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Broncos OL Polumbus feels at home leading camp

By **Lindsay H. Jones**
The Denver Post

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Broncos offensive lineman Tyler Polumbus steadies blocking dummies for campers at his inaugural football camp held in Greenwood Village. (Kathryn Scott Osler photos, The Denver Post)

Tyler Polumbus gathered the group of aspiring football players in close for an important

message Monday morning.

If you want to play football, and particularly if you want to play on the offensive line, you've got to be tough, Polumbus — the third-year offensive tackle for the Broncos — told the campers.

"Nobody gets any glory in this group, and that's how we like it," Polumbus said. "We are the toughest guys on the whole team."

Polumbus then had the kids break their huddle with a cheer of "Up Front."

While most NFL players are far away from the game of football during the first week of July, Polumbus was wearing an orange Broncos hat as he led his inaugural Tyler Polumbus Football Camp at Village Greens Park in Greenwood Village.

Polumbus grew up nearby and attended Cherry Creek High School, both located just across the street.

"I'm so blessed to be playing here in my hometown, and our facility is just five minutes away from here," Polumbus said. "I grew up on these fields, and I wanted to be able to give back."

Plenty of NFL players, including Broncos, host or participate in youth camps in their offseason break. But it is hard to imagine another camp being as homegrown as Polumbus'. His wife, Liz,

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ran the registration table and his father, Tad, joined in as a volunteer coach, while mom, Nancy, and sister, Lindsay, watched from the sidelines. Polumbus did much of the legwork for his camp, from sending e-mails to the local youth football leagues to recruiting participants and hand-delivering fliers to the physical education teacher at Belleview Elementary, where he once went to school.

Polumbus recruited a number of fellow former University of Colorado football players to serve as coaches, including former quarterback Joel Klatt and receiver Dusty Sprague. Polumbus is expecting several NFL players, including Broncos teammates Ryan Harris and Daniel Graham, to join the coaching ranks today. The

no secret this was a Colorado crew. Polumbus jokingly made a camper take off a Nebraska hat, and Klatt teased others for wearing Texas gear.

"Sometimes dreams can seem too far away, but for these kids it's not," Klatt said. "They can see Cherry Creek High School right there and see Tyler, who played there and now plays at Invesco."

Lindsay H. Jones: 303-954-1262 or ljones@denverpost.com

Football

[View slide show of inaugural Tyler Polumbus Football Camp at Village Greens Park in Greenwood Village.](#)

camp concludes Wednesday.

"It's just awesome," Polumbus said. "And all these guys are here for the right reasons."

The local ties, both of Polumbus and the CU players, were a large part of the draw to the camp. Polumbus and Klatt, who delivered a speech to campers after the first session, made

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By
Kat Galsim

Freedom Newbies: Rookie Nikki Marshall

(Correspondent) on July 6 2010

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The second in a series of features on the new players of the Washington Freedom, the spotlight is focused on the team's first pick in the 2010 WPS College Draft, Nikki Marshall.

Imagine spending your whole life in Colorado, only to move to the nation's capital far away from your family, to start your professional career. Imagine being a star forward in college, only to become a rookie defender in a team full of veteran and world class players.

That is exactly what Nikki Marshall went through. And for her, having this new life has been a blast.

"My move's been great, I don't think I can be happier," Marshall expressed. "I just feel like Washington has been a really good fit for me in terms of, not just location, but just the team in general. Everyone's awesome. They've been welcoming and the coaches are great. This team has done a great job of just including everyone. I feel, honestly, just really close to almost every player on this team."

The Mead, Co. native was the seventh overall pick at the WPS Draft in January 2010. The all-time leading scorer of University of Colorado with 42 goals and nine assists, Marshall was placed in a new Freedom back line after working hard to earn a spot in the team's final 22-player roster.

The back line, hoping to improve from last year's record of having the most goals allowed in the league, includes Becky Sauerbrunn, Rebecca Moros, and team captain Cat Whitehill.

"She is a converted forward. She played forward all during college. The only time she's played in the back is with the Youth National Team," said Whitehill. "And with Youth National Teams you get great experience playing with top countries, but you only play there once a week, or a week at

a time, or two weeks at a time, and it's not consistent. So not only is she young in age, but she's also young as a defender."

"Nikki is awesome when it comes to working on improvement. She always wants to learn, constantly asking questions. And she takes criticism extremely well."

Marshall's attitude helped as she has demonstrated some standout performances at the back. A regular starter for Freedom, she contributed to the team's three shutouts, most recently against the Chicago Red Stars on Independence Day (check out the 4:22 mark on the video below where Marshall stopped Brazilian star Cristiane).



Can't view the video? [Click here.](#)

Later in the game, Marshall moved up top after striker Lene Mykjaland was subbed out with the score still 0-0. It was her first time to play as a forward in a WPS game after being a defender in ten matches.

"We were just really trying to push and get as much attack as we could and we needed some fresh legs up there," said Marshall in a post-game interview with Freedom. "It was pretty unexpected to move up. I had played a little bit of forward the past couple of weeks in practice, but [head coach Jim Gabarra] just threw me up there to see what would happen and I'm excited about it."

Whether playing up top or in the back, Marshall is adjusting well on and off the field. Spending time with her teammates has not only helped build on-field chemistry but has helped her adapt in her new life on the East Coast.

Marshall shared that she hangs out a lot with her teammates at Erin McLeod's host family's house, which has a pool. They often have lunch together, have a movie night at least once a week, and even do little things like spend time together before practice to get to know each other.

The small town girl, a self-proclaimed homebody who values family—and is actually far from hers in Colorado—feels thankful for her host family in Maryland.

"I was thrown into a situation where I have a family and I live with these people and they've been just absolutely incredible," said Marshall. "They make me feel right at home and they're just really genuinely good people. I really couldn't be happier with my situation."

And what perfect situation she is in right now. Instrumental in the improvement of Freedom's defense this season (1.27 goals against average to last season's 1.60), the rookie appears to be on her way to making an impact in what is widely considered to be the best women's soccer league in the world.

With her transition from college kid in the west to professional soccer player in the east seemingly smooth, and with her work ethic paying off as seen on the field, one can only imagine the big things up ahead for this small town girl from Colorado.

To get to know another Freedom Newbie, check out the feature on Norwegian striker Lene Mykjaland.

PHOTO CREDIT: Charlotte Mace