

A television program devoted to cycling

Richard Saulnier, Vice-president, Marketing Communication, Tour de l'Île de Montréal
Maison de Cycliste, 1251 rue Rachel est, Montreal, Quebec H2J 2J9 Canada

Richard_saulnier@velo.qc.ca

In the Canadian province of Quebec, over 99% of households have a television set. French-speaking Quebecers spend an average of 26.5 hours per week watching television (Canadian average: 22.7 hours). In 1999, the Tour de l'Île de Montréal, a branch of Vélo Québec (which is an associate member of the ECF), produced a series of thirteen 30-minute television programs about cycling. These shows were broadcast in prime time on Radio-Canada, a public television network that is the largest French-language TV broadcaster in Canada. This series is unique because it focuses on cycling activities for the general public — on urban, tourist and recreational cycling — and not on competitive cycling, as is usually the case on television. Using an entertaining magazine format, each episode of the series presents a variety of information capsules: types of bikes and equipment, road-safety advice, basic cycling techniques as well as a weekly route that the host of the program cycles with a local celebrity. To encourage viewer loyalty, the weekly route was published in a major Montreal newspaper after each broadcast. Viewers were also asked a question about the content of the program and those who provided the correct answer were eligible to win prizes. The series was such a success that Radio-Canada has agreed to broadcast 13 new programs produced by the Tour de l'Île de Montréal in the spring and summer of the year 2000. It is quite exceptional for an organization that promotes cycling to have access to such a coveted venue (a prime-time slot on a major network) to convey its message to the general public. Using excerpts from the 1999 and 2000 series, the speaker will discuss the concept and the philosophy behind the series, and describe certain aspects of its production: funding, co-production and broadcasting agreements, etc. He will specifically attempt to demonstrate that television can be a powerful public-education tool and an incomparable means of promoting the development of a new urban culture based on cycling.