

## Polumbus handling move to first team in stride

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REDSKINS INSIDER



Tyler Polumbus returned to Ashburn last week expecting to challenge for a backup job on the Redskins' offensive line.

Nine days into training camp, though, Polumbus has taken every snap with the first team because of the uncertainty surrounding Jammal Brown, and appears to be the frontrunner to start at right tackle when the team opens the preseason Thursday in Buffalo.

Brown is sidelined indefinitely with a lingering hip ailment.

"I have no idea what's going on with Jammal," said Polumbus, who started four games for the Redskins last season. "But as of right now, I'm just going out here and doing the best I can and making sure there's no lost production."

Coach Mike Shanahan added: "He's very sharp. He's a good athlete and I thought, when he *did* play last year, he played well."

Polumbus' competition for the starting job, however, has gotten a bit stiffer.

On Monday, the Redskins signed tackle Jordan Black, who had been out of the NFL for a year. Willie Smith, who replaced Trent Williams at left tackle when he was suspended last season, returned from a knee injury this week and could also be in the mix.

A week into camp, Polumbus hasn't been a dominant presence like Williams. He's been an adequate pass and run blocker who has limited his mistakes – which is precisely what's expected of him.

"He's done a good job," Shanahan said of Polumbus' performance.

At the moment, Polumbus has a key advantage over Black: He's familiar with Shanahan's blocking schemes from last season. The 27-year-old also played for Shanahan as a rookie in Denver in 2008 and is comfortable with his players lining up on either side of him.

But the fact that the Redskins signed Black this week suggests they want options.

Polumbus has never started more than eight games in a season. But this year he's hoping for more. If Brown misses significant time during the regular season, Polumbus could get that opportunity.

"Any time you get a chance to get on the field, that's a good opportunity for you," he said. "That's why you play the game – you want to be a starter."

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## Tom Powers: 3M has been Hale Irwin showcase

By Tom Powers Pioneer Press TwinCities.com-Pioneer Press

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Hale Irwin couldn't hide his disgust.

"Seventy-three yards," he said, pointing to a spot not far from the 18th pin. "That's exactly what I'm talking about."

From that distance, his wedge shot had been short and he had misfired with his putter, thus finishing with a bogey 6. That put him 2 over for the day and 4 over in the 3M Championship.

"I'm not playing well right now," he said. "For the last month, I've been out of sorts. That's the big difference between now and 20 years ago. Then I could sort it out quickly. Now at 67, it just doesn't screw down very fast."

Well, Hale, that's what happens at the age of 67. Lots of things, not just golf, become a bit more difficult.

"Yeah, but out there," Irwin said, gesturing back toward the golf course, "is where it shows its ugly face. Nobody sees if you forget your car keys and have to go back and get them. Out here is where you're hanging out all your dirty laundry and everybody sees it."

The theme at the 3M this year is \$20 million in 20 years. That's the amount the local Champions Tour stop has raised for charities since its inception. No golfer is more responsible for that incredible success than Hale Irwin. To this day he is the man most closely associated with the event. After becoming eligible for the senior circuit in the mid-1990s, Irwin won here in 1997, 1999 and 2002. And he won with flair.

Irwin was not some marginal pro looking for a second chance at success on the seniors tour. He is considered one of the best ever and was coming off an outstanding career on the PGA Tour. In fact, in 1990, he improbably won his third U.S. Open. He did so by sinking a 42-foot put on the 72nd hole and forcing a playoff.

He brought that pizzazz when he started playing on what was then called the "Seniors Tour." And he set the circuit on its ear, still holding the record with 45 Senior/Champions Tour victories. Irwin always put on a show here, first at Bunker Hills and then at TPC Twin Cities.

His popularity dovetailed nicely with the rise of the Champions Tour stop in the Twin Cities. He certainly boosted the tournament's visibility. And after a while, he became a focal point. While fans enjoyed seeing all the greats perform, for 10 years the one inevitable question at the end of the day was, How did Hale do?

Even though his Saturday, Aug. 4, round was over by midmorning -- an early tee time being a byproduct of a high first-round score -- fans were lined up at the fence waiting for him as he walked off the 18th. Twenty minutes later, he still was signing visors and shaking hands. I don't want to make that sound unusual because all of these fellows are great about interacting with the crowd. But Irwin still is treated like visiting royalty here and usually draws quite a gathering.

"I feel like a little, small piece of this community," he said after Saturday's round. "That's why I'll play here as long as humanly possible."

He then deflected any credit for the success of the event, calling himself "a small facilitator." Instead, he deferred to the sponsors, organizers and volunteers who, he said, make this one of the premier tour stops. And he spread his arms wide as he talked about the entire Twin Cities community.

Irwin shook his head, chuckled and said: "The way I'm playing now, it's hard to find anything really cozy. But I do have great memories. I won on this course with my son caddying for me. That was terrific." He then reflected on the old days at Bunker Hills and how the various venues in Minnesota always have a "family feel."

One of the great things about professional golf is that athletes get to be a rookie twice -- once when they turn pro and

once when they turn 50 and join the Champions Tour. The flip side is that they have to experience getting old twice, too. But Irwin is trying not to go quietly.

His last victory was at the 2007 MasterCard Championship in Hawaii. But in 2012, before the 3M, he's had three top 10 finishes in 14 events, including a third-place finish at the Senior PGA. So he still can crank it up. And the word is that he may have the most competitive spirit on the Champions Tour.

Still, there's no getting around 67. As his playing career winds down, Irwin has left many trails of success, including one in Minnesota. You know how some loudmouth always yells "You the man!" after every tee shot. Well, those yahoos actually have a chance to be right here.

Because at the 3M, Hale Irwin really is the man.

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