



Former Viking Matt Birk starts new career in comedy with charitable focus

By Jeff Passolt

ST. PAUL, Minn. (KMSB) - Former Minnesota Viking Matt Birk is finding a new career in the spotlight.

"Since retirement five, six years ago, I've had trouble finding my groove, so I said what the heck, let's try comedy," said Birk.

The St. Paul native, who spent 14 seasons in the NFL - most of those as a Pro Bowl offensive lineman for the Vikings - has decided to make a funny choice for his next career: stand-up comedy.

"I was dared to try stand-up comedy and I guess I would fashion myself - I'm somewhat funny," said Birk.

A lot of people wouldn't dare get on stage under the bright lights, but for a guy who spent Sundays banging helmets in front of millions of people, the pressure is a challenge he just had to take.

"It's harder than football in the way you can't just will yourself to do it," said Birk. "Sometimes in football, like no matter what - sometimes I have to block this guy, we have to drive down and score a



touchdown... Comedy doesn't work like that, you have to think about it. I'm walking around always thinking, 'Is that a bit? Is that a bit? Can I make a joke about that?'"

There's another reason he's taking the stage: for different charities. Currently, he's raising money for Lyme disease awareness, especially for kids. Birk also suffered a tick-borne illness.

"We're going to do it for Lyme Awareness Minnesota," said Birk.

"Lyme disease is a very, I think a very underreported problem. I don't think people realize how serious it is, how many people are afflicted by it and it's one of those diseases where early detection really is the key."

Birk is hoping to get two children's books, which focus on detecting Lyme disease, added to every elementary school library in Minnesota.

Birk will next be supplying the laughs for a charity comedy fundraiser at O'Gara's in St. Paul on Thursday night. When it

comes finding material for his standup, Birk says he doesn't have to look too far.

"People tell me - I have eight kids, two dogs, a tortoise - so people always tell me, 'Oh you should have one of those reality shows,' said he said. "People might look at me and say, 'Oh you're a retired NFL player!' No, I'm a husband, I'm a dad, you know every day I get my butt kicked, trying to be a great husband, try to be a great father. I think I can relate to people. I'm going through the same struggles and trials as everybody else. That's what's important when you're doing comedy. Find a connection with your audience. Find some common ground and try to make fun of yourself."

The Do Good Comedy Tour fundraiser is being held on Thursday, Sept. 20 at O'Gara's in St. Paul. For more information visit lymeawarenessmn.com.

