

**Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois**

**Jack Daugherty Oral History Interview**

Paul Brazier, Interviewer

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**Paul Brazier (PB):** This is Paul Brazier, it is July 12th, 2018. I am here with Jack Daugherty a Competitive Cyclist. We are doing an oral history for Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia Digital Archive of Madison County. We're going to talk about being competitive cyclists in the Metro East area. Hi Jack, how are you doing today?

**Jack Daugherty (JD):** I got not too much to complain about, I guess, I'm doing pretty good.

**PB:** Nice, nice. Uh, first thing, I guess, we're going to talk about the greatest bike race in the world's going on right now, the Tour de France? Um, have you been following it?

**JD:** I've been following it. Not super closely, but I am following it.

**PB:** Good. Who would you like to see win this year?

**JD:** You know, I don't have any particular favorites. I would like to see someone from France win. Uh, but I don't have any particular favorites at all. I, I am opposed to a few riders, but I, uh, I don't have any specific favorites. I just enjoy watching the race unfold.

**PB:** Nice. That was going to lead me right into my next question. I said, is there anybody that you would like to see maybe not do so well this year?

**JD:** Yeah, I would like to see Chris Froome fail. I would like, he's, uh, I suspect, I'm not a fan of Chris Froome, I'm not a fan of his style of racing, I'm not a fan of the recent delegations of pharmaceutical misuse on his behalf. I think racers who race like him make the sport boring.

**PB:** Nice. Alright. Um, now, back to you. How did you get interested in competitive cycling?

**JD:** That's kind of a hard question to answer. Uh, because I've been doing it so long, I almost can't remember a time when I wasn't doing it. I would think probably that the time I became aware of competitive cycling was when my parents took me to see the movie *Breaking Away* back in the '70s. And for some reason, the footage of the bike races and, uh, the story of bike racing was, uh, really captivating for me. And it was something I wanted to become interested, more interested in. Of course, living in Edwardsville in the '70s, there was not a whole lot of, uh, whole lot of options to explore bike racing.

**PB:** Great. Um, and you talked about the '70s, how old would you have been then?

**JD:** I think that I probably saw *Breaking Away* when I was eleven years old. Because then I became really, kind of, interested in road bikes, uh, road racing at that time. Every, all of my friends had BMX bikes, and I was always the one kid on the, on the ten-speed with the curvy bars.

**PB:** Right. Um, what types of racing have you done?

**JD:** So, through terms of just bicycle racing, I think I've "done" everything that you can do. I've done road racing; road racing involves a lot of sub-disciplines, that's criteriums, that is actual, that is road races, that is time trials, uh. Road races are more accurately described as longer over the road races, they usually are point-to-point, or they can have long circuits, five to ten, sometimes even twenty miles in length. Criteriums, which are also a type of road race, are usually closed circuit, the mileage, the course is usually a mile or less involving a lot of turns. It's usually in an urban area. It's usually a higher speed and dicier affair. Time trials, uh, are not pack races. And by "not pack races," I mean it's, uh, individuals riding by themselves trying to cover a set course in the, in the fastest amount of time.

**PB:** Great. Um...

**JD:** So, you, but that's, that's the road racing. I've done a lot of track racing. Track racing is, uh, takes place in what's called a velodrome. People will not recognize that word, necessarily, but a velodrome is a banked oval. Of bike racing events, in the past it used to be Olympic events, that would be the one event that would get TV coverage. Um, the track racing involves bicycles that don't have brakes and you only have one gear on a drive train that is "track drive," which means that if your rear wheel is rolling, your pedals are moving too. You cannot coast on a track bike.

**PB:** Those are a lot of fun to ride. Those have kind of come into vogue in the last few years, with, uh, they talk about the hipsters, they've kind of taken that track bike setup and used that.

**JD:** Yeah, I, and I have mixed feelings about that. The fixed gears are fun to ride, uh, but if you don't know what you're doing, you can get hurt. And they're harder to control, and they're harder to stop, and if you don't know what you're doing, you're not just a danger to yourself, you're a danger to others. So I'm not, I have very mixed feelings about the, the, um, fixed gear development amongst people that maybe don't really know what they're doing. Other bike racing I've done, is done mountain biking. I think most everybody is familiar with mountain biking. Mountain biking really has become kind of a misnomer, because most mountain biking does not take place on a mountain. Uh, mountain biking is really more, I would say, it's more all-terrain, uh, cycling. Uh, those are bikes usually with fatter tires, knobby tires, and those are races and rides that take place on wooded trails, on the grass, typically not paved. The other racing I've done is cyclocross, which is a precursor, really, to mountain biking. Cyclocross is also done off-road, but it's also done a little bit on pavement. Cyclocross is basically an off-road criterium. The bikes are set up like road bikes, they have the curvy handlebars and they have the skinny tires, but you race over short courses with obstacles. Uh, the obstacles are set up so that you have to dismount and carry the bike over them. So, cyclocross is kind of a mixture of, of cycling and running. And I've done those.

**PB:** Nice. Um, what was your first competitive race you took place in, and where did that happen?

**JD:** So, the first competitive race that I remember was in Bloomington, Illinois, I was in college. And it was a citizen's category. And citizen's category meant, back then, that you didn't have a license. I lined up for the race, back then there was, uh, we didn't have clip-in pedals, we used toe clips with leather straps. And, uh, not even sure if the hard-shell helmet rule was in effect yet. But what I remember mostly about

that race is that, uh, I was so amped up and so nervous at the beginning of the race, I fell over at the starting line because I couldn't get into my pedals.

**PB:** That's, that's funny, I think that's happened to pretty much all of us if you've ever used any type of clips or any, even, the clipless pedals. Um, you were talking about your earlier days of racing and such. Did you have any mentors in those early days?

**JD:** So, the main mentors I had, uh, a lot of them were in Normal, Illinois, and Bloomington, Illinois. There was a gentleman named Mike Osment, who was a surgeon in Bloomington-Normal at the time. He was very nice to me and taught me a lot. Tommy Thompkins, another guy that was there. Another gentleman named Phil Menard. And the person that made most of it possible was a gentleman named Chris Koos, who owned a bike shop in Normal, Illinois called the Vitesse Bicycle Shop. Chris is now the mayor of Normal.

**PB:** Nice. Um, and that was back in the, you said, in the '80s, when you were doing that?

**JD:** This would be in the '80s.

**PB:** Okay. And so, take, talk a little bit about how training was back then, when you were training to race.

**JD:** So, training then just, you just rode your bike. There was, there was a new training technique called "intervals." Intervals are very commonplace now, but not everyone did it then. A lot of, uh, training was just going as long as you could for as long as you could, whereas intervals is doing, uh, excessive, very hard efforts for more measured amounts of times. But, uh, most of the training back when I started was just riding your bike.

**PB:** Nice. Um, as we talk about your racing career, can you elaborate on some of the highlights of your career? Any, uh, accolades that you've received, or awards, or anything that really stands out, um, that was a big accomplishment during the time that you were racing?

**JD:** I, uh...I've won a few races, that was fun. Um, I got invited to the Olympic trials in 1995, uh, on the track. That was probably the, one of the more, one of the bigger milestones. But in terms of ongoing accolades, you know, I can't really think of anything off the top of my head. I mean, I was, I was a pretty good racer, but I was, never was professional, I never went to the Olympics, I just, you know, raced a lot.

**PB:** Nice. Um, can you talk a little bit about the time that you did go to the Olympic trials?

**JD:** The Olympic trials was an exciting time. It was in Indianapolis. It went, you know, it was kind of a big deal to get invited, you had to be a category one racer. Uh, and at that time, there weren't many, very many category one racers, I was a category one at the time. Still am, actually, which is kind of remarkable. It was, uh, I trained. At the time, I was training, I was actually also in my first year, um, of my law practice, I was a prosecutor at the time. So, I was, uh, splitting time between training and being a lawyer. Went out to the Olympic trials hoping to do well, and I, I did well relative to my, uh, my past performances, I had some very good races, but I was racing against the very best cyclists in a very big country. And I got my butt whooped. So, it was a, it was a, it was a good experience, and it put my relative abilities in perspective.

**PB:** Uh, can you tell us about any of the, the racers that you were raced against that went on and raced at the Olympics? And if they, uh, had any success when they went?

**JD:** Sure. Uh, Robbie Ventura was there, he was a well-known professional for quite a while. Fred Rodriguez was there, he raced professionally in Europe. Kevin Livingston, I believe, raced in some of the races; he raced professionally in Europe. Mike McCarthy was there, he ended up racing professionally in Europe and he was also the professional pursuit champion, uh, on the track. Event...uh, he was a world champion. Uh, Kent Bostick was there. Kent Bostick was a perennial national champion, uh, and longtime pro. I'm trying to think of who else was there. It was, it was a large number of very, very heavy hitters. And they, uh, they heavy hit upside my head.

**PB:** Well, at least you got that experience under your belt. And that's uh, that has to be something that you'll remember for the rest of your life, for sure. Okay, um, let's go ahead and move on. Let's talk about, um, some of your local racing. I know you talked about starting out, you were in Bloomington-Normal area, Springfield area. Um, some of the stuff that you've, some of the races that you've done in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

**JD:** Well, for, uh, for a long period of time, if there was a race, I did it. I mean, there have been different races all over, uh, St. Louis metropolitan area, in almost every neighborhood, in almost every, uh, community. Of course, Edwardsville has a race, Belleville has had races, Lebanon has had races, uh, Alton has had races, Godfrey has had races, all over St. Louis. Kirkwood, the cities Lafayette Square, there's, it's almost impossible for me to list all of them, but, uh, for a period of a couple of decades, if there was a race in the St. Louis area, I almost certainly did it.

**PB:** Nice. Um, you'd mentioned Edwardsville, and, um, the last few years Edwardsville Rotary has sponsored a race, a day of racing, um, here in the city. Um, describe the difference between a regular road race and the type of race that they put on here in Edwardsville, the criterium?

**JD:** So the, the Edwardsville Criterium, is a, as I described previously, a criterium is a relatively short course race with a lot of turns. The Edwardsville Criterium, in particular, has a lot of turns. The course has a reputation regionally as being a very, very technical course. It is, it puts a premium on bike handling and fitness. I mean, that's what I have to say about the Edwardsville Criterium and the Edwardsville course. The Edwardsville Criterium, generally, you know, it's, I'm very glad that we have it. I, there is a bittersweet aspect to the, that race because I very much wish that that race was happening when I was a younger man and I could make a, uh, a better showing for myself in the races.

**PB:** I think you and me both, I had done that race myself, and it is very, very taxing physically and also with your bike handling skills. Um, do you have any plans on racing this year? In the Criterium?

**JD:** No. No, I won't be racing this year. Uh, I'm putting most of my energy into my law practice. And, um, criterium racing comes with it a certain amount of risk, and risks of crashing, and at this point, I am not willing to take the risks of crashing.

**PB:** Got it. Um, okay, so going to kind of backtrack a little bit. You were, um, you talked a lot about track racing and, and such. And um, I saw a post on the Internet not too long ago about the velodrome in St.

Louis, and they're looking at reopening it, possibly this fall? What kind of information do you have on that? And any of the history, anything you'd like to share about that particular velodrome?

**JD:** So, the Penrose Park Velodrome has been around since, I think, the early '60s late '50s. It was actually built, uh, by, by the German and Polish folks that were living in the Penrose neighborhood at the time. And it was built to replace a velodrome that was in Forest Park. The, Forest Park lost the velodrome when they built the I-64 highway through the middle of it. Uh, so, they were without a velodrome. And the velodrome was moved to Penrose Park. It's a bit of a misnomer to say that they're reopening it, because they've actually been racing in Penrose Park for the last several years, and I've been racing there occasionally myself. What they're doing now is they're resurfacing it. For the last thirty years that I've been riding on the Penrose Velodrome, it's been barely rideable, it's been in very bad condition. It's not, was not a velodrome that was suitable to host, uh, big regional races, uh, because the surface was so uneven, it was so cracked, and so, uh, in such disrepair. We raced on it, but it was, it was kind of, uh, unpleasant. So what's happening now is they are tearing it down bare bones, they are putting a new surface on it, it's going to be smooth, it's going to be rideable, the only, uh, real downfall is it is a, it's going to be one-fifth of a mile, which is an English measurement. All modern velodromes use the metric system, which is going to most likely make this velodrome, really, an unlikely candidate to ever host national or state championship races, but it's still going to be nice to have a nice, smooth surface to train or race on locally.

**PB:** Sounds like it's going to be a really nice facility. It's too bad that, uh, the distance, uh, is going to make it, uh, not necessarily a national destination. Um, what direction do you see local cycling, racing, taking the next five years or so?

**JD:** So, that's really hard to say. Uh, there are, there aren't a lot of young people getting involved in bike racing. I think that if you looked at the United States, uh, the, the organizing group is called USAC, and I think if you looked at the USAC's membership, you would see a bulk of the, uh, racing membership is probably over thirty. And that does not really bode well for the growth of the sport. So, I, the growth of the sport in this region, I don't really know. I mean, for bike racing. Bike riding, that's a different thing. But, uh, bike racing...because of the expense to get involved in it, bike, racing bikes are not cheap. Uh, I think that there's a precious few number of parents that are willing to make that kind of investment in equipment. You know, the expense of just the bicycle dwarfs that of hockey and baseball. And I think that really makes it somewhat of a non-starter for young people. And I think that's, that's too bad.

**PB:** And, uh, kind of on a personal note for yourself, where do you see your cycling in the next five to ten years? Things that you're going to be doing, or trying anything new? Or anything...

**JD:** You know, cycling for me in the future is going to be riding for fun. I might do some, some, you know, with the track being redeveloped, I might take up training more on the track, and I might take, you know, do some racing on the track. I, I don't see myself spending a whole lot of time doing any, uh, road racing or criterium racing in my future. I'm fifty years old, I got nothing, really, to prove, and I don't really have the time or the energy to devote myself exclusively to bike racing. You know, bike racing is a fun thing to do, uh, it is, uh, if it's not paying your bills, it's not really, it's not really a practical thing to devote all your energy to. I know plenty of people that do, but that's just crazy to me.

**PB:** Okay. And you talked a little bit about the direction of cycling, and you can see that cycling itself might not necessarily be declining, but the racing part is. Um, to kind of go along with that, what are your thoughts on the MCT Trails, the Madison County Transit Trails, that are here in the, uh, area?

**JD:** So the MCT Trails are really a delightful use of, uh, public property and public easements. Um, and they seem to have sparked a huge growth, uh, in the interest in cycling. Not racing, necessarily, but there are certainly significantly more cyclists that I see on a daily basis than I ever saw before, and they're almost always on the bike trails. Because I like cycling, and I like running, and I like being outside, I tend to be on these bike trails, so I see a lot more cyclists. And it's, you know, people are riding what I would describe as performance bicycles. They're dressed up in their lycra, you know, giving it an effort, but they clearly aren't racers. But they're certainly interested in fitness and some of the more, uh, healthful benefits of cycling.

**PB:** Okay, I've got one final question for you. And take a second to think about it. If there was one cyclist, it could be somebody current, uh, it can be somebody that was, that raced or cycled in the past, that you would like to race against or train with, who would that be? And why?

**JD:** Well, that's a tough one to answer because there's been so many characters that I've known, well that I've known of, that I've read about over the years. I mean, I always liked Sean Kelly, uh, the Irish cyclist that was so winning in the '80s and the early '90s. Of course everyone likes Eddy Merckx, Eddy Merckx, uh, probably the winningest cyclist of all time. Uh, but, um, he's not that interesting of a character to me beyond the fact that he was a winning cyclist and he built a very fine brand of bicycles himself. I think probably the person most interesting was a cyclist named Gino Bartali, uh, he was an Italian cyclist, and he raced, you know, during, during the time of, uh, World War Two. And Gino Bartali collaborated and worked with liberating, uh, Jews that were trapped in Europe. He, it's really a fascinating story, there's a book written about him, there's a movie about him. Gino Bartali was a winning cyclist, he won the Tour de France, he won the Tour of Italy, but he was also, he was a spy. And he worked for the good guys during World War Two, and that makes him a, uh, an interesting character. If you spend time cycling, you want to ride with someone who's interesting. Sometimes riding with the meathead fitness people is not exactly, um, interesting. So if I had to pick one cyclist that I could train with or ride with, it would be Gino Bartali.

**PB:** That's a great choice. Okay, I would like to thank you, Jack, for taking your time today to talk with me about your cycling experiences. This has been Paul Brazier interviewing Jack Daugherty about his bicycle racing experiences for the Madison County Historical Online Encyclopedia Digital Archive of Madison County.