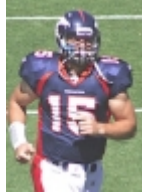




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 27, 2011

## NFL's Tim Tebow Steadfast Despite Animosity Toward His Faith

Tim Tebow just doesn't seem to get it. The NFL quarterback, whose mother ignored a doctor's advice to abort him, and who himself has ignored critics who consistently minimized his college successes and predicted failure at the professional level, publicly thanked Jesus after leading the Denver Broncos to an improbable come-from-behind victory over the Miami Dolphins in his debut as a starting NFL quarterback October 23.



Tebow apparently does not yet understand that the liberal major media — which has successfully blockaded nearly every meaningful mention of God from their realm of influence — and the culture at large aren't interested in his wholesome, guileless image and his desire to give credit where credit is due.

"First off, I have to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and my teammates ... they believed in me for more than 60 minutes," Tebow told reporters after a game in which he played poorly for 54 minutes, before engineering two touchdown drives — including his own two-point conversion — in the final six minutes, to tie the game at 15 and set up an overtime field goal for an 18-15 Broncos victory.

"You can't lose confidence in yourself or you've lost already," said Tebow. "When you get knocked down, you've got to keep getting back up."

Tebow has always been vocal and demonstrative about his Christian faith. Born in the Philippines to Baptist missionaries, Tebow played college football at the University of Florida, winning the Heisman Trophy in 2007 and leading the Gators to a BCS National Championship in 2009. During those years he could often be seen on the field sporting eye black with Bible verses, alternating John 3:16 and Proverbs 3:5-6 (a practice for which he would most likely receive a \$5,000 fine in the NFL).

Tebow's witness bore fruit during the 2009 BCS championship, when over 90 million viewers who watched the televised game "Googled" the phrase "John 3:16," the Bible reference he opted for that night. "It just goes to show you the influence and the platform that you have as a student-athlete and as a quarterback at Florida," Tebow said of the incident. Predictably, in 2010 the NCAA banned football players from wearing eye black with messages.

Also predictably, while Tebow has been applauded by Christian and pro-family leaders as an appropriate role model for young people living in a culture where such models are few and far between, he has become a high-profile target of those who hate his Christian example and wholesome image.

That animosity, which remained low-level during his college career, may have gotten a power boost during the 2010 televised Super Bowl, when Tebow and his mother were featured in a [high-profile pro-family ad](#) sponsored by Focus on the Family (see story from [The New American](#)). While abortion activists engaged in an intense pre-Super Bowl campaign to vilify the ad which they had not even seen, fearing it would be blatantly pro-life and anti-abortion, in reality the ad was nothing more than a light-



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hearted and harmless celebration of life and family.

Nonetheless, the weeks-long media attention surrounding the ad helped to reinforce an image of Tebow as an up-and-coming professional athlete whose behavior — both on and off the field — would be defined by traditional morals and an outspoken Christian faith — a scapegoat for assault by those whose lives are defined by hatred of such ideals.

As Tebow has demonstrated a combination of quiet grace, confidence, and maturity in his mostly unimpressive career as an NFL back-up quarterback, waiting for his opportunity to shine, his attitude and presence has prompted a bizarre hate campaign by an assortment of malcontents who wish he would just go away. At least one website — [www.TebowHaters.com](http://www.TebowHaters.com) — along with a handful of Facebook pages, exist solely for the purpose of bashing Tebow and hoping for the worst.

In an attempt to analyze the strange phenomenon, [NFL.com writer Jeff Darlington](#) interviewed various past and present NFL players. One Tebow friend, Miami Dolphins center Mike Pouncey, a former Florida teammate, was mystified. “It really blows my mind,” he said. “You talk about a guy that’s in the church, doesn’t do drugs, doesn’t drink alcohol, lives right, won the Heisman, won the national championship in college. Why do you criticize a guy like that?” Pouncey called Tebow “genuine to the utmost degree,” adding by way of endorsement: “If I have a daughter someday, that’s the kind of guy I want her to marry. I love him. He’s a great friend of mine.”

Dolphins running back Reggie Bush speculated that the dislike may be about more than Tebow’s good-guy image. “Maybe people don’t like the fact that he has accomplished so much,” he told Darlington. “And maybe some people just don’t think he’s a good quarterback. Everyone has an opinion — that’s just the way it is.... People look for a reason to hate you. With Tebow, though, it’s almost like they think it’s too good to be true.”

Darlington speculated that some folks may vent their hatred upon Tebow because he “has lived a life that meets to a surreal degree the moral standards generally taught to this country’s society at an early age.” He added that it “isn’t just that Tebow lives a wholesome life. It’s that he wears these qualities — openly crediting his faith for the reasons he lives his life this way — on his sleeve.”

One NFL great who can sympathize with Tebow is future Hall-of-Fame quarterback Kurt Warner, who as a player was equally vocal about his Christian faith. “Like me, Tim wears his faith on his sleeve,” said Warner, a two-time league MVP who came off the bench with two different teams for a total of three Super Bowl appearances and one victory. “I felt like there were always people who said football should be over here and faith should be over there. But that drove me, and I think it drives him.”

Warner told Darlington that the flack Tebow gets for being open about his faith shouldn’t bother him. “I don’t feel bad for him,” Warner said. “That’s part of the deal. You’re going to be criticized. I always welcomed that. Not everyone believes what I believe. And I welcome the criticism, not because I like it, but because it means they’re watching you. It presents an opportunity to share your message and share your faith.”

That insistent faith stance is what appears to goad most Tebow detractors. Asked by Darlington to expand on what it is that bothers them, the “haters” were vocal in their Tweets and e-mails. “The God thing.... He just seems like a phony,” wrote one. Another complained of Tebow’s “holier than crap” attitude, while another weighed in that he “brings his Bible thumping nonsense anywhere he goes. It doesn’t belong in sports and politics.”

As for Tebow himself, he apparently doesn’t care that giving glory to God doesn’t cut it these days. Or



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maybe he answers to a higher authority. At any rate, he told Darlington: “I’m going to be who I am. I’m not boisterous about it and I’m not shy or quiet about it. That’s just who I am, and I will always be — and I’ll never be ashamed of it.”

Tebow also doesn’t seem to track with the importance that others place upon the elite sports world he has been allowed to be a part of — who knows for how long. “If someone asks, I’ll always be willing to share His will,” he said, “because I also know that there are a lot more important things than football and that is one of them. That ultimately overrides football any day of the week.”



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