



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 2, 2011

Christian NFL Player Tim Tebow Takes Heat for His Faith

Tebow is not ashamed of his deeply entrenched faith. He began his postgame news conference Sunday by thanking his "Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" and ended it with "God bless." He openly prays on the sidelines and even on the field when he has thrown a touchdown. Tebow is often seen taking a knee, either in prayers of gratitude or in anticipation of a play. In fact, he does it so often that newspapers and fans have taken to coining a term for it: "Tebowing."



According to the *Daily Sentinel*, "Tebowing sweeps the nation." The *Sentinel* [notes](#) that Tebowing has become such a major trend that it has even helped to divert attention at times away from Tebow's failures on the field:

He gets blitzed. He gets sacked. We have no idea what he's going to throw or not throw next ... but we know this:

He's Tebowing.

And we go WILD and start taking pictures of each other Tebowing.

And we go online, post our .jpegs and look at photos other people snapped of other people Tebowing.

We don't care who else knelt and prayed on a sideline before Denver Broncos' quarterback Tim Tebow was even born.

The popularity of Tebowing has prompted Jared Kleinstein to create a website calling Tebowing.com. Kleinstein told the *Wall Street Journal* that he felt compelled to set up the site after watching one of Tim Tebow's fourth-quarter comebacks. "Everybody was jumping up and down, and we noticed Tebow Tebowing," said Kleinstein.

Since the inception of that site, fans have enthusiastically taken photos of both Tebow and themselves Tebowing and posted those pictures to the website, as well as to Facebook and Twitter.

Some consider the Tebowing trend to be a mockery of Tebow's faith and of the Christian faith as a whole.

Last month, the *Christian Post* reported on the taunting of Tim Tebow's faith by fans of the opposing teams. The *Christian Post* wrote, "Oakland Raiders' fans held signs that read 'Welcome to Hell,' directed at Tebow during the pre-game warm-ups before Sunday's NFL match-up in Oakland. Sunday's game marks the second week that the evangelical quarterback was targeted by fans for his Christian beliefs."

The week before the Broncos/Raiders game, the Broncos played the Detroit Lions. During that game,



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Detroit Lions linebacker Stephen Tulloch mocked Tebow's prayer pose after sacking the quarterback in the second quarter. Later, other Lions' players did the same.

Tulloch's behavior provoked the ire of some of Tebow's fans, as well as Christians across the nation, prompting Tulloch to tweet, "Football is a form of entertainment. Have a sense of humor. I wasn't mocking GOD!"

Still, Tulloch's gesture perturbed some observers, including Gordon Thiessen, director for training and resources at the Nebraska Fellowship of Christian Athletes. "I think the linebacker for the Lions was attempting to not mock God, but to mock Tebow and have fun with it. But it was still in bad taste and inappropriate, at best."

ESPN's Jemele Hill [articulated](#) similar sentiments:

Ridicule [Tim Tebow](#) for his slow release, for missing open receivers, for throwing passes that sail out of bounds, and for sometimes dancing in the pocket like someone put a firecracker in his cleats.

That's fair game.

But mocking Tebow's Christian beliefs is not.

Noting that it was not likely the opposing players necessarily intended to mock Tebow's faith by Tebowing, Hill added, "But if Tebow were Muslim or Jewish, would Tulloch and [the other players] have been so quick to execute a prayer parody? Would columnists, such as my friend Dan Wetzel ... encourage those who were offended by Tulloch's ... Tebowing to just lighten up?"

Likewise, Tebow's faith has become a punch-line for others who are disoriented by Tebow's shortcomings as a quarterback.

"Jesus must be thinking even Judas had a better release than this guy," comedian [Denis Leary](#) [tweeted](#) on Monday.

Travis Freese, a Tebow fan from Grand Junction, said, "My first reaction to it was, I was offended by it as a Christian." But Freese began to consider it as more of a fun game than anything else. "Even Tebow himself thinks it's funny," said Freese. "It's more along the lines of fun and games."

Freese admits that one of the things he likes about Tebow is Tebow's powerful faith, and his willingness to be public about his faith during interviews and to put biblical references on his eye black. "He kind of started to form as a role model for me and for others around me," said Freese.

But Kurt Warner has [advised](#) Tebow to tone down those displays. In an interview with the *Arizona Republic*, Warner said, "You can't help but cheer for a guy like that. But I'd tell him, 'Put down the boldness in regards to the words, and keep living the way you're living. Let your teammates do the talking for you. Let them cheer for your testimony.'"

Despite Warner's good intentions, some argue that it would be a shame if Tebow followed his advice. If Tebow inspired Freese, one wonders how many others he has inspired. And despite the mockery that he has provoked from some regarding his faith, he has placed Christianity at the forefront of some discussions about football, and that, one can argue, is a rather impressive feat.

In fact, the *LA Times* actually [attributed](#) some of Tebow's more recent successes to the intervention of God: "The premise that a higher being doesn't really care about football games continued to be challenged on Sunday. Tim Tebow won another one."



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During last year's Super Bowl, Tebow appeared in a pro-life commercial sponsored by Focus on Family, a global, conservative Christian ministry, and Tebow's autobiography, comprised of his numerous principles regarding faith, debuted at No. 6 on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Tebow has effectively used his position as a high-profile athlete to promote Christianity, and he stands out as one who is wholesome — even openly revealing to the media that he is a virgin — amongst other professional athletes who are often the subject of news stories for their bad behavior. He is one of the few positive role models in sports that gets significant media attention. Should he give that up and follow Warner's advice to tone it down?

The irony, of course, is that even as the nation has often called for more positive role models in professional athletics, when one is born, like Tebow, he becomes the subject of criticism and mockery.



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