

SPORTS

Drechsler, Spruill anchor UNC offense

By FRANK KENNEDY
Staff Writer

Just ask David Drechsler and Ron Spruill what it's like to guard UNC's offensive backfield — but don't expect them to tell you that it's anything close to glamorous.

Life definitely is not a bowl of cherries when your job matches your own brute strength against the insatiable hunger of sack-happy linebackers and defensive backs.

The rewards for knocking helmets with the opposition are few. There are, of course, the aches and pains, the bumps and bruises. But there is little or no limelight. While attention tends to focus on the more visible players — the Bryants and the Elkinses — the interior linemen tend to get lost among the mass of bodies.

"You've got to play with pain," Spruill said. "They (the coaches) won't let you play with an injury, but you do have to play with pain."

As far as recognition is concerned, neither Drechsler nor Spruill is out to improve his own notoriety with the press.

"Our main concern is for the team," Drechsler said. "Both of us lead by example. We are always there and we work hard all the time. That's something you can't put down on paper."

"We get the job done," Spruill said. "That's what everybody sees."

Motivation and pride play a large role in the way the Tar Heel seniors look at their place on the squad. Drechsler, left guard and self-proclaimed perfectionist, rates

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himself on his leadership qualities and his game-to-game consistency.

"I try to take each game one at a time and do my best on each play. Ron and I both are motivated, but we don't shout and jump up and down on the field. I think our presence is calming to everybody else (on the team)," Drechsler said.

Spruill, who lines up to the right of the center, considers himself the more "gutsy" of the duo. "We complement each other with our different styles of play, and so we play well together. Dave would have

to be more of a technician with good work habits," Spruill said.

It is this cohesive working relationship that has made Drechsler and Spruill one of the best guard combos in the nation. The facts speak for themselves.

In the 25 games in which they have both started, UNC running backs have rushed for over 100 yards a game on 25 occasions. During that same time, the Tar Heels lost only four times and averaged 30 points per game.

In 1981, Drechsler and Spruill made ACC history by being named to the All-ACC team, the first time both guard spots were held by players from the same team. Drechsler even added a little frosting to the cake with his first-team selection to the Football Writers' All-American squad.

Carolina quarterbacks were seldom sacked, and the Tar Heels' three primary backs — Kelvin Bryant, Tyrone Anthony and Ethan Horton — rarely had any trouble racing through the line.

This season's Vanderbilt contest was the first one in over two years in which Spruill and Drechsler did not start together. Out with an ankle injury, Drechsler's consecutive game streak ended at 24, while Spruill now has started 26 straight.

"Sure, I think about it," said Drechsler of his streak coming to an end. "But it's more important to have someone in there who can play the position. If I can't play, I want somebody in there that can do the job."

Drechsler's absence was felt against Vanderbilt as the Tar Heels struggled offensively during the first half. However, that changed against Army last Saturday. With Drechsler back in the lineup, the Tar Heels amassed 414 yards on the ground.

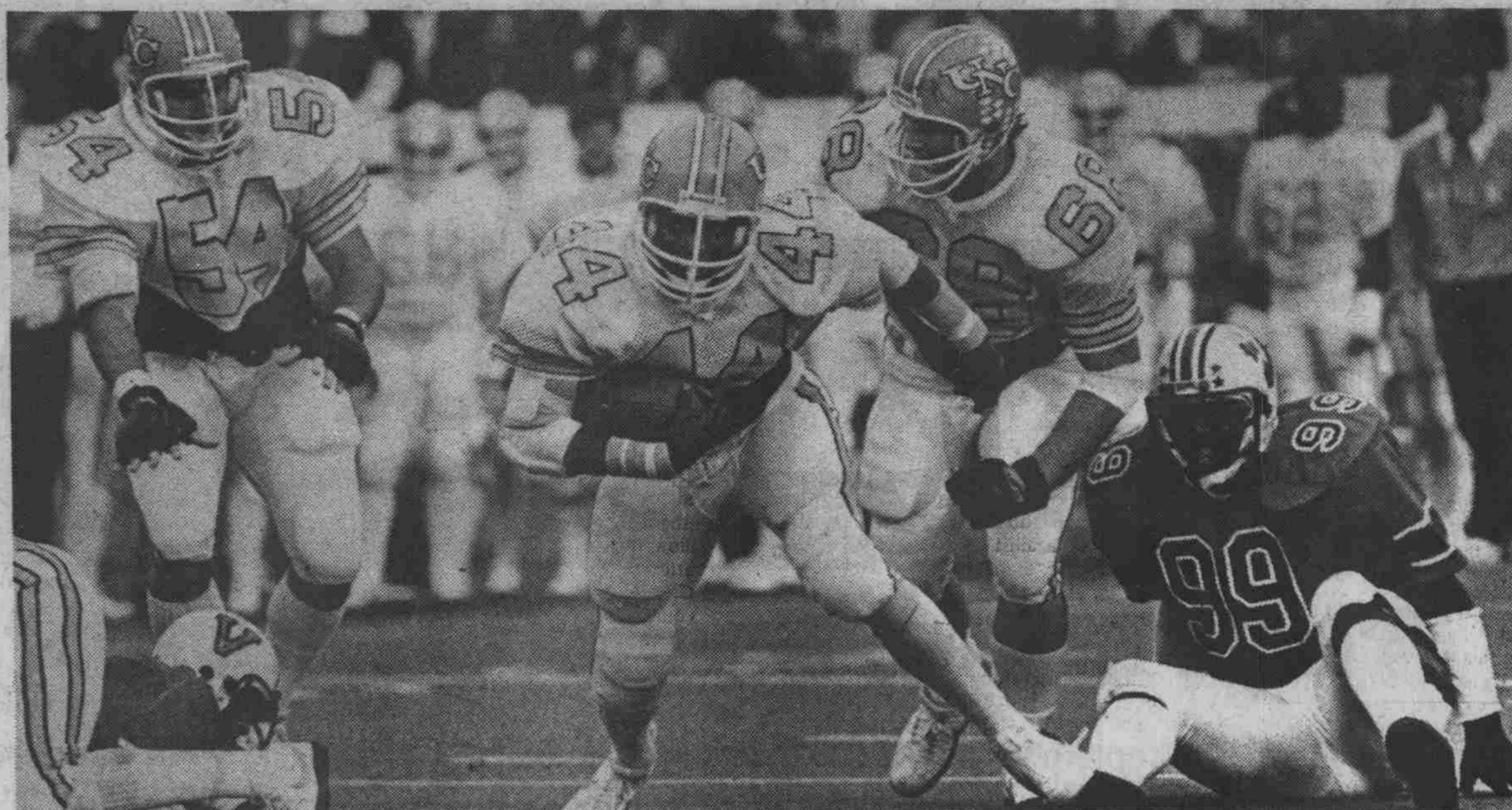
Drechsler has not been without injuries in the past. He was red-shirted for the 1978 season because of a knee injury; he reinjured the knee in 1979.

But he tries not to let injuries get him down. He disciplines himself to carry out his role in a business-as-usual manner. Injuries, like his personal goals, simply do not crop up during play.

"Dave is a very highly motivated person" said Spruill, a senior economics major.

Spruill takes his job just as seriously, noting that the guard position is one of the most skilled jobs on the line.

"We have to do an awful lot of running and reading of the linebackers and defensive backs," Spruill said. "We do a lot of block-



Dave Drechsler and Ron Spruill square off for action ... guard tandem endures life in the trenches

ing on the corners. We have to be very aware of where people are on the field."

"Nobody on the offensive line ever misses practice, and if they do, it messes them up for a while," he said. "We're taught to be rugged, and (the coaches) teach us a lot of mental toughness."

But Spruill does admit to having the practice blues occasionally. "Sometimes it's hard to get up for practice. Sometimes I can't imagine how I'm going to get through it."

In 1981, the Tar Heel front line was highly praised, especially in the early weeks when the offense glided across the field with incredible ease. However, that same line has been frustrated early this season. Pittsburgh's top-rated defensive unit was up to par in the Tar Heels' opener.

"It was very frustrating," Spruill said. "We felt we could move the ball, but every time we got something going, we stopped ourselves. We had too many first-and-long situations thanks to penalties. We don't have many plays designed for that, and it was hard to adjust."

"They (Pitt) deserved their reputation," Drechsler said.

But Spruill has always maintained that things would get better — he just didn't know how much better. "We have basically the same personnel this year, but after the Pitt game we had to show people what we're made of," Spruill said.

Drechsler and Spruill know injuries will play a key role in the performance of not only the offensive line, but also the team as a whole. Naturally, they remain cautiously optimistic about the Tar Heels' prospects.

"There are so many ifs and buts," Drechsler said. "There's no telling what will happen come December. It's realistic to think we can win the rest of our schedule, but anything can happen."

"We still have a tough schedule, and we'll need to be in top form to have a good record," Spruill said.

Spruill should know quite a bit about records, especially since his own history in sports is a prominent one.

As a student at Bethel High School in Hampton, Va., Spruill was named to the All-State team following his play as both an offensive and defensive nose guard. His wrestling prowess earned him third place in the Virginia state wrestling

tournament.

Drechsler was, himself, quite a high school celebrity. The Cleveland, N.C., native also was a basketball and track star.

On the gridiron at West Rowan High School, Drechsler played end, guard and tackle, and was chosen to play in both the Shrine Bowl and the East-West All-Star games.

The paths of Drechsler and Spruill might never have crossed had it not been for their mutual interest in North Carolina basketball; neither one had ever really taken a serious look at the football program.

"I had always been a big Carolina basketball fan, but I didn't know that much about UNC football," Spruill said.

"When I came for my visit, I went to a basketball game and was spirited by the enthusiasm. I made up my mind to come here. I cancelled the rest of my trips to other colleges."

Drechsler has similar memories. "I came out my junior year to see a basketball game, and I just decided I'd come here. I didn't look closely at the facilities or the program. I just realized this was the place for me," Drechsler said.

It didn't take long for the duo to become close working companions, on the field and off. Both of them entered the starting lineup at about the same time.

"Yeah," Drechsler said, "We get along. We room together on the trips. But then, everybody pretty much gets along well."

But Spruill, in his characteristically sarcastic manner, smirked at Drechsler and said, "We really despise each other."

Drechsler and Spruill have been through a lot in their years as Tar Heels: three straight bowl victories, a shellacking at the hands of Oklahoma, and a 1980 ACC championship.

Both of them agree that it was the 1980 title which satisfied them more than anything else. "It was gratifying to go 6-0 in the conference," Spruill said.

Now Drechsler and Spruill have their minds focused solely on this, their final year as Tar Heels.

Typically unselfish, neither thinks of his own future, which may include pro ball.

"It's still too early to think of that," Drechsler said. "This season is foremost in our minds."

Carolina Union Presents
Bond Street Theatre
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1 pm, Graham Memorial Lawn
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It's not easy for a gal to make a living standing up. I never knew I was dirty until I joined this group.
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Now appearing thru Sun Oct 3 - JOE WILLIAMS!

UNC-Tech football game rescheduled
From staff reports
The kickoff time for the UNC-Georgia Tech football game has been rescheduled from 1 p.m. until 12:35 p.m. on Saturday so that the game can be televised by ABC-TV. Coverage of the game begins at noon and can be seen locally on WRAL-TV, Channel 5.
The UNC-Georgia Tech game will be broadcast throughout the areas of the Atlantic Coast and Southeastern conferences. Other regional games include Houston at Baylor, Idaho State at Montana State and Akron at Middle Tennessee State. The Pittsburgh-West Virginia match will be the major regional game televised.

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career information
self-guided tours
student life slide shows
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