

'Typical' Fuller powers defense

By EDDIE WOOTEN
Staff Writer

For an average, run-of-the-mill football player, William Fuller sure has a lot going for him.

UNC's senior defensive tackle was a first-team All-American selection last season by the Football Writers Association of America after leading the defense to a second-place rating nationally in yards allowed per game. He earned second-team All-American honors from the Associated Press and was a finalist in voting for the Outland Trophy. Everyone has tabbed Fuller a preseason All-American for 1983.

Despite capturing so many accolades, Fuller keeps his easy-going personality intact.

Fuller recently strolled into the training table in Ehringhaus Residence Hall, preparing to add more nutrition to his already-healthy 6-foot-4, 250-pound frame. He walked in alone, wearing his horn-rimmed glasses. Carefully perusing the serving line, Fuller gave the impression that he was looking for a good book instead of a good meal.

He timidly introduced himself and sat down for yet more questions about William Fuller and the 1983 Tar Heels.

"I'm your typical person," Fuller calmly explained about his seemingly-shy disposition. "But I like to have fun, go to parties and hang out with the guys."

"There's not too much untypical about William Fuller."

Now that he's a senior, Fuller is expected to take a leadership role on the defensive unit, just as tackles Donnell Thompson and Harry Stanback did when Fuller was a freshman in 1980.

"I think they (the defense) look at me as a leader," he said. "I try to be a leader, especially to the younger players. When I was a freshman, I learned a lot and looked up to the older guys. I said, 'I want to do the same thing when I'm a senior.'"

The task could be a piece of cake for the Chesapeake, Va., griddier. With good size, excellent strength, quickness and speed, he carries a truckload of impressive stats. In his first two seasons as a starter, Fuller was credited with 103 tackles and 41 assists, including 15 quarterback sacks and 20 other hits behind the line of scrimmage. His previous two campaigns have ended with All-ACC attention.

UNC head coach Dick Crum called Fuller a "great all-around player."

"The thing that's most impressive about him to me is he's still trying to improve," Crum has said. "He's not resting on his laurels. He's a very hard worker who has not let success go to his head."

Fuller admitted he just wants to be one of the guys on defense—no spotlights.

"I want them to think of me being on the same level, no matter what honors have been bestowed upon me," he said. "I wouldn't want them to think I'm any better."

"I try to set an example for the younger guys in practice," he added. "I want to help them in any way I can really. If a certain defense gives them problems, I'll be glad to give them help. I try to pick them up emotionally when things get a little tough out there."

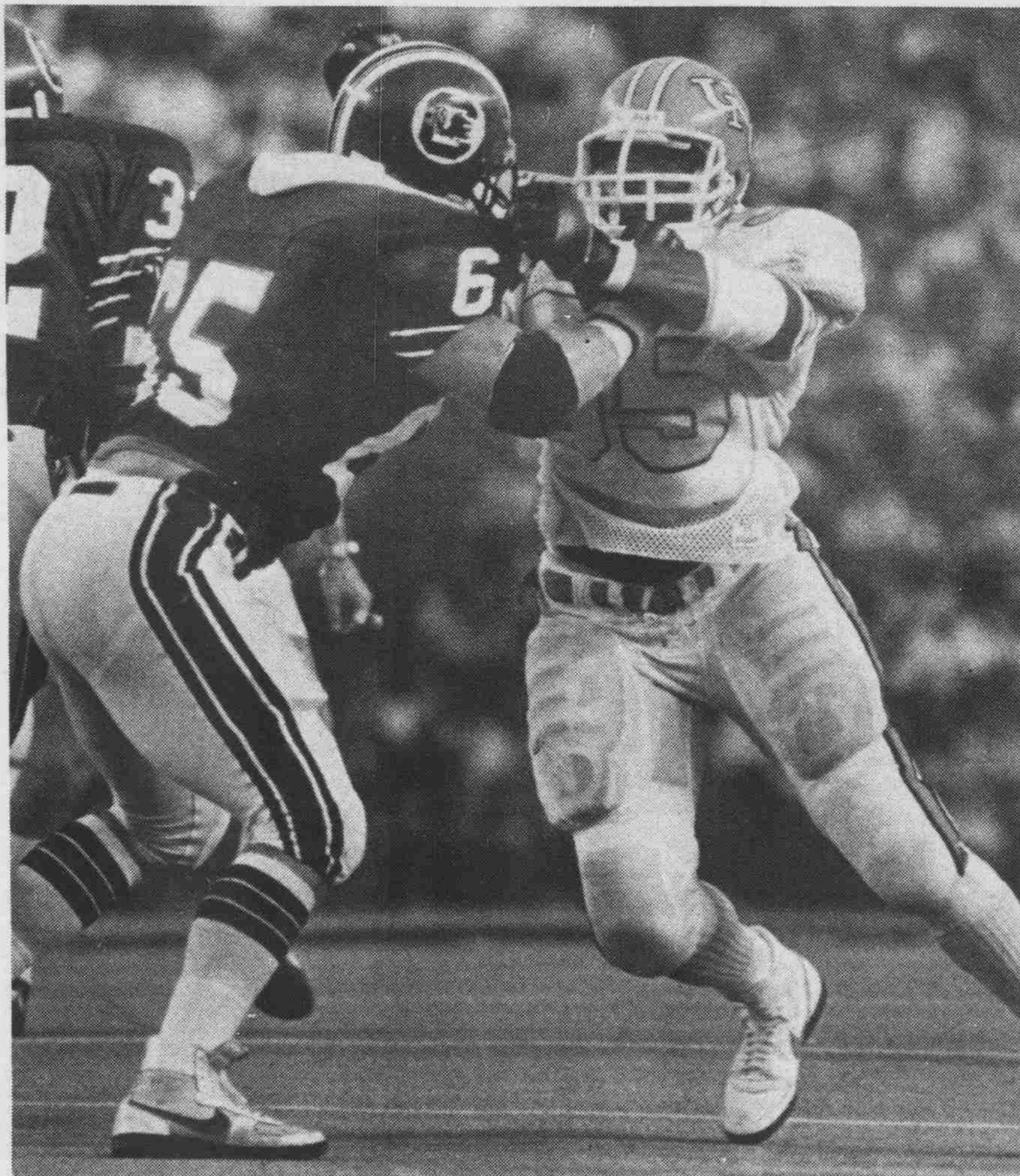
Three years ago, UNC posted an 11-1 mark, losing only to Oklahoma. That team's defense had its own personality with stars like Lawrence Taylor, Calvin Daniels and Darrell Nicholson. Those guys were flashy, they hit hard, and they didn't mind a few high fives or verbal intimidation.

With the quiet Fuller anchoring the line, the 1983 edition is different.

"We have a more calm, more disciplined defense," he said in comparison. "We like to talk with our actions instead of talking on the field verbally. You find out that it doesn't really help—it may even be a distraction."

"We're kinda keyed low emotionally," Fuller said. "The whole team is kinda typical of Coach Crum—low-key. He kinda likes it that way. We never do a lot of whooping or hollering. We just go out there and get it done at practice."

Off the field, Fuller has accomplished something not so



DTH/Jamie Francis

Defensive tackle William Fuller, right, tries to break through the South Carolina line. The three-year starter will be looked to for leadership on the 1983 defensive unit.

typical of UNC football players. Along with outside linebackers Aaron Jackson, he's a member of the Omega Psi Phi social fraternity. Football players and frats haven't always mixed, he said.

While Taylor probably wouldn't have cared for a fraternity, Fuller still admires Taylor's on-field demeanor.

"I liked his style of play," he said. "I said I would like to play my senior year like Taylor played his. It seemed like whenever they needed a big play, when the team was behind, he'd be the one to get it."

Fuller echoed the same sentiments of all of the Tar Heels when discussing the 1983 season.

"Winning the ACC is the team goal," he said. "Our defensive goals are to keep up the tradition at Carolina of having a defense in the Top 10. We feel we have people who do play good defense."

"It's like the baton is being passed; it's up to us to carry it on."

Like so many athletes excelling in their sport, the industrial

relations major has fallen behind in his course requirements. He said he planned to catch up during future summer school sessions.

He explained that his grades were in the "two-something" range.

About average, huh William?

"Yeah, I guess so," he replied with a chuckle.

It's hard to imagine that Fuller is the same guy Saturday after Saturday trying to sack an opposing quarterback or stop a tailback for no gain. It just doesn't seem like the off-the-field William Fuller.

"I think there are times when I'm quiet," he remarked, "and there are other times when I'm not so quiet. I can be a very loud emotional person. But most of the time, I'm kinda low-keyed."

Don't be surprised in Kenan Stadium Saturday when you hear the public address announcer repeatedly say, "Tackle by No. 95, William Fuller." It'll only be a low-keyed guy having an average kinda day on the field.

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