Many Athletes Fled State, But Then Some Stayed

Jerry Lindquist

MEET MICKEY FITZGERALD. Sophomore, Virginia Tech. 6-2, 251. Tight end, offensive guard and defensive tackle turned fullback.

"It was tempting as hell to go somewhere else," he admitted. Alabama, Clemson and North Carolina were among out-of-state schools who gave the native of Lynchburg (E.C. Glass) a heavy rush. In the end he chose Tech.

"I'm just an old country boy," said Fitzgerald who doesn't sound like one. "I knew I'd be happy here. Why go outside the state?"

He sees himself as a trend setter. He recognized the mass exodus of first-rate state players. "I was hoping that was one thing I could stop. If I stayed in the state, maybe others would stay, too," Fitzgerald explained.

In two games since being switched to fullback, Fitzgerald has gained 256 yards, averaging 4.8 yards per carry, and the Hokies (1-7-1) came that close to dumping Florida State and West Virginia.

"The only regret I've had," said Fitzgerald, looking back, "is that I wasted a couple of (recruiting) trips. I always dreamed about playing at Notre Dame ... and I turned down a visit there.

MEET GREG TAYLOR. University of Virginia. Freshman.