

Polumbus able to devote himself to right tackle for the first time

By John Keim, Updated: July 2, 2013

They noticed the protection issues during the season. They also knew what he was doing wrong. [Tyler Polumbus](#)'s shoulders weren't square; his hands weren't being used properly. The coaches and Polumbus just couldn't spend the necessary time to correct those problems, not with game plans to execute.

When training camp opens July 25, the coaches hope a good offseason working on those drawbacks leads to improved pass protection. Their reasons for optimism: Polumbus did not spend the bulk of his time at right tackle last offseason. Nor had he ever really been able to devote himself to that position, as he's done this offseason.

They were pleased with his progress as a run blocker. And Polumbus said he was proud of his season. But ...

"If there was a drawback to Tyler last year, he had to solidify his protection," Redskins offensive line coach Chris Foerster said at last month's minicamp. "There was probably too much push in the pocket. He worked hard to correct that this offseason; we'll see how that plays out."

Sometimes Polumbus would open his shoulders too much, allowing a clear lane to the quarterback inside. If guard [Chris Chester](#) wasn't around to help, that path could lead to a hit on [Robert Griffin III](#). Other times he failed to keep his hands inside the pass rusher's chest. When Polumbus would keep them outside, it was harder to control a defender – or even just knock him off his path. So a counter move inside, for example, would result in pressure.

Also, because he's 6-foot-8 and does not have long arms (relatively speaking), it's imperative to stay balanced, bending at the knees to stay low and not the waist. That's a constant challenge for any tall player. A long-armed blocker can control a defender with his hands on the outside; other tackles, such as Polumbus, must stay low and keep their hands inside. Or be exposed.

"It's a copycat league," Foerster said. "Once someone sees success doing something the next guy will do the same thing."

It would be wrong to say Polumbus is the only lineman who has to improve. But there will be more attention paid to him as right tackle was considered an area of need after the season. Also, with less congestion outside, a tackles' struggles are easier to spot.

The Redskins did not spend big money – or even medium money – to upgrade right tackle. Instead they signed low-cost veterans [Tony Pashos](#) and [Jeremy Trueblood](#). When they signed the latter, it could have signaled the end for Polumbus, who weighed an offer from Jacksonville. But a league source said Coach Mike Shanahan made it clear to Polumbus that he wanted him back and viewed him as “his guy.” Polumbus received a two-year deal.

Second-year [Tom Compton](#) has worked at left tackle and Foerster said he would not move him to the right side unless he becomes that strong as a backup left tackle.

Foerster said he’s encouraged by Polumbus’s offseason. Yes, mirages pop up often on spring practice fields; reality intervenes during the season (or before). But Foerster offered a dose of optimism.

“The problems he had last year, they were there during camp,” Foerster said. “We worked on them, but when push came to shove, habits are habits and you revert back to them. But in the offseason he’s worked very hard. Everybody has little things they need to work on in the offseason.”

One factor that should help: Polumbus worked at this spot full-time in the offseason. Last year, he spent the bulk of 2012 working with the first-team offense at left guard for the still-recovering [Kory Lichtensteiger](#). In his previous two seasons, Polumbus had started seven games at left tackle with Seattle or appeared in games at guard. He started four games at right tackle for Washington in place of Jammal Brown in 2011.

“To get a chance to work at my craft at that position has been great,” Polumbus said. “I’ve never had a full offseason to work at right tackle before. I’ve been able to work on some things, trying to stay square and keep my hands inside. There are reasons why you get yourself in bad positions, so obviously I’m working on things that may have caused issues last year.”

How much a difference will it make? The coaches will enter camp hopeful that any problems have lessened.

“That’s what he worked on and he did a nice job of it,” Foerster said. “But he’s fixed a lot of it. We’ll still have to see it in the summer.”

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