THE YEAR OF THE QUARTERBACK *CONTINUED*

Fraylon searches for a receiver against rival Winston-Salem State: 'Talking junk' and doing his level best to win (photo by Joe Daniels).

Will The Real Gerald Fraylon Please Stand Up?

Off Field He's Mild-Mannered -- On It He's An Arrogant Pain For Opponents

By SAM DAVIS
Review Staff Writer

The registrar's office at N.C. Central University lists only one Fraylon among the 4,000 or so students on campus. But we could have sworn there were two.

One, Wilson Fitzgerald Fraylon, is a political science major who will graduate in May of next year. He's a religious, introverted young man who appears as humble as he is sensitive.

Then there's "Gerald" Fraylon, the cocky quarterback who's the most visible performer to ever grace the football fields of the CIAA. Gerald openly taunts opponents at every opportunity and tries to demoralize opposing teams with his pinpoint passing – and tongue – every time he leads the Eagles into action.

At first glance, it appears the two Fraylons have little in common. Yet, shades of Sigmund Freud, they are one and the same.

"Off the football field, Fraylon is one of the nicest, most well-mannered young men that you'd ever want to meet," says NCCU Coach Henry Lattimore, who describes his young quarterback as a "schizo."

"He is a model person and student. But, when he goes on the football field, he turns into a lion.

"You can see the determination in his face," says Lattimore, who has seen Fraylon rally the Eagles to numerous wins during his career. "He has fire in his eyes. Fraylon is our offensive morale. He's going to find a way to beat you and he doesn't care what it takes as long as he gets it done."

Robert Clark, Fraylon's teammate at Central, echoes those remarks. "He's the leader of the team," Clark says of the rifle-armed senior. "He takes control of the game from start to finish.

"The entire offensive team looks up to him and trusts him because of his leadership. Before I came here (to N.C. Central) I had heard a lot about Fraylon, and when I got here he proved to be everything people said he was."

After taking over as a starter two games into his freshman season, Fraylon has become a living legend. Coaches around the league acknowledge his enormous talent and place him among the country's finest.

"Fraylon makes the big plays when his team needs them," said Livingstone Coach Mel Rose, after watching Fraylon score NCCU's winning touchdown with 3:27 left in the season-opener to defeat Rose's team.

"He's the leader of the team .... He takes control of the game from start to finish."

-- Robert Clark, Fraylon's teammate

"Fraylon is the kind of player that only concerns himself with winning," Rose says. "I think he's one of the best quarterbacks in the country."

With more than half of his team's games left to be played this season, Fraylon already had established himself as the all-time total offense leader in the CIAA. He also holds N.C. Central records for passing yardage and total offensive yards.

Despite the attention given to Fraylon by the media, opposing coaches and players, and fans, Fraylon remains low-key about his accomplishments at the Durham school.

"I feel good about the records I have been able to set, but I always think I could have done better," he says. "But I don't let it get to my head that I'm better than anyone else."

As far as the two different personalities he portrays, Fraylon says he has no problems adjusting from the one on the field to the one off the field, or vice versa.

"I think that I could be called a normal college student," says Fraylon. "At practice I'm very quiet. I don't go around jumping up and down, or getting emotional. But, when it's game time, I sort of change into a different person."

What that means for Fraylon is doing his best to win.

"My whole interest in playing football is to do the best job I can and to win games," he says. "If it means I have to run the ball or pass it, then that's what I do."

During Fraylon's illustrious four-year career at Central, he often has looked like a man among boys. Fraylon calls all of the Eagles' offensive plays and is at his best when the team employs a no-huddle offense in which he reads the defense and then calls the plays at the line of scrimmage.

"Throughout his career here Fraylon has always called his own plays," says Coach Lattimore. "When I send a play into the game, he sends it back to me."

Although that might cause problems for some coaches, Lattimore gives his talented signalcaller the latitude to make those types of decisions. After all, the Eagles' won-lost record with Fraylon as a starting quarterback stands at 23-6-1 (as of Sept. 16).

Like most college athletes who enjoy success, Fraylon has a burning desire to excel. While for some that means better chances at pro careers, it means more much more to him.

"I play to glorify God," Fraylon says of his yearning to always be at his best on the football field. "He has given me the ability.

"I put my relationship with God first in my life," he says. "I give Him total credit for everything I've been able to accomplish."

Fraylon, who comes from a very close-knit, religious family, says his upbringing plays a vital role in his life.

"I play to glorify God .... He has given me the ability. I put my relationship to God first in my life."

-- Wilson Fitzgerald Fraylon

"My father was a minister and he had a big influence on me," Fraylon explains. "He passed away a few years ago and, ever since, the things he taught me have stayed in my heart. I plan to do something with my life and I'm trying to get closer to God."

Yet, Fraylon says his deep religious convictions don't necessarily conflict with his desire to do well in football.

"There's no problem as far as that's concerned," he says. "I'm out on the field to give my all for the team. I've been blessed with the physical talent to play, so I feel obligated to use it."

Another inspiration for Fraylon is the fact that, despite his eventual success as a collegiate quarterback, not very many colleges were interested in his services at the end of his high school days at Myers Park High in Charlotte, N.C..

"Fraylon is the type of player that only concerns himself with winning .... I think he's one of the best quarterbacks in the country."

-- Livingstone Coach Mel Rose

Even when he arrived at NCCU, Fraylon started out as a fourth-stringer and thus has worn a 20 on his jersey rather than a more traditional quarterback's number.

"Central was the only school that really wanted me," Fraylon says. "That's what caused me to work so hard when I got here. I didn't think I would have the opportunity to play football again and, when I did, I decided to always play each game like it's my last. I think that gives me a good outlook on life."

While Fraylon hopes he'll play pro football once he hangs up his cleats at NCCU, he's prepared to face life without it.

"I think I'll get my chance to play in the pros," he says. "I don't think the fact that I'm playing in Division II football will hurt me, but that's too far for me to really think about.

"I don't really want to put any thought into whether or not I can make it as a pro quarterback. I'm focusing all my attention on this season and trying to win every game we play.

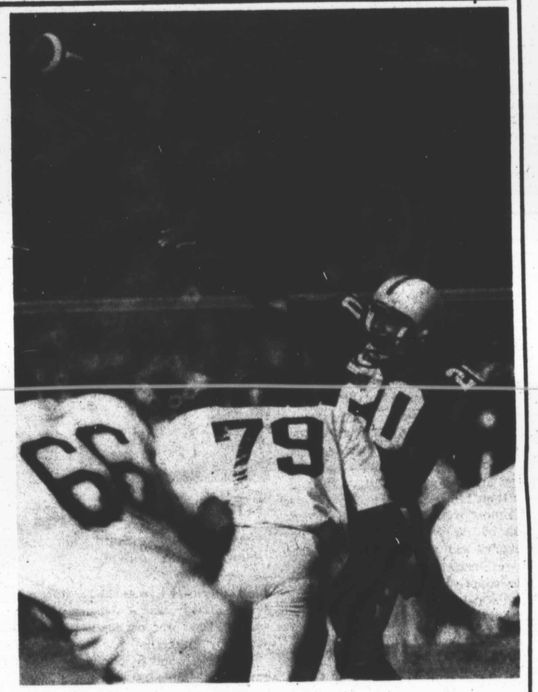
"I look at this season as my last one in football. I want to make sure that, when the season is over, I can say that I did everything within my power to win every football game."

"Right now I'm also worrying about getting my books (studying and going to class) and graduating in May," he says. "I've been looking for jobs so that I'll have something to fall back on."

Despite all of the accolades that have been tossed his way, Fraylon continues to be well-liked among his teammates.

"I don't think that the players on the team are overly envious of me,"

Please See Page 18



All The Ingredients

Fraylon: A strong arm, field savvy, competitive spirit and a nonstop mouth (photo by Joe Daniels).