

■ GREATS

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jumped at the chance," Fulton said. "I never had a situation before where professional baseball and college sports were located in the same place."

While he tried a short stint at Georgia Tech, Fulton never found a home he liked better than Columbia and, upon his return to USC in 1967, signed a long-term contract that lasted until his retirement in 1994.

His lustrous career put him at the helm of a major football team in the South. Fulton experienced the two biggest conferences in the South during his time — the ACC and SEC — along with the school's independent phase. Along with border rivals like Georgia and North Carolina, Fulton had a front seat to the rivalry that is USC-Clemson, including games like the 1984 miracle 22-21 comeback and the 56-20 drubbing of the Tigers in 1975.

That rivalry took a backseat

during the 1994 season, as Fulton was given a surprise ceremony at halftime to honor his success. Gamecock and Tiger fans alike gave Fulton a standing ovation as he took a victory lap around Death Valley while longtime Tiger broadcaster and friend Jim Philips spoke on Fulton's accomplished career.

Aside from the Clemson rivalry, Fulton also experienced the two biggest wins in Gamecock history. The first was the 1983 upset of Southern California 38-14 in Columbia. But the biggest win came at Ann Arbor against No. 4 Michigan in 1980, as Heisman Trophy Winner George Rogers carried the Gamecocks to a 17-14 win against the Wolverines.

"I honestly believe the win at Michigan (was the biggest) because that's the first time we defeated a top national power," Fulton said. "When we went up there, they were ranked No. 4 in the country and that year went to the Rose Bowl, and we played in front of 107,000 people."

While it is considered the biggest game in USC history, Fulton is quick to say he knew Michigan didn't have a chance.

"The day before (the game), Jim Carlen had the team work out at the field at Michigan, and, after they worked out, he called a meeting of the squad in the dressing room. He said, 'Now when we walk out the door tomorrow, Michigan likes to wait till you come out and then they talk trash to you. But I want to tell you something. We're going out right after they go out, and we're going to talk trash to them. And if that doesn't work, I'll go over and bloody Bo Schembechler's nose.' And that's when I felt we're going to win that game, no matter what happens. A lot of teams go to Michigan and get scared to death when they walk out in front of 107,000 people. He had a great motivational speech ready, and that's all it took."

While Fulton called the big games, none was bigger than his finale in the 1995 CarQuest Bowl.

Fulton's voice had been behind all of Carolina's previous bowl appearances but one, and in seven tries, the Gamecocks had never won a bowl. All that changed in 1995 as quarterback Steve Tanneyhill pioneered a 24-21 win against West Virginia in Miami.

"Going into that game, I had exactly the same number of wins as loses," Fulton said. "And if we won, of course I went out as a broadcaster of a winning team. And if we lost, I wouldn't say anything. And I came out a winner."

His awards and accolades are numerous, including being named South Carolina Sportscaster of the Year eight times; receiving the state's highest civilian honor, the Order of the Palmetto; being inducted into the South Carolina and USC halls of fame; and having a jersey retired to the rafters of the Carolina Coliseum.

While his honors are many, Fulton's real trophy piece was getting to know some of the biggest names in sports. Along with Gamecock heroes like George

Rogers, Sterling Sharpe, Joe Morrison, Jeff Grantz and Bobby Bryant, Fulton met some of professional sports biggest stars. Mickey Mantle, Ted Williams, Hank Aaron and Dan Marino headline a select list of those who Fulton has had the honor to see play and get to know.

While he is enjoying retirement, Fulton will openly say he misses being behind the microphone. And with the Spurrier Era about to kickoff, no doubt longtime Gamecock fans will miss him. In closing his book, Fulton wrote, "When I made out my last will and testament, I wanted something carved on my gravestone that would bring a smile to someone who might happen by. At first I thought it would be, 'I'll be back in a moment,' a phrase I had used thousands of times in my broadcasting career. After very serious consideration, I chose, 'WAIT TILL NEXT YEAR.'"

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