

Michigan will stay on the ground

By W.W. EDGAR

There may be some truth to the adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

At least that's the impression the members of the press got last Saturday morning after listening to Bo Schembechler, the University of Michigan football coach, in his annual pre-season meeting with the press.

Asked by one of the dozens of the press box if he planned to add a screen pass to the Wolverines' offense this year in face of all the criticism he has taken in the past years, he grunted his team and shouted:

"You fellows must not have been looking. We used it in the first game last year and then put it back on the shelf again. We might do the same

thing again this year."

So, if you are looking forward to seeing some aerial fireworks to go with the powerful ground game when the Big Ten campaign opens, you will be disappointed.

Schembechler did have some cheering news and, for the first time, he made a prediction that one of his players would be an all-American.

"Rick Leach, who has held down the job for the past two seasons, will be the best quarterback in the country," Schembechler said and he was serious when he explained that the Flint junior showed a lot of improvement between his freshmen and sophomore year and just as much between his sophomore and junior years.

"He's just the best," Schembechler emphasized, disregarding the fact

that Leach had injured his shoulder during the baseball season. While it wasn't his throwing arm, he could fall on it and injure it again.

Schembechler scoffed at the idea that several magazines already had designated the Wolverines as the No. 1 team in the nation.

"It is going to be much more difficult to win the Big Ten title this year," he said "because of several coaching changes."

"You'll find Illinois, Wisconsin, Purdue and even Iowa much improved over last year. In fact, in our opening game with Illinois, we will be facing a team that is coached by Gary Moeller whom, you recall, was on our staff."

"And I look for trouble with Purdue again—simply because Jim Young, another former member of our staff, is down there. And I haven't forgotten that Purdue beat us a year ago when Alex Agase was the coach."

To meet these challenges, Schembechler said that Michigan will have another powerful team. Most of the of-

fensive line will be back and, aside from Leach, Harlan Huckleby, Russell Davis will return to the backfield.

Max Richardson and Kevin King, another letterwinner, will share the place held last year by Bob Lytle.

"We need a hard-nosed guy," said Schembechler, "and one of these two fellows could do the trick."

To fill the gap caused by the loss of Jim Smith, the pass-catching end, Schembechler is counting on Rick White of Cincinnati, a letterwinner a year ago, and Rodney Feaster of Flint.

Along with these promising performers, the kicking job, left vacant by the graduation of Bob Wood, will be taken over by John Anderson, another letterwinner Schembechler has great faith in.

"Our boys are ready right now," Schembechler said, "and you can rest assured of one thing—they'll put up a helluv a battle in defense of the title."

Mechanics moving for Michigan Mile

Detroit Race Course racing secretary Tom Dorsey assigned weights to 39 Michigan Mile nominees Tuesday morning and within hours, Detroit thoroughbred fans knew whether such great runners as Forego, defending champion Sharp Gary, Run Dusty Run and Nearly On Time would be on hand for the \$100,000-added classic on Sept. 3.

Weights to be carried can be all-important in a major horse race, even to a champions such as Forego. Dorsey is well aware that Frank Whiteley, who trains the three-time Horse-of-the-Year, blames weights of 138, 137 and 136 pounds for the three straight defeats suffered by Forego.

"We do not intend to weigh that horse out of the picture," Dorsey said. "We'd love to have him here, and we'll bend overboard being fair with the weight assignment."

Meanwhile, other events have transpired through the past few days which indicate that the Michigan Mile, still Michigan's richest horse race, just could be the best in the 28-year history of the headliner.

The \$5,000 supplementary entry Tuesday of the five-year-old mare My Juliet, was a tremendously pleasant surprise to Dorsey. The speedy daughter of Gallant Romeo was an Eclipse Award winner as the champion sprinter of 1976, counting among her victims such top winners as Bold Forbes and Master Derby.

"All we want to do is race against Forego," said owner George Weasel Jr. The only mare ever to win the Mile was Old Hat in 1965, but the \$451,325 career earnings of My Juliet indicate that the mare could very well turn the trick.

No horse has ever won the Mike twice, either, although many have

tried. So the likely return of the 1976 winner Sharp Gary adds further excitement to the scene.

Last year's second-place finisher, Methioxya, is also coming back. This five-year-old flash is owned by Michigan's Shinnore Farm and has already been victorious in the Crimston Satan Prep and the Crimston Satan Handicap this year at DRC.

Methioxya suffered a bad start from the gate last Saturday in the \$28,000 Michigan Mile Trial, but still steamed up from eighth place to a third-place finish in the last quarter of a mile. Jamming, the winner of the trial, is owned by Detroit's Karl Vangeloff.

Of all the Michigan horses to watch in the Michigan Mile, however, the four-year-old colt Private Thoughts seems to warrant the center stage.

Owned by Sandra Farms of Metamora, Private Thoughts continued his outstanding 1977 season last Saturday at Arlington Park in Chicago by winning the \$150,000 Arlington Classic.

Ridden by Ramon Perez, a member of the DRC jockey colony, Private Thoughts not only won the tough race by a head but broke the track record with a 1:59.2 for the 1 1/4-mile event.

At Saratoga in New York last Saturday in the \$114,600 Travers Stake, Run Dusty Run seemingly won the race but was disqualified for a bumping incident and the win was handed to Jatski.

Both Run Dusty Run, the runnerup to Seattle Slew in the Kentucky Derby last May, and Jatski are nominated to DRC's Labor Day weekend classic.

Other horses aiming for the Mile include the Canadian champion, Norcliffe; the jockey Slew Galen-handled Nearly On Time and a top stakes winner of 1976, Honest Pleasure.

Adding further excitement is the fact that Willie Shoemaker will ride Forego if the seven-year-old gelding makes his expected appearance.

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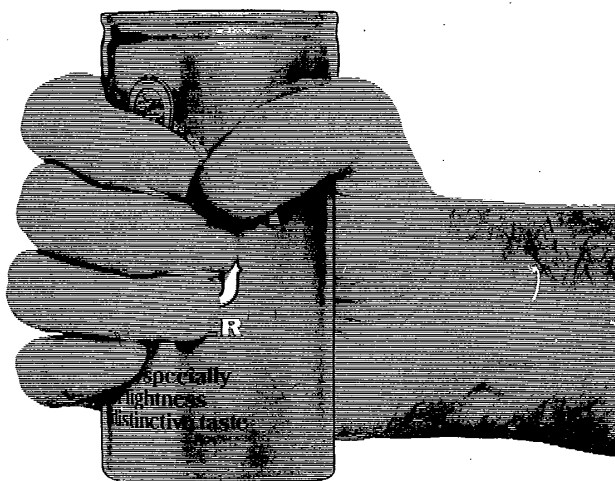
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