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Cowboys sign FB Lawrence Vickers

By Calvin Watkins

The Cowboys agreed to terms on a two-year deal with fullback [Lawrence Vickers](#) from the [Houston Texans](#), according to a source. Financial terms were not disclosed.

Vickers, a six-year veteran from Beaumont, Texas, played in 14 games last season. He only had one carry and had two special teams tackles for the Texans.

Vickers was the lead running back for [Arian Foster](#), who rushed for 1,224 yards and 10 touchdowns last season.

The Cowboys were also in talks with fullback [Tony Fiammetta](#) and declined to give him an exclusive rights deal on Tuesday. What this means for Fiammetta's future with the Cowboys is uncertain.

It appears doubtful the Cowboys would want Vickers and Fiammetta, two veterans on the team.

Jill Painter: Former college QB Irwin picks right career path

By Jill Painter, Staff Writer Inside SOCAL

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NEWPORT BEACH -- Before Hale Irwin became a professional golfer, he was a college quarterback.

During a practice at the University of Colorado in the 1960s, Irwin started a snap count and his center snapped the ball on the wrong cadence. Irwin wasn't prepared for the ball when it was thrust into his hand and his little finger was dislocated.

"All of my other fingers were going North and this one was going East," Irwin said. "As soon as I was home I grabbed a golf club to see what that was going to do to my golf game."

Irwin was worried one errant snap would ruin his golf game, but his grip was fine and so was his career. Much more than fine. Irwin went on to win 20 events on the PGA Tour and three U.S. Opens. He's one of just five golfers - including Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Ben Hogan - to win the coveted major three times, and he's a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame.

But it was football that taught the multisport star - who played football and then and months later won the NCAA championship in golf as an individual in 1967 - that he was better suited for the links.

"We opened at USC in the Coliseum my sophomore year (1964) and you had Mike Garrett. He made us look silly," Irwin said. "I thought, 'I'm not sure this is for me.' After being on the bottom of those piles - and some funny things happen under there - I thought, 'This is not my game.'"

USC won that game 21-0. Irwin said he contemplated quitting football after that season but couldn't shake his father's motto about honoring commitments. Irwin moved to defensive back, where he made the All-Big 8 team. He was an Academic All-American, too.

Irwin said it was much easier to jump on the pile than be under it, which he was when he played quarterback.

Irwin, 66, is here to play in the Toshiba Classic on the Champions Tour. He's won 45 of those events, too. He was chosen as Tuesday's keynote speaker for a breakfast that kicks off the week.

It was appropriate because Irwin was instrumental in helping the tournament decide to team up with Hoag Memorial Hospital. The tournament is expected to raise \$1 million for charity this year. Hank Adler, chairman emeritus for the tournament, picked Irwin's brain about teaming up with a hospital.

"I just peppered the guy with questions the entire dinner," Adler said. "Hale was so positive this would be great. As we finished the dinner, I said, 'Wouldn't it be a kick if a year from now I was able to give you the trophy?'"

That became reality in 1998.

Irwin was a good person to consult. Irwin, who grew up in Missouri, has been a big advocate for The Hale Irwin Center for Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at St. Louis Children's Hospital. He has hosted

a golf tournament benefitting the hospital for the past 25 years, a career streak of which he's most proud.

He still has a picture in the office of his Phoenix home of a little girl he talked to at the center when the wing was dedicated in his name. She died eight weeks after that conversation. It has been 12 years, but he has that constant reminder to keep working to help children.

"She was 10 or 11 and had just been diagnosed with leukemia," Irwin recalled. "She was so sweet and frightened. I went out of that room and was crying. There was a boy who was a survivor. I was blubbering, and I told him that girl broke my heart. He said, 'You can do this.'"

"To me, there's nothing out there better than doing this."

Irwin looked around at the 500 people in the ball room at the Newport Beach Marriott Hotel & Spa, who were there helping that cause.

Irwin often goes to the hospital unannounced to talk to children.

"I go down there to remind myself how good I've got it," Irwin said.

He can see tangible things, like a neonatal intensive care mobile unit.

It's been more than four decades since Irwin played at Colorado, but there's been talk of him helping with a practice facility for the golf team.

His school spirit was reignited with Colorado's basketball victory in the Pacific-12 Conference Tournament. A buddy called him, and Irwin turned on the championship game Saturday and watched the Buffaloes earn their way into this week's NCAA Tournament.

Seeing Colorado on television reminded him of his playing days. Things were so much different then.

"When I went to Colorado, I caddied in the morning and then I'd go pay for green fees in the afternoon," Irwin said. "I didn't have a pro. Now, you have a pro, nutritionist, shrink, trainer. Now these guys have 5, 6, 7 people following them around all the time."

"I'm not saying it's better or worse. I'm not saying it's better. Jack Nicklaus had a teacher. Arnold had his father. Lee Trevino had a Dr. Pepper bottle. Good or bad, I'm self-developed."

And for Irwin, he has been all he has needed. jill.painter@dailynews.com

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