

HARRY TO THE RESCUE

By Ray Schmidt

As the 1932 season approached, the University of Michigan had high expectations for another successful season. They had shared the 1930 and 1931 Big Nine titles, had lost only one game in the last two years, and their star quarterback, Harry Newman, was returning for his senior year.

Harry Newman was born and raised in Detroit where he attended Detroit Northern High School and played two years on the football team. His senior year he was named captain of the All-City team and was highly recruited by various colleges, but events the previous summer had sealed his college football destiny. In the summer of 1928 Newman had been the guest of Benny Friedman, the ex-Michigan great, at a camp in New Hampshire where Benny was working as a counselor. Despite his parents being financially able to send him to college anywhere, Newman had really only thought of attending Michigan, and the summer with Friedman must have certainly helped develop his passing skills for the days ahead.

Newman had started his sophomore season (1930) at Michigan as the second string quarterback, but when he came in early in the season against Purdue and threw two touchdown passes to produce a victory, he was quickly promoted to the top spot. From there he led Michigan to a great season and by October of 1930 the newspapers were calling Newman the "second Benny Friedman." Unfortunately this made Michigan fans very demanding and rather unsympathetic toward Harry when he struggled through much of the 1931 season. His disappointing junior season had been attributed by many to Harry having become "impressed with his own greatness," although in reality he had been suffering from an ankle injury.

Michigan opened the 1932 season against their inter-state rivals from Michigan State, and Newman started right in to prove that 1930 had not been a mistake as he completed six long passes, four of which led directly to touchdowns. Late in the third quarter Harry made a sparkling 45-yard punt return as Michigan wrapped up a 26-0 win, having held State to only 46 yards of total offense and two first downs. One newspaper observed that "Newman proved a revelation, what with his almost flawless running as well as highly successful passing."

The second week of the season Michigan was scheduled to take on the Purple of Northwestern for the first time since 1925, when the Wolverines had been upset by a 3-2 score in Chicago's muddy Soldier Field. One reason offered for the teams not having met since then was that it was an open secret that Michigan athletic officials thought some of Northwestern's alumni were a bit overzealous "in pointing out to promising high school athletes the cultural advantages of Evanston," home of the Purple. Of course, the fact that this 1932 Michigan squad was regarded by many as their most powerful since that last meeting in 1925 did serve to ease their concerns at having scheduled the team the Wolverines had shared the 1930-31 titles with.

In front of 55,000 fans at Ann Arbor, Pug Rentner of the Purple fumbled on the first play from scrimmage and Michigan recovered on the eight yard line, from where Stan Fay scored the touchdown in two running plays. Late in the first period Ollie Olson, NU fullback, passed to George Potter for a touchdown to tie the game at 6-6. Then in the second quarter, Olson fumbled the ball away and the Maize and Blue struck quickly as Newman completed a 39-yard pass to Fay at the one yard line. On the next play Fay ran it in for the TD and a 12-6 lead at halftime.

Late in the third quarter Newman raced a punt back 50 yards to the Purple eight yard line, from where, three plays later, he kicked the field goal to produce the 15-6 final score. The game plan for Michigan had been to contain the great Rentner and they succeeded in holding him to a net

31 yards in 24 carries, while holding Olson down to 11 yards in as many carries. The Chicago Tribune called the contest a "colorful exhibition of radical football... in which both elevens took desperate chances with forward passes, resulting in many interceptions (six in total) but producing an open and spectacular combat."

The following week Michigan journeyed to Ohio State and put on another exhibition of brilliant offensive tactics and tenacious defense. Newman threw TD passes of 10 yards to Jack Regeczi and 30 yards to Captain Ivan Williamson for the 14-0 victory. Three times Ohio State advanced within the Michigan 10 yard line but never came close to scoring, and at no time was Ohio allowed to mount a drive consisting of more than two first downs. Michigan did take some injuries though as Johnny Heston - son of the great back Willie Heston - suffered a broken foot and Stan Fay, the right halfback, was hit hard enough to loosen rib cartilage.

With the regular left end Ted Petoskey moving to fullback and Regeczi replacing Fay at halfback, Michigan brushed aside Illinois 32-0 the next week as Newman again passed for two touchdowns. Petoskey rushed for 187 yards on 21 carries, including a brilliant 57-yard TD dash, while Newman's TD passes were both to Williamson on plays of 35 and 26 yards. For good measure Harry ripped off a 76-yard kickoff return which led to another Michigan TD.

The Wolverines then tested themselves against the Princeton Tigers on a very cold day in Ann Arbor. Princeton dominated the scoreless first period, and, after recovering a Newman fumble on the Michigan 15 yard line, the Tigers scored on Jack Bales' two-yard run for the first rushing TD yielded by Michigan in its last eleven games. Just before halftime Bales was tackled for a safety on an attempted punt return, and Princeton led at the half, 7-2.

Early in the third quarter Michigan took command when Williamson blocked a Tiger punt, which was recovered in the end zone by the Wolverines' center Charley Bernard for the go-ahead TD. Then in the fourth quarter, preceded by two major penalties and a poor Princeton punt, Newman completed his only pass of the day when he found Ward in the end zone for a 10-yard score and the final tally of 14-7. As can be seen from the statistics, Princeton dominated every aspect of the game except the score. The Maize and Blue finished the first half with a net total yardage of minus one yard. For the game the Tigers outgained Michigan with 237 total yards to 141. The two teams had attempted a total of only 12 passes for the day! Princeton - a very ordinary team - had clearly lost the game by its own mistakes.

It was then back to the Big Ten the next week where Michigan barely held off Indiana for a 7-0 victory. Early in the third quarter, with all his receivers covered, Newman made a great 37-yard dash to the Indiana 16. Several plays later, Newman finally managed to slip over for the touchdown on the third attempt from just one foot out. In the fourth quarter the Hoosiers

recovered a fumble deep in Michigan territory and then drove to the four yard line before being stopped in their most serious threat of the contest.

The next-to-last contest of the regular season was with the University of Chicago team which was the final edition from that school under the designs of their great coach Amos Alonzo Stagg, who faced mandatory retirement, and an emotional battle was expected. There was snow on the ground and it was extremely cold as the Chicago defense played an excellent game and held Michigan without a first down in the opening half. However, Newman overcame this with a 76-yard punt return for a touchdown in the first period and a 6-0 Michigan lead at halftime.

In the second half the teams continued to battle back and forth in the middle of the field until three minutes remained in the game, when an exchange of interceptions gave Michigan the ball on the Chicago 27 yard line. From there Newman dropped back to pass, but instead dashed around left end and down the sideline to the touchdown that produced the 12-0 final score. There was a total of only six first downs in the game as the two teams each punted 17 times! Only once did Chicago advance past midfield, and then just barely, while Michigan never was a threat to score except on the occasions noted.

At long last came the final regular season game which was to be played at Minnesota, and Coach Kipke explained his small traveling squad of just 26 players by saying that his men were in the best condition they had enjoyed the entire season. The game proved to be a typical Michigan-Minnesota battle but even so the offensive statistics for the day are quite surprising. A grand total of only five first downs were made in the game -- Michigan for the day had net rushing of only four yards and passing of 21 yards for a total offense of just 25 yards. Meanwhile, Minnesota had 112 yards rushing and 11 yards passing, and each team gave up two pass interceptions.

After the first half had settled into a defensive struggle with both teams punting frequently in an attempt to keep the opposition pinned down, Michigan's Petoskey recovered a Gopher fumble at the Minnesota 23 yard line late in the second quarter. With just seconds remaining in the half Michigan had advanced the ball to the Minnesota four yard line and taken a timeout to discuss the matter. Then Harry Newman (who else?) dropped back and kicked a 15-yard field goal to give the Wolverines a 3-0 lead at the intermission.

Having played for a break and then capitalized on it, Michigan then spent the second half protecting that three-point lead. Early in the third period Michigan recovered a fumble at their own 17 yard line to end the only real Minnesota scoring threat. The remainder of the game saw Minnesota attempting occasional long passes to save the contest, but primarily it was a continuation of the punting duel between the two teams. For the day Regeczi of Michigan punted 20 times for an average of 39 yards, while Minnesota, with Lund and Dillner handling the chores, punted 16 times for an average of 31 yards. The difference in punting yardage for Michigan offset the total offense advantage held by Minnesota and the contest ended with the 3-0 score.

With the victory over the Golden Gophers came the Big Ten championship and an undefeated, although hardly overwhelming, season for the Michigan Wolverines. They had shutout six of their eight opponents while averaging 216 yards per game of total offense to their opponents average of 130 yards. Further, they had allowed their opponents to complete only 17 of 88 passes attempted for the year and allowed only 13 points to be scored for the entire season. The Maize and Blue also laid claim to the national title after the Dickinson Ratings came out showing them with a narrow advantage over Southern California.

Mythical titles were nice, but what Michigan wanted most of all was a bid to the Rose Bowl game where they could take on the undefeated Southern Cal powerhouse. Immediately after

receiving their bid to the post-season classic, the Trojans had let it be known that Michigan was their first choice for an opponent. But if the Wolverines were to play at Pasadena, it would have to first be approved by the Big Ten faculty committee.

The Michigan team and administration was confident of receiving the Rose Bowl bid, and the Wolverine players continued to practice on a "voluntary" basis even as newspapers around the Midwest maintained a constant drumbeat of support in favor of them making the trip. Athletic Director Fielding Yost was also confident, and he had even been seen "singing" while walking down the halls, which was most unusual behavior for the patriarch of Michigan football.

One negative aspect for the Wolverines' chances was that it was being made known that the faculty men from the various Big Ten schools regarded the pressures being exerted upon them by the newspapers and others as an interference with their freedom of thought and action. It was feared that their resentment might be shown with negative votes at the conference meeting scheduled for December 3.

These comments, and an unofficial poll showing that the Big Ten's athletic faculty reps would probably turn down a Rose Bowl bid extended to Michigan, moved the Pasadena selection committee to announce on December 2 that Pittsburgh had been chosen as the opponent for USC. The choice was made before the Big Ten meeting to insure that any Eastern team selected would not appear as a second choice and thus reduce the prestige of the Rose Bowl game. The Southern Cal athletic director, Bill Hunter, told reporters that the "selection of Pittsburgh rather than any other eastern college eleven speaks for itself... It will be a privilege for our boys to test their mettle." All of Michigan was stunned.

But still 1932 had been a rewarding season for the Maize and Blue. Harry Newman reaped numerous post-season honors, including being voted a unanimous First Team All-America backfield man, winning the Chicago Tribune's Silver Football award as the top Big Ten player, and winning the Douglas Fairbanks Trophy as the MVP of intercollegiate football. If the competition had existed in 1932 for the Heisman Trophy, he most likely would have won that award also. Ivan Williamson and Ted Petoskey also received various All-America mentions.

The 1932 season was best summed up by two men from Chicago, the first being the illustrious Amos Alonzo Stagg, as he wrote, "Michigan is entitled to all her victories because her team is well rounded, tremendously strong in punting, stout in defense, particularly dangerous in the double threat of Newman's forward passing and elusive running, and thoroughly sound and smart in her tactics and strategy." The second commentator was an unknown staff writer for the Chicago Herald Examiner, who wrote that "when nobody else feels like going out and salting away the ball game, they put it up to Harry. And Harry takes charge!"