

## **Once Upon a Time in North Park**

### **The Velodrome at Morley Field**

By Steve Hon

Lance Armstrong's quest for an unprecedented sixth victory in the Tour de France in July of 2004 was followed by millions of Americans. A few weeks later, the 2004 Summer Olympics from Athens showed athletes from across the globe competing in a variety of bicycle events including both road racing and track events on a velodrome. Many viewers might have wondered where athletes find a velodrome to train on since there are relatively few velodromes in the United States. As most North Park residents know, North Park is the home to the only velodrome in San Diego County, located just west of the softball fields at Morley Field. Many North Park residents may not know that many representatives of the United States National and Olympic Team have called Morley Field their home training ground in the past 28 years since the present velodrome was built in 1976.

The Morley Field velodrome is a paved track, 333.33 meters (approximately 1,096 feet) around, with a maximum banking of 27 degrees in the corners. It is owned by the San Diego Park and Recreation Department but operated by the San Diego Velodrome Association.

San Diego has a rich history of bicycle racing due to its mild climate that makes it ideal for bike riding year round. On the San Diego Velodrome Association's website, under the history page, there is a quote from Bob Bergen, a member of the San Diego Bicycle Club, track cyclist and lawyer, summarizing the history of track racing in San Diego:

“The first velodrome I know of in San Diego was built in 1916. It went from Harbor Drive to Pacific Highway to Broadway. In 1917, when the United States got involved in World War I, they tore part of it down. What was left became the grandstand for Lane Field where the (minor league) Padres played until Westgate Park Stadium was built. The Morley Field velodrome was a dirt track when I first got into racing. I don't know when it began but I know from 1936 to 1948, including the war years, when nothing was happening, that was the track we had.”

Since the current velodrome was completed, it has hosted a number of national championship events including Junior Championships, the Collegiate National Track Championships and several Masters National Track Championships. The Velodrome Association sponsors a Tuesday night racing series from April through September of each year. Admission is free to spectators. Although the current Tuesday night racing season has concluded, check out the races next year. In addition to adult riders, the Velodrome Association offers free cycling classes for younger riders interested in the sport. A completed listing of activities at the velodrome can be found at the Velodrome Associations website at [www.sdvelodrome.com](http://www.sdvelodrome.com).