spring, on most PBS stations around the country, Todd will be with me to talk about the film in a moment. Then, sometimes inspiration at a young age ends up being the direction of your entire life. Such is the case for John Howard, one of the most successful cyclists of our time. Among some of his feats, John won a gold medal at the 1971 Pan Am Games Road race as a member of the US Army. Cycling team he took first place at the 1981 Hawaiian Ironman, raced in three separate Summer Olympics and came in second in the inaugural race across America in 1980. Due he set a land speed record at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1985 that stood for 10 years and of course he is a member of both the bicycling and triathlon halls of fame. So what drives someone to achieve this kind of success? In John's case, it was the story of Marshall Major Taylor, the talented and ambitious black cyclist. Who overcame intense racism to become a world champion at the turn of the last century? John will be with me in the second part. Of the show. Major Taylor was not only one of the greatest cyclists and athletes to ever compete, he was a gentleman and a pioneer, navigating a world that didn't want African American athletes to survive, let alone thrive. As you will hear in my conversation with Emmy award-winning producer Todd Gould, Major Taylor story is a timely and. Fascinating tale that needs to be heard. Hi, Todd. Welcome to the outspoken cyclist. Thanks for being my guest today. How are you and how's Indiana?

### Speaker 3

It's wonderful. Yeah, the weather's starting to get a little warmer, and it's the buds are starting to come on the.

Speaker 2

Trees. So that's really good. Yeah. I'm not sure we're there yet. I I, my husband said he saw daffodils this morning on the way to work. But other than that, I don't know. So I wanna talk about your documentary. Made your tailor champion of the race. It's it's airing on February 26 on your PBS station, which is WTIU in in Bloomington. We will let people know at the end of our conversation how they can.

Speaker 3

That's correct, right?

Speaker 2

Stream it and eventually it'll be on all of the PBS stations or through passport. So let's talk about the title first. Because I imagine that it has sort of a double meaning to it, champion of the race. It's it's kind of a very clever title. We all most of my listeners know who Major Taylor was, but go ahead, tell me about the title and how you decided upon that.

Speaker 3

Well, you know, I think that one of the things that stood out to me a lot about Major Taylor's story was what an amazing, not only not only just an amazing cyclist, an amazing athlete. Certainly he was all of those things and he set 20 world records and and did all kinds of amazing. Things in the world of. Of track cycling. But what really impressed me was how how he negotiated for greater social and economic opportunities for African Americans during the heart of Jim Crow America during the, you know, by the turn of the 20th century. So to to have. Him figure out how to gain greater agency, how to negotiate contracts, to to, to compete in a number of these races, especially ones in in towns where he was not welcome to, to stay and. To stay at a hotel or to eat at a restaurant, you know, this was really the heart of Jim Crow America that he was trying to travel through. And yet he did it with such class and such style that he was referred to as a race man. So that was. And of course then, if you're asking about the title, then of course then I've. Just started thinking about. Race, racing, race relations. And and so I I would, I would argue that champion of the race does have a double meaning and and it's and I think it's very appropriate on both parts.

Speaker 2

I agree. I agree. I think it's a great title, a great title. So where did you get a lot of the documentation in this film? The information you've got, some luminaries. Another one is on the show with you this week, John Howard, whose book is out right now. The black cyclone, which is also about Major Taylor. So this whole show is about Major Taylor.

Speaker 3

Thank you. Thank you.

Speaker 2

Tell us who else is in the documentary and then I want to go through a little bit of how what you're covering from the start to finish.

Speaker 3

Of course we we've had some really great response from people that you know had heard had heard about. Major story had felt like maybe it was under told underrepresented. His story had been underrepresented. Right. And and I thought it was interesting that we had a number of different athletes and sports executives. Not just, not just African American pioneers, but female pioneers, LGBTQ pioneers, Hispanic. And you know, a lot of them reflect back and say, you know, if Major Taylor hadn't done what he did, I wouldn't be able to do what I do. Right? So so it's it's more of it's more than just about, about a bunch of old stuff that happened a long time ago, but actually has a rich legacy. Today, that athletes, sports executives, people in social activism, community activism. All see those same themes pop up in Major Taylor's story and and. And I think it resonates with a lot of.

Speaker 2

People that way. Let me take a moment to reintroduce you, and then I want to talk a little bit about how the the documentaries put together. We're speaking with Todd Gould. He's the executive producer of a new documentary on Major Taylor, Major Taylor, champion of the race. Air February 26, which is Monday at 8:00 PM on WTIU out of Indiana. And you're gonna be able to stream it after that on through your PBS passport app. Of which I hope everybody has one big fan of PBS here.

Speaker 3

Yeah. Yeah, thank you. Well, thanks. We'll, we'll, we'll. Take the plug.

Speaker 2

Yeah, there you go.

Speaker 3

Yeah. So just just real quick to answer your question from before too. In terms of other luminaries you. We had a a number of, you know, gold medal athletes, top folks at ESPN and the Washington Post. We have Jonathan Jackson, who is Jesse Jackson's son. He's a congressman from Illinois, and he's pushing now currently to get a House Resolution bill passed in Congress. To posthumously award. Taylor, with the congressional gold.

Speaker 2

Medal. That's great.

Speaker 3

And so, yeah, so all these things sort of came together and and it's been wonderful for me to go to all these different places all over the United States to talk to people about this particular history. And they each of them in their own ways, working to try to remember Major Taylor and and his not only just his life, but.

Speaker 2

Well, it's very interesting that you have original music. You have a mezzo soprano who is actually voicing the documentary. You have as it. Brandon Marsalis.

Speaker 3

Sure. So Branford loves, yeah. Bradford ourselves. Yeah, 3 \* 3 time. Yeah, three time Grammy Award winner is is reading the passages from Major Taylor's autobiography, which is really terrific because that's a lot of first person accounts. You know, that kind of thing. So it's, you know, I did this. I saw this.

Speaker 2

Branford, Marshall. Come on, Diane. You know it's Branford.

Speaker 3

I felt this way that there's. That that kind of power in that so Branford brings. Major Taylor's voice to life through the reading of these passages in his autobiography and then Marietta Simpson, who is the the metal soprano from the Philadelphia Philharmonic, and she's the primary narrator for the film and and then Tyron Cooper, who was a five time Emmy Award winner. And in terms of musical score and sound. Track is recording that Tyrone and I are pals. We've we've been. We've been together for a long time and he's he's scored a number of different documentaries for me. So and they're all just wonderful. And and each of these folks lending their time and their talents to this, I think it comes back again to major story and how people found. This story to. Be so compelling and that they wanted to be a part. Of it. So I I'm I'm just. I'm the conduit. You know, they they just come through me to to produce something really cool and that and that's what's.

Speaker 2

I get that I think it's awesome. I think it's just awesome. How long is the film?

Speaker 3

60 minutes. Good Yep.

Speaker 2

Me, you you can hardly tell his life in 60 minutes. But I'll bet you can pick up some of the best highlights of.

Speaker 3

Right. And and you know, initially I had started out trying to make this show a little longer, more like a feature length 90 minute film. But I think it was really more of a question of distribution and you know, we could get, say 2/3 of the stations across America to pick up a 90 minute show. But we could get, you know, 98% of stations covering an hour. So so I so I sort of opted to cut it down and and and have it shared more widely. Across the US.

Speaker 2

It also gives people the opportunity to get a taste of major tailor and maybe do a little more digging on their own. And I mean there's a lot out there now and more and more all the time. And it seems so. I wanna take a moment to talk about your. I think it's the 29th. Of course. February 29th, leap year, that you're doing a question and answer session. It's sold out. I understand that at the at the Museum, Indiana State Museum, what are you going to be talking about?

Speaker 3

There, though, well, so it'll it will. Be screening the film. And that'll be sort of a premiere screening and then and there's, there's several people in the documentary itself. Historians, archivists, Major Taylor's great granddaughter, is coming in from Hawaii. And so yeah, it's great. And so I thought it might be rather than just do a Q&A with me as the TV producer, I thought it might be more interesting to watch the film. And then here's five people you just saw in the film all up.

Speaker 2

Oh, nice.

Speaker 3

On stage and you could ask any one of them questions you know, because I thought well. You know, there's certain historians that are going to know a lot more about Taylor's history. There's some that just know about the history of race relations at the time period. And then, of course, you got Majora's great granddaughter, and you can actually talk to.

Speaker 2

Somebody in Major Taylor's family, if you go there, you go. Well, a lot of people may or may not know that for all his successes and for all of the records he said, and for the.

Speaker 3

Wish yes.

Speaker 2

Competition. His his abilities were really unmatched in the day. The man died penniless and I don't know how you end the film, but I I'm pretty sure that it will make people very sad to know that.

Speaker 3

Yes, I mean and and we we explore that to a certain degree. You know in terms of what happened for him financially and and that kind of thing. I mean a lot of it had to do with just the the pressures of the Great Depression. We're hitting everybody hard at at at the time and major was just trying to reinvent himself once again. So he he was done. He he he was too old to race anymore. Competitively so. He opted in like a lot of the bicycle manufacturers did at the time they started switching over to automobile production and Taylor actually got a couple of patents on what was essentially what we call today, a steel belted radial tire for for automobiles. And so he had been working on that, but then at the same time. He was sucking a lot of his own money, investing in the these car parts at the same time. He's he's got a weakened heart, he's got several diseases that are coming on. So there's a lot of physical ailments. And then that takes money and time and resources, and so that. And, you know, just simply a 15 year career of just horrible racist practices that he had to face and overcome. And I think it just I think it just beat him up, you know, it was. I mean was I I think. I I I would almost say I think that he would die of a broken heart because of of because I think he was trying so hard to push out. Greater opportunity, economic opportunity, social opportunity, cultural opportunity and and he was just the tip of the spear. I mean, he it was just him by himself. I mean, he didn't have teammates, you know, he and he's the only black face in the crowd. And in the United States, that didn't bode well. It did not bode well for him because. There were so many places that that did not allow him to stay or to race or to eat. He ends up ultimately going over to to Europe for a while and and then there he's treated like a king because the the, the bicycle Riders and racers in France. Just thought he was like this bronze Adonis is what they. Call him a. A lot of a. Lot of words that were very glowing, you know, excited, you know, and I think he found that agency there. You know, when he was touring around the the world. Same thing in Australia for a period of time. But you know it just. It it's was a difficult period of time in the late 20s and early 30s and he was trying to make another go of it and was losing his money and his health as a result. So so it is sad, but I will say that. I couldn't in the documentary that way you. Know I just couldn't do it. Yeah. So. So what? What I tried to do in the last 5-7 minutes of the show is just talk about legacy and what's all the other things that are going on that you had you had mentioned to me earlier that you thought that, you know, the guy is getting a moment now, right. He's getting he's getting us a. Place in the spotlight and and there are a lot of efforts, you know, national bike rides on our major Taylor bike rides around the unit. States. I know there's a new initiative up in the Brownsville district in Chicago where they're trying to restore some areas where Major Taylor had lived for a period of time, certainly in Worcester, MA. They do a pretty good job of remembering him. The statue and the street and the museum and a bunch of other things that are there in Worcester. So I left it on that note, you know, with school children reading about him

right with, you know, museum exhibits and in a much more sort of uplifting tone, which I think that that's what. I I would like to think that that's what Major Taylor would have wanted is to say, you know, let's look at the big picture and. The not only just what you know, I did as Major Taylor, right, but but also what we all of us together, white and black coming together and and making great opportunities happen.

Speaker 2

Well, I really appreciate you making this film and I think people are gonna enjoy watching it. I'm looking forward to it. We've been speaking with Todd Gould. He's the executive producer of Major Taylor, champion of the race. It airs Monday night, February 26th at 8:00 PM Eastern. Time WTIU out of Bloomington IN's PBS station. You'll pick it up through your passport, and then it'll become available on your PBS station nationwide sometime later this late spring. Thank you so much for making this film. Thank you so much for talking with me. I really appreciate it, and I'm very excited that. Major Taylor is getting his day.

Speaker 3

Yay. Yep, that that's that's the. Goal, right? So yeah, thanks.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Todd for not only joining me today, but for producing this film. And if you are inclined, let your representatives know that a Congressional gold medal is a great idea, even posthumously, for the incomparable major tailor, the documentary major tailor, champion of the race, airs tomorrow evening. February 26th at 8:00 PM Eastern on WTIU and streaming on your PBS Passport app. Find a link to the film at [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com) or [WTI u.org](http://WTI u.org). Let's take a short break, and when we return, we'll speak with cycling. Great John Howard about his new book, *The Black Cyclone*, a hero the world forgot. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. After 40 years of research travelling worldwide for details about Major Taylor's life, John Howard's new book *The Black Cyclone*, a hero of the world forgot, was just published. With access to historical documents, including an original copy of Major Taylor's autobiography, as well as traveling worldwide to delve into places where the cyclists competed and lived, John's biographical novel gives voice to Major Taylor, bringing him to life. Hi John. Welcome to the outspoken cyclist. It's a good time to have a talk with you. I'm so excited. We haven't seen each other or talk to each other in years. How are you?

Speaker 4

I'm doing fine, Diane, and it's great to hear your voice after all those years. I think the last time I saw you was in San Diego at at the one at a Bicycle builders convention down in downtown.

Speaker 2

Ohh is that the one? What was it Brian Bayless? He that's the one he. Hold on.

Speaker 4

I might well have been Brian was no longer with us. But yeah, it's been a while.

Speaker 2

Yeah. Wow. That was a long time ago. Yeah. Yeah. Well, and you know, I've spoken with people who have been working with you on certain things, like Denise for her land speed record and other people who who go to your school of champions and have been training with you. But now this is a little bit different. I want to talk to you about your new book, Marshall Taylor and. Marshall, Major Taylor and most people who listen to this show know who major Taylor was, at least. Sort of peripherally, but let's let's dive into it. The book is titled the Black Cyclone a hero the world forgot. And I'm hoping that maybe we can unforgettable him. So what is it about Major Taylor that drew you to him? Because this has been a long time. Coming this book.

Speaker 4

It has Major Taylor was born in 1878, which happens to be the same date that my grandfather was. Was also came into this world so. Early on, as a cyclist I I didn't follow the traditional, especially Midwestern sports like baseball and and basketball so much. My focus was on cycling and from almost the earliest readings I I had an opportunity to read. Is our Major Taylor's original autobiography and I have a historical copy of it today. OK. But during that period I started getting into cycling on a a fairly serious level and major Taylor was my hero. To be perfectly straightforward about that, I I revered him. And his his perspective of having to race as a black athlete in a period when it was very difficult to do that most people, most white people, could not understand. Nature's gift of speed. Certainly to Major Taylor or other African American athletes, of which there were very, very few in the 1800s.

Speaker 2

I like that turn of phrase nature's gift of speed. It's one I haven't actually heard all at once, and it's it's really interesting. Because in fact he set a speed records and as we know, many African American runners and other athletes set these amazing speed records.

Speaker 4

Well, it's a. It's a phenomenon that that can be traced. I don't know how how far back we want to trace it because it becomes a a racial issue very quickly when you start looking at at the the reasons African Americans are so gifted. But it's it. Biologically, it comes about from from a white. Muscle fibers. These are the fast twitch. Fibers in the human body that allow athletes to be labeled. Slow or fast? Major Taylor had a blend of both. He had extraordinary capabilities as a sprinter, but. What is largely unknown is that he also was quite an A good endurance athlete. His sponsors, which included Bertie



Munger, his coach early on, and Ivor Johnson, which was a, an arms and cycling dealer back at that in that era. Wanted him to compete in the six day race in Madison Square Gardens in 1896 and they pushed that. They wanted him to show his versatility. He didn't have a long time to train for it, and he was only 18 years old. At the time. So he had a lot going against him, but his early earliest the event that he he he was trained for was trick riding and his coach Bertie Munger trained him to be the best trick. Rider and that would come in handy later on when when cyclists tend to want to put him in a box and. Bring him down to the pole line, whereas other cyclists would be streamlining up at the top of the track to get away. Well, he had to. He had to maneuver himself out of those boxes, which continually formed in mass start racing.

Speaker 2

So explain what a trick rider actually does.

Speaker 4

Well, yes, I really do need to go back to the beginning. Early on, Taylor got his start from delivering newspaper. Hours and he did that on a bicycle. Early, early, major tailor, probably in his eight 910 years old. So he developed some some strength early on and at some point he started doing trick riding the. Family that more or less sponsored Major Taylor, the Southern family. Very wealthy railroad. So family in Indianapolis bought him a trick bike early on and he demonstrated his considerable skill at riding that bike and doing things that few people at the time were able to do. I mean, he could. He could ride the bike while standing on the saddle. And and one foot on the handlebars. He he could he could do wheel stands. He could. He could balance it and. Ways that it it would. Be impressive even today, so out of that, as I said, he he became very adept. At trick riding, which would help him maneuver through the pack when when the chips were down and winning was everything. And I think it's important to point out that cycling was. Arguably the the biggest sport of the time, there was also horse racing and boxing, which which came in a close second and third, but cyclists were. The best paid athletes in the world at the time they made money. Not only did they make prize money, but they had salaries from from some of their sponsors, so it was a very rich sport and I think you could say that. It in its heydays. You went to baseball games when all the seats at the bike track were sold out. That gives you some idea of of of the impact that it had in those days before the motorcycle and the automobile and the airplane existed because we were we were driven. To explore speed records. That was a big part of of the sporting discovery process, where cyclists would pace behind. When they weren't doing mass start racing, they would pace behind tandems, triplets, quads. These bikes provided a measure of excitement for the public because they kept going faster and faster and faster. And with the advent of the of the motorcycle platform, which of course evolved from bicycles, the speeds became even faster. And these these contraptions were mounted to bicycles such as the. A bike I have in my museum Orient pacing tandem and that had a bell on the back. For the the final lap. Ohh it was the. Tandems that. Originally were mounted with Didion, Betton Motors, little single cylinder motors from France, and they were

brought over by people like Albert champion and crates, and assembled on bikes like the the Orient. Which was a super sturdy bike of the of the day and the next thing we know we have what was known as motorcycles. And motorcycles, of course, quickly developed into their own game, but for quite a long time. The primary objective of the Moto cycle was to pay cyclists on the on the tracks and the velodromes of Europe. Immensely popular it it. It brought cycling to another level. You have to remember that baseball, boxing, horse racing. Basketball, football all came about and began competing for public attention. So cycling up the ante one more time with the invention of of what we today would call motorcycles. So these bikes always driven, or at least in the very beginning, you'd have the captain who would steer. The bike and then you'd have the stoger who would operate the motor and the rear. Well, it didn't take long before they they eliminated the the the stoger altogether and the bike was was now a single. So that would that's sort of how the evolution occurred and of. Course a lot of the. Those inventions, that, of course. The the pneumatic tire, the the, the spiral bevel gear which became the differential on the model. A Ford. All of these inventions started with bicycles and they brought post industrial revolution to another level and that's when we start seeing the the the early automobiles and so forth. But I'm I know I'm getting off track.

Speaker 2

That's OK. Let me take a moment to reintroduce you to listeners and then we're going to talk a little more about Major Taylor and how all of that sort of comes together. We're speaking with John Howard. I will not enumerate his accolades because they are many and over many, many years. John and I met back in 1980. 5 or 86, when he came here in Northeast Ohio to do a 1/2 Ironman, and he gave this really interesting sort of workshop lecture in front of it. And we became friends. And then I've known him. So obviously a few years and he has done RAM and he has won the Ironman. And he was our U.S. National champion. I'm. Times. Did you or did you not race for the army? I. Is that right?

Speaker 4

That was one of the first things that I did. Diane. I I I was fortunately selected most of my company ended up in Vietnam, but it was an period when we were evolving from the all draft. Era in the in the military to. The all volunteer and it was important for the the the military services and that included all the military services to offer young men because at the time young women didn't didn't participate in an athletic program which would would so we were.

Speaker 2

Right.

Speaker 4

We were really the first sports advocates of them in the military and we had. Yeah, facility back in in Fort Hamilton, New York and on Staten Island. And that was the Army's first real cycling team. Actually there was one in 64 as well with Jack Simes and a few other luminaries of the sport, but 68. Was the was the organization of all branches of the service and we all. Served and competed in bicycle racing and traveled to Europe for the season games and represented our country in the Pan American Games, which we did well. I won a gold medal in the Pan Am Games and my teammates took home 3 bronze medals. So out of that. We got to play for the next year and represent a few of us represented the US in the Olympics in Munich, Germany.

Speaker 2

Wow. And that was that was a very interesting Olympics that I do not really want to get into. Let's take a short break and we'll be back to talk with John Howard some more. You're listening to the outspoken cyclist. We are back on the outspoken cyclist. I'm Diane Jenks, and we're speaking with John Howard about his new book, The Black Cyclone. A hero the world forgot the historical biographical novel about Marshall. Major Taylor. Let's go back to Major Taylor for a second because he was sort of forced to go to Europe in a way and race in Europe. Let's talk a little bit about the way he was treated as this amazing elite cyclist. I had to have some sort of a. Peace to it. But things did not go well for him here in this country.

Speaker 4

Well, Major Taylor was the best cyclist. The the I think the world had seen I I think. Marty Zimmerman might have might have had a A. A hand in helping him, Bernie Munger certainly promoted him and and trained him. But there was. There are few people who could argue with the level of speed that this man had. He just to give you an example on period equipment he covered a kilometer in 57 seconds which today would be world record time. Now we we're we're fairly certain that's a. That's a rolling start, but if you can relate to a 57 second kilometer, you can those who race bicycles or have some understanding of track racing can understand just how fast that actually.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 4

Is that was Major Taylor in his prime. He competed a very long time from, I think 1891. His first race. He was an absolute prodigy. At age 13, his employer Sam Hay. With hey and will it cycle us down on bicycle row in Indianapolis? Bicycles were immensely popular in the in the Midwest. And hey, told him that he would like him to to show off his tricks, skills and promote the bike shop in the process, which he did and and his his How the military. Came into this and major. Came into it. It's is somewhat of a a subject of debate, but he had a military uniform, a tight fitting military uniform that hey wanted him to wear and that uniform earned him the nickname Major. So that was sort of the

beginning of the major period. I could. I could go on and do go on in the book, but there are. Very few real stories about exactly how he promoted the hay and Willie's bike shop, but it so happened that there was an important race that took place on the 4th of July. And of course Taylor was doing his best to to do his tricks in front of the crowd. Huge crowd. Thousands of people, because again, cycling was a very popular sport and this was a this was a handicap race and just by chance Tom Hay said to Major Taylor as he was cooling down from one of his ex expeditions, he said. Would you please? Actually, it was more of an order, he said. You will ride this race and Taylor was just astounded, he said. I I could, I could get hurt. I could, I could hurt somebody. I I'm not trained as a bicycle racer. This is. It's not a good idea and and he started crying. He was 13 years old at the time and. Hey, said look, you don't have to finish. Just start the race in the handicap group. Whoop and go down a few blocks and and and that's it. You don't have to finish. So when the when the race started, Taylor sure enough there was a crash very early in the race. In the first turn and the the the beginners were were not skilled. Cycle us at all and Taylor and realize he had to get out of there in a hurry. So on this trick bike he rode as fast as he possibly could to make a Long story short, he won the race. He beat out Walter Marmon of of who was the state champion and Marmon. I actually supported him. He won the race, beat Marmon and his Sprint. And and. There was, it was protested. How can this black Kid win an important race such as this? This can't be, and the officials wanted to disqualify him. Marmon stood up for him. He said no. He beat me fair and square. He deserves the gold medal. Give it to him. And they did. Marmon, of course, went on to great fame and as as the with the Marmon Wasp and the and the great sedans, they. Well, the the Marmon Wasp was the first winner of the Indianapolis 500, so on and on there there's a lot of stories like that. One of the one of the the most enjoyable parts of the book, I think, is trying to explain all of the the. Various nuances of how the industrial revolution was manifesting itself to continually improve the mechanical invention such as the automobile and the Wright brothers, and their role in developing the airplane. Major Taylor was had an engineering mine and he was fascinated by this technology and wanted desperately after his retirement to get into the Motor Age and and the automobile industry and wanted very much to compete in motor racing. Well, that didn't happen, but onward I. Apologize for getting ahead of myself. That's exactly how I do when I'm trying to.

Speaker 2

I know, John. I've known you a long time.

Speaker 4

But but I I think to describe Major Taylor, he was an extremely enigmatic individual. It was a complicated era because he was a complicated man. He had a lot to deal with, not only with the intense racism, but he had to.

Speaker 2

OK.

#### Speaker 4

He had to on his shoulder. He represented African American athletes and and he did that extraordinarily well. And one of the the the very first experiences that he had. After, well I I could describe the first experience in in early on when he was trying his best to learn the new game of basketball. He athletes of the era were very versatile and he really wanted to learn basketball well his buds. There were about five of them. Were ushered into the YMCA in downtown Indianapolis, and as they were coming into the building to sign up to learn the new prep game of basketball, the director called him out. He said. Your son, your to one of the. White boys who was there, he said. Your attendant is not allowed in this facility. You'll have to. Spend the rest of the time in the gallery watching you play, and so they very reluctantly went through with that. But in his autobiography, Major Taylor refers back to that continually as the Monster of Prejudice. And that was his first introduction prior to that. He led a very safe and innocent life, but very quickly. Three, he was transformed into a different world. A. A world of. Bicycle racing, long train rides to races, training on dirt roads and and the persistence of of of racism and and. Bigotry that would follow him for his entire career.

#### Speaker 2

And did did that racism force him to go to Europe? Is that how it happened?

#### Speaker 4

It did, but a couple of things prompted that. That, and it wasn't easy. Everything in Major Taylor's life was complicated. He was in Savannah, GA we go into great depth on this one because it happened where he took a train ride to Savannah to get out of the cold weather. So they. You could train. And while he was in Savannah, he had an encounter with the triplet yet again, remembering that cycling was very, very popular in the South. Atlanta was one of the the the real hot centers of of activity, and some of the greats. Like Bobby Waldhauer came out of Atlanta. So. So the South was very big on cycling and Major Taylor had a a, a little run in with a triplet, which was a steer. By a a real I I know only way to put it sons of the Confederacy. Told him in no uncertain terms that they didn't want him to pace behind their triplet, and he proceeded to drop this triplet, which is not an easy thing to do and and to show his power. He he literally rode away from him. Well, by the time he got back to his room. House in Savan. Of no. With a rock tied to it came crashing through the the the the window and the note basically said. Using the N word if you're not out of Savannah by sundown, you will be sorry and he left promptly, only to be to to ride a race back in the spring in Taunton, Pennsylvania, not far from Philadelphia. And hey, you gotta remember these guys were riding for a paycheck, a big one, so. What happened is not clear, but another rider who outweighed Taylor by almost 50 lbs. His name his name was Becker, was crowded on the on the track at the at the catch fence. And it was a dirt track, and Taylor put him in there. And and whether he did that on purpose or not is anybody's guess. But I think it's safe to say that Major Taylor had the sort of Jekyll and hide personality when it came to his racing. He took it

very seriously. So. So what happened was Becker did not qualify, but Taylor did. And as he was cooling down, Becker came up from behind him. And grabbed him by the neck and wrenched him off his bike. His bike went sailing into the infield and he proceeded to strangle him. To the point where he became unconscious for almost 15 minutes, and if it hadn't been for the constable with the Billy Club. He would have killed him right then and there. So that actually prompted Major Taylor to to consider the possibility of racing in Europe. He was in great demand after winning the World Championship in in 1899. And also the American Championship in 1898 so. Everybody wanted to see the World championship perform and and and in Europe it was bring on the \*\*\*\*\* Volant. So they were ready to pay major tailor an extraordinary amount of money to bring him to Europe. Robert Cockell and. Victor Briere were the two promoters that that wanted Taylor desperately wanted Taylor in Europe, but there was one big problem. Major Taylor was a Christian. He believed wholeheartedly that his power came. Through his maker, and that God rode with him every mile of the way, and he promised his mother on her deathbed that he would never race on the Sabbath. And that there's there is a A Diane. Indulge me. I want to read a quote here from Michelis who was the father of Greek tragedy. And this of course, is part of the book. I shall have said, even in our sleep pain, that we cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until in our own despair against our will comes wisdom. Through the awful grace of God and that quote essentially sums up the black cyclone the the whole gamut of of. Issues that Major Taylor had were essentially brought on by his strong belief that God was his power source, and because of that. You have a huge conflict and the conflict was that. Europeans race bicycles on Sunday. They go to the fans, go to watch them race on Sunday and the velodrome circuits of Europe were packed in order to get. Major Taylor to race in Europe, Coquelle and Briere had to. Revise the contract, which originally would have paid Major Taylor close to 3/4 of \$1,000,000 in today's money. They they revised the contract because he said I will not race. On the Sabbath and because of that, they literally changed the entire structure of bicycle racing in Europe. To see this man compete against Europe's best.

Speaker 2

I I'm telling you, do not tell the whole book. The book is just sounds fascinating. It sounds wonderful. Let let me just. I wanna wrap it up with a couple of things. First of all, we're speaking with John Howard. He's the author of the book The Black Cyclone, a hero the world forgot. And I want to get to the forgot part in a moment. There's a documentary about Major Taylor that's going to be streaming February 26 out of Indianapolis PBS station, and we'll have a link to that on the website you take. You have a part in that. What is your part in that document?

Speaker 4

I am a historical content provider. I suppose you could say I will be on there and and that that. Documentary is is Todd Ghoul production. I think Todd is a marvelous documentary filmmaker and it is headline with Marita Coleman who is a a wonderful.

Mezzo soprano opera star and the voice of Major Taylor is is is is voiced by Branford Marsalis who was a wonderful saxophone player. As we all know. So so I think it's going to be a I have not seen it yet. So I don't know what my role is at this point, but.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 4

But I do know that I will be a part of the production.

Speaker 2

All right, well, here's what I want to wrap up before we tell listeners how to get a copy of the book. I want to know. How? How Major Taylor ended up. Dying the way he did, and which was pretty much penniless.

Speaker 4

Well, again the complexities and and I I don't want I can't go into too much detail. He came up with. He was a brilliant inventor in addition to everything else. Major Taylor. That in the in the bicycle factory in Indianapolis with Bernie Munger, who who, who started the business and later with with Iver Johnson, he learned the trade of machinists and actually he got a deferment in World War 1 to to stay out of it on the basis. Of his machining skills and we believe that he, his first invention was this incredible spring wheel which he invested heavily in as well as Fred Johnson at at Iver Johnson. So what happened was that they were unable to secure a patent and somebody else essentially ripped it off. So that was sort of the the spiraling downward that occurred and it it did not end well for Major Taylor and spite of being. The one of the wealthiest African Americans in America and one of the highest paid athletes in the world, he essentially died. And was buried in a pauper's grave. It reminds me of the Amadeus story. If you've seen that film. And and it it has that sort of blend to it. And yes, we do tell the rest of the story as as I think as best we can within the information. But I was very fortunate. Early in my interest level of of Major Taylor to meet Sydney Taylor Brown, his daughter and through Sydney, I traveled to Pittsburgh twice. And made hours of of, of of taped interviews with Sidney so that I could get what Paul Harvey called the rest of the story and that's that's Sydney's contribution to the book. I'm the only person alive at this point to have actually interviewed her. She died at 102. And they will say that there were. There were a number of of pioneers who remembered Taylor, like Alf Gullette, who I met on a sunny day in New Jersey and and Alf also lived to be 102. Believe it or not. And and he loaned Major Taylor. His favorite bicycle for Taylor's final race, the old timers event in Newark in 1917.

Speaker 2

Wow, what a great way to end this conversation 1917. That was a long time ago. We've been speaking with John Howard. His new book is the Black Cyclone, a hero, the world

for God. It's a story of Marshall. Major Taylor. I think everybody who knows anything about the man. Or has heard anything we'll want to read the book clearly. You have done your homework and have conveyed it in this book. I it's pretty exciting.

Speaker 4

Damn, one more thing that I. Would like to add. Unlike the other excellent biographies on Major Taylor, beginning with Andrew Ritchie and finishing with Michael Kranish, this is not. A biography. This is a biographical novel, and unlike the other books, we actually give Taylor and his contemporaries voices. And I think that's the critical difference in understanding and and. And I feel that that my co-author Renee Mauer. And I can do that because. Of the research, the level of research that I've been doing for over 40 years, I've traveled to Paris, the the Bibliotheque in Paris was a wonderful source of information, as was the The Rum Library in Sydney, Australia. I I traveled to Sydney. To to the the cricket grounds to see, of course. That track is long gone, as is the Part 2 prances in Paris. But some of the places still have a sort of aura to them, and the microfiche labs are just full of information about Major Taylor. So from that and and my fabulous discussions with with Sydney Taylor Brown, I learned how. Her father actually lived in all of. The of the. Issues that followed his retirement, of course. She was born in. In the early part of the of the 20th century, and it doesn't doesn't know that much about his early days, but to his credit, major Taylor came out with a wonderful autobiography that that again tells the rest of the story.

Speaker 2

So if you're interested in getting a copy of the book, it's major taylorstory.com. You can get it there, or you can probably get it in all the usual places, but by all means support your local bookshop, support the major Taylor story. A project I think it's really an exciting book and I'm glad you wrote it. Congratulations on it. And I I can't wait to see the documentary too, which is again February 26. It'll start streaming from WTIU in Indiana. John, thank you so much for talking with me and for writing this book. I think it's really important.

Speaker 4

Thank you, Diane. It's been a pleasure.

Speaker 2

My thanks to John for joining me on the show today. You can get a copy of the Black cyclone, a hero of the world forgot at majortaylorstory.com. I think it's probably one you'll want in your cycling library. John also sent me a photo of the pacing tandem that he mentioned in our conversation from his collection. Which you can find along with other links, photos and a transcript of the show at outspokencyclist.com. Thank you for listening. I hope you enjoyed the show. Remember to subscribe to the podcast on your favorite app. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter or. Thanks and please feel



free to leave a comment on our website too. So until next time, stay safe, stay well and remember there is always time for a ride. Bye bye.

Speaker 1

Thanks for joining us today on the outspoken cyclist with. Ann Jenks, who welcome your thoughts and contributions on our Facebook page or visit [outspokencyclist.com](http://outspokencyclist.com) to leave a comment on any episode. We'll be back next week with new guests, topics, conversations and news in the world of cycling. Subscribe to the show on your favorite podcast app and you'll never miss an episode. The outspoken cyclist is a copyrighted production of DBL promotions, with the assistance of Wgcu FM Cleveland, a service of John Carroll University. Thanks again for listening ride safely, and we'll see you next week.