

# Rice challenges Fordson for state crown

By DENNIS O'CONNOR

It's not hard to figure out the advanced billing of this year's Class A state championship football game.

It will be the awesome passing attack of Birmingham Brother Rice against the mighty running game of Dearborn Fordson.

Kickoff time is 1 p.m. at the Pontiac Silverdome between these two undefeated gridiron powers. Tickets are \$3.50 at the gate. The price includes admission to the 10 a.m. Class D championship game (Norway vs. Fowler) as well.

It's been two weeks since these 11-0 teams won their respective semifinal games to advance to the state finale. Brother Rice demolished Detroit Central, 49-12, while the Tractors took care of East Kentwood, 28-12.

"THE ATTITUDE is up," said Rice coach Al Fracassa of his team practices earlier this week. "We have some bumps and bruises — maybe it was OK that we had two weeks off to prepare."

Fracassa said everyone should be ready for action against

Fordson. The only missing starter will be interior lineman Joe Bars, who injured a knee against U-D the seventh game of the season. He hasn't seen any playoff action.

Junior quarterback Dave Yarema, a first-team selection on the All-Oberon & Eccentric squad, takes an awesome 68-percent (83 of 147) passing average into the game. He has thrown for 1,419 yards in 11 contests. Junior wide receiver Paul Jokisch, who stands 6 foot 7, has caught 23 passes, 10 for touchdowns. Senior tri-captain Steve Allen has caught 25 passes and three touchdowns.

Running back Mike Neff enters the game with 878 yards in 181 carries.

TIM MacLEAN, John Maher and Greg Dingens head the Rice defense. MacLean, a senior tri-captain, leads the Warriors with 11 tackles. Maher, the other linebacker, has 101 tackles, while Dingens, only a junior, has 77 tackles at his interior-line position.

Rice's defense isn't overpowering, but it has relied on exceptional quickness to thwart this year's opposition.

That defense will be tested against Fordson's one-two running attack of Mike McGowan and Tom Matelic. It may be the strongest running combination in the state.

"They are a powerful team," Fracassa said of Fordson. "They come out and they dig at you — 10, five, six yards at a time. They control the ball very well. I think they will try to control the ball on us."

FORDSON LOST in the first round of the 1979 state tournament to Catholic League champion Detroit Catholic Central. The Shamrocks eventually won the state crown, so the Tractors will be hungry to take out their frustrations on Brother Rice — this year's Catholic League champion.

McGowan, a senior halfback, scored gained 142 yards and scored two touchdowns against Kentwood.

But Fracassa was impressed with McGowan's defense, as well as his running statistics.

"They have some good ballplayers," the Rice coach said. "This kid, Mike McGowan, number 27, he's 195, 6 foot and a strong, balanced individual. And he plays strong safety on defense."

McGowan's defensive skill may be the key Fordson's hope of stopping the Warrior passing attack.

BROTHER RICE, which defeated Sterling Hs. Stevenson, 25-13, in the quarterfinals, qualified for the state playoffs after beating Detroit DeLaSalle in the Catholic League playoffs at the Silverdome.

But Fracassa doesn't think his squad has an advantage over Fordson because of its previous Silverdome experience.

"It really doesn't make a difference where you play," Fracassa said. "I know when we played in the Silverdome we won and I was happy about that (but) it's a very big game. Once the whistle blows, it won't matter where we're playing."

Fordson, champions of the Great Lakes Eight, qualified for the state playoffs with a victory over archrival Dearborn Edsel Ford of the Suburban Eight League. The Tractors followed that victory with a convincing 21-0 triumph over Sub-8 champion Trenton in the quarterfinals of the playoffs.



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