

Schmidt claims slump end near

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — What's wrong with Mike Schmidt? At last count the \$3 million slugger was hitting .243 with nine home runs and 22 RBI.

"Nothing that one hot week won't cure," replies Schmidt. "He's trying to change the outlook on the type of hitter he is," growls Philadelphia Phillies' manager Danny Ozark. "He's trying to make himself do something he can't do right now."

Ozark says Schmidt is trying to be a line drive hitter to all fields.

"And as a result he's taking something away from himself," Ozark declares. "He doesn't want to strike out and he's trying to become a contact hitter. What's happening is that he's taking something away from his aggressiveness as a hitter."

Hell, Ted Williams didn't try to hit to left field until he matured as a player... Who is he (Schmidt) fooling at his age? He doesn't have to compensate. He's trying to become accomplished and he's giving the pitchers too much credit."

Ozark says that he has talked to Schmidt about the third baseman's hitting.

"He just wants to be an accomplished hitter, hit to all fields, and he's messing himself up. He's not that kind of hitter. The pitch that he's trying to hit to the opposite field he could drive out of the ball park swinging in his natural way."

What Ozark is afraid of is that Schmidt may fool around just long enough that he won't recapture the stroke that made him major league home run king the last three seasons.

Schmidt, a serious type, is concerned but not worried about his slump as a power hitter.

"I'm about a hot week away from leading the league in home runs," says Schmidt. "And the RBIs come with them."

"I'll accomplish what I should accomplish before it's over. I will. I'll hit .270 to .280, get 30 home runs and 100 RBI. I tell a lot of people that I don't set goals, but that's where I'll finish."

"I've got a period coming when I'll be scalding hot. I'm just living and waiting for that particular period."

Yeah, but can he take the intense booing of the blue collar worker who sees him now as a \$3 million dollar bust with the bat?

"The guy who comes to every game doesn't boo," Schmidt rationalizes. "It's the guy who comes to one game who boos. The knowledgeable fans give me a cheer."

Schmidt must be marching to his own drummer. Those boos night after night are clear and resounding. The fan expects \$3 million production.

"It's not like going from a Volkswagen to a Rolls Royce," says Schmidt of his six year multi-million dollar contract. "We're human beings, not machinery. They may pay more for my services, but human beings are subject to failure."

Schmidt says anyway that he is past the stage where he lets the fans bother him.

"It's a hell of an adjustment from a guy who played this game for fun all his life to suddenly find himself playing for all this money," Schmidt said. "Now I have to make this work. I'm not going to lie. I did press, try too hard because of the money. But I'm going to handle it."

Schmidt carefully points out that he hasn't been a total loss to the Phillies. He's still playing defense like the Gold Glove third baseman that he is. He insists that there is no panic situation either for himself or the team.

"I'm hitting a hard .243. I don't get trash hits. I put the ball in play more. Pitchers have tended to throw inside to me, which keeps me from getting my hands extended. The more that I extend my hands the more liable I am to hurt them," Schmidt noted. Has he sought help from Phillies' batting coach Billy De Mars?

"I don't spend a lot of time grabbing the bat, because I know that I can be a hell of a lot better ball player. It's my own

Favored as first unbeaten Triple Crown king

Seattle Slew 'home team favorite'



Seattle Slew is right at home working out for tomorrow's Belmont Stakes. The 3-year-old is a heavy favorite to win the race and capture the Triple Crown.

NEW YORK (AP) — "There's no disgrace being beaten by Seattle Slew," Billy Turner, trainer of the overwhelming Belmont Stakes favorite said yesterday.

And, obviously the owners and trainers of nine other 3-year-olds, agreed with Turner... and felt it was worth the gamble that tomorrow might not be the Slew's day.

"Horses that never win another race have won at Belmont," said Turner. "Why not take a chance? It's good business."

But if the early odds are right, it's useless business. The Slew was made 1-5 to win his ninth race and become the first unbeaten Triple Crown winner in history.

"I think it's a compliment," said Karen Taylor, the listed owner of Seattle Slew, said of the surprisingly large field.

"Everybody's out to beat Seattle Slew." "I've never worried about Slew's competition, I never have," said Karen's husband, Mickey. "He can gallop faster than most horses can run. This is our playground this time; we're the home team."

Seattle Slew's base is at Belmont Park and ran all three of his races there last year when he was voted the 2-year-old champion.

"It doesn't make any difference how many horses there are," Taylor continued. "Iron Constitution, Run Dusty Run, Sanhedrin, they deserve to be in the race, and the rest have high hopes."

Run Dusty Run and Iron Constitution had the best loser's look at Seattle Slew in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness.

The "High Hoppers" entered yesterday were Spirit Level, Sir Sir, Mr. Red Wing and the John Campo-trained entry of Make Amends and Hey Hey J.P.

If all 10 go to the post at 5:38 p.m., EDT, the 109th running of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont will be worth \$183,800, with \$110,280 to the winner. However, Campo has indicated that Hey Hey J.P. will be scratched and sent to Philadelphia for the \$25,000-added Keystone Handicap.

A victory by Seattle Slew would also

make him the 10th winner of the Derby, Preakness and Belmont and the first since Secretariat, who in 1973 became the first Triple Crown champion since Citation in 1948.

The Slew, who will be ridden from the No. 6 post by Jean Cruguet, could boost his earnings past the \$790,000 mark. He won \$94,350 in 1976 when he easily won three races including a 9 1/4-length score in the Champagne Stakes at Belmont in 1:34.2 for the mile, the fastest running in the 105-year history of the race.

This year his wins in a seven-furlong allowance, the Flamingo Stakes, the Wood Memorial, the Derby and the Preakness have been worth \$514,290.

Run Dusty Run, owned by Verna Lehmann, was made the second early favorite at 6-1. He was second in the Derby and third in the Preakness and in 16 starts, seven of them this year, has eight wins and has been worse than second only twice.

Sandy Hawley will replace Darrel McHargue, who rode Run Dusty Run in the Derby and Preakness, and take the stretch-running colt from the rail. Trainer Smiley Adams was not pleased with McHargue's ride in the Derby and was downright unhappy about his ride in the Preakness.

John Galbreath's Sanhedrin, who will leave the No. 8 post under Jorge Velasquez, was third in the Derby, skipped the Preakness and was second, by a head, to Spirit Level in the 11-8 mile Peter Pan at Belmont June 1. He is winless in seven starts this year, leading trainer Lou Rondinello to say: "The only thing I haven't taught my horse yet is how to win." Iron Constitution, second in the Preakness after skipping the Derby, goes into the Belmont after finishing second in the Jersey Derby. Pass Catcher finished second in the Jersey Derby and then won the 1971 Belmont as Triple Crown candidate Canohero II finished fourth. Iron Constitution, owned by Harry T. Mangurian Jr. and ridden by Angel Cordero Jr., will start in the No. 2 post.

problem, and I'm not changing now. I do communicate with DeMars, but I don't spend much time in the batting cage with the coach. I hit so well in the cage that I can't correct much."

Schmidt says that he has been in a worse position as a hitter at this time in previous years. He was hitting .190 in June of 1975. He wound up hitting .249 with 38 home runs and 95 RBI.

Of course, the spotlight wasn't on him in 1975. He hadn't won a home run title yet, and he wasn't earning close to \$3 million.

Ozark probably has the right answer. Schmidt should go up there and swing like Mike Schmidt. If he does he'll get 30 or more homers and drive in 100 runs. After all, what appears to be conveniently forgotten is that Schmidt is a lifetime .252 hitter. His best year was 1974 when he hit .282.

What Ozark appears to be saying is: "give me .252, but give me those home runs and RBI. Ted Williams you ain't."

Garner determined to overcome identity crisis

PITTSBURGH (AP) — People have been having trouble with Phil Garner's name, but that hasn't bothered the Pittsburgh Pirates third baseman.

In Philadelphia, the press box attendant spelled Garner's name "Gardner" on the blackboard where they put the starting lineups.

Chicago broadcasters Lou Boudreau and Jack Brickhouse continuously pronounced it "Gardner" when the Cubs were in town.

But Garner is more concerned that he's batting a weak .221, that the Pirates have lost 12 of their last 16 games and that the team has drifted out of first place in the National League East.

"That's all going to change pretty soon, I hope," says Garner of his average. "I'm starting to get in the batting groove. Maybe when I start hitting a ton, those guys will be able to say and spell my name."

The new Pirate infielder says his bat

usually comes to life in June. "I can't wait until June comes every season," he said. "I'm glad it's here. May? Well, I could do without May very nicely."

"But I still don't accept it. I'm going to find out what happens. Until then there's not much I can do but live with it."

"All I have to do is get this guy 'Gardner' off my back. Then I'll be okay," he said.

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(answers to page 4 puzzle)

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