

The history of recumbents goes back almost to the invention of the 'modern' bicycle in 1884. Bicycle racing was quickly becoming one of Europe's most popular sports. Early bicyclists soon found out that the less aerodynamic drag you had, the faster you could go. This is when drafting (riding closely behind another rider to reduce wind drag) came into practice. Later, innovations like drop handlebars and even fully enclosed shells for the bikes were introduced, all for the sake of going faster, all measured by official records.

The hour record had been the biggest prize to date. Held for almost 20 years by Oscar Egg, racers all vied to defeat this seemingly unbeatable record of 44.247 km ridden in one hour. Along came a man named Charles Mochet, a self-taught engineer and manufacturer. Charles had invented a four-wheel pedal car that was gaining popularity and had an idea to split it in half. The idea was the birth of the recumbent. By 1932 Mochet's recumbent, the Velocar, was finished and ready for racing. It was a second category racer by the name of Francis Faure that became very intrigued with its possibilities and decided to attempt to beat Oscar Egg's hour record. At first the other racers laughed at Faure, they said that he would fall asleep lying back like that, and to stand up and pedal like a man. Soon the laughter faded, as the other two professional riders could not keep up with Faure as he beat the record. Faure managed to go 45.055 km in one hour. Despite this impressive performance, the UCI (the international committee that oversees bicycle racing to this day) was upset by this upstart second category racer breaking the record set by the famous Oscar Egg, and two months later they ruled the recumbent 'not a bicycle' and dishonored the record. Without the UCI's endorsement to race or hold the record, Mochet's recumbent never had a chance to become a mainstream item. Without the marketing support of racing, the recumbent style was not picked up and developed by manufacturers.

Francis Faure Breaking the World "Hour" Record, 1933

