



By SCOTT GLEESON
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ON THE RECORD

"It's not always fun. I like being a normal guy. I mean, I grew up on a farm. I like to get to know people and go to dinner like anybody else."

- Denver Broncos quarterback **Tim Tebow** on the downside of being in the media spotlight.

BY THE NUMBERS

3 Months Warriors center **Kwame Brown** is expected to miss because of a chest injury. The former Wizards No. 1 pick will have surgery in the next few days.

40 Years of age for swimmer **Janet Evans**, who returns to elite competition this weekend at the Austin Grand Prix for the first time since the 1996 Olympics.

NO STARRING ROLE



MARIANNE HELM/GETTY IMAGES

Ducks forward Teemu Selanne has opted not to participate in the league's annual All-Star Game.

Happy to have bit of a break

It's a young man's game, apparently.

Two of the NHL's legendary veterans have opted not to participate in the league's annual All-Star Game. Both Anaheim Ducks forward **Teemu Selanne** and Detroit Red Wings defenseman **Nicklas Lidstrom** were left off the final roster of the Jan. 29 game in Ottawa. But it wasn't because they aren't worthy anymore. At age 41, Selanne still has 14 goals and 27 assists. And Lidstrom, also 41, has eight goals and 15 assists and still anchors a Detroit blueline that allows just 2.36 goals per game — sixth best in the NHL.

But instead of an 11th All-Star Game appearance in what could be his final season, Selanne passed the opportunity on to his teammate, reigning Hart Trophy winner **Corey Perry**. It's unlikely if Selanne hadn't bowed out that the last-place Ducks would have had two representatives.

"I'm an old guy. That's one thing. I've been there many times," Selanne told reporters in Calgary. "Honestly, I think it's a young player's great opportunity. Perry was MVP last year. He's the man."

Lidstrom didn't need to step aside to give his teammates in Detroit a chance. The Red Wings were sending goalie **Jimmy Howard** and forward **Pavel Datsyuk** anyway. But not to have the seven-time Norris Trophy winner on hand in Ottawa? Lidstrom was a team captain, after all, at last year's game in Carolina. But a weekend of rest is welcome, too.

"It's always an honor to be selected and one of the guys going to the All-Star Game," Lidstrom told reporters in Detroit. "It would be nice to get the weekend off, kind of re-energize and get back at it after the break."

- Brian McNally

FAVORITE ATHLETE

Winning popular vote

A recent ESPN poll crowned **Tim Tebow** as America's new favorite active athlete. As if the Tebow-dominated headlines in newspapers and constant analysis on television weren't any indication.

Tebow climbed to No. 1 faster than any other athlete in the history of the 18-year poll, beating out **Kobe Bryant** and **Aaron Rodgers**.

It's one of many signs that Tebowmania has captured the nation.

While Tebow's popularity has become a phenomenon, it's difficult to think of a sports figure who has had the same type of effect on the nation with this magnitude. **Tiger Woods** had a similar impact that brought golf to the forefront of the sports world. And **Michael Jordan** helped globalize the game of basketball during the 1990s.

What's perhaps the most fascinating is that those two were considered the greatest in their sports and both were champions. Tebow is in the playoffs for the first time. He was a champion in college at Florida, but that was way before his fourth-quarter heroics as the "Mile High Messiah."

So what draws so many people to Tebow? It's certainly not his scrutinized mechanics as a quarterback.

Is it because he wins? Time and time again, the unconventional quarterback proves his doubters wrong by simply leading Denver to victory. Whether it's with his legs all season in the Broncos'

pro-style offense or with his arm in last week's 316-yard performance against the Steelers, Tebow finds a way to win.

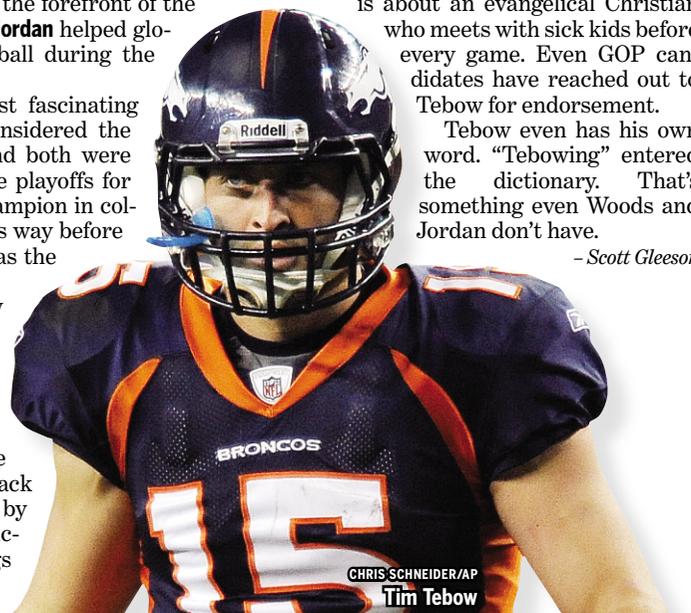
Is it the way he wins? The Broncos had six comeback wins in which Tebow transformed from a horrendous signal caller through three quarters to an All-Pro in the closing minutes.

Is it his personality? He has been compared to **Magic Johnson** with his leadership and ability to inspire teammates.

Is it his character? Last year, it was **Mike Vick's** comeback story that dominated NFL headlines. A guy who electrocuted dogs and rose to redemption. This year, the NFL's most prominent story is about an evangelical Christian who meets with sick kids before every game. Even GOP candidates have reached out to Tebow for endorsement.

Tebow even has his own word. "Tebowing" entered the dictionary. That's something even Woods and Jordan don't have.

- Scott Gleeson



CHRIS SCHNEIDER/AP
Tim Tebow

NO STOPPING POWER

Not looking much like a champion

If defense wins championships, the defending Super Bowl champion Packers could be in trouble.

While Green Bay finished the regular season with the NFL's best record at 15-1, it also owned the league's worst-ranked defense.

No team has reached the Super Bowl after allowing more than 360 yards a game.

The Packers gave up 412 a game this season.

Still, Green Bay sports one of the most explosive offenses behind **Aaron Rodgers**.

Can offense win championships?

A month ago, Green Bay was undefeated and seemed invincible. Fast forward to the Packers' NFC playoff matchup against the red-hot Giants, and

Green Bay's defense has come into serious question.

But the statistics could be deceiving. The Packers' defense surrendered the most yards but also led the league with 31 interceptions.

New York is a perfect example of a team catching momentum at the right time — very similar to the Packers last year.

- Scott Gleeson

COLUMN INCHES

Opinions from around the country on the hottest topics in sports:

» Some owners' offspring, such as the Patriots' **Jonathan Kraft**, the Cincinnati Bengals' **Katie Blackburn** and the Pittsburgh Steelers' **Art Rooney II**, are shrewd, engaged presences entrusted to operate their respective franchises at the highest levels. Others, such as the Indianapolis Colts' **Jimmy Irsay** and the 49ers' **Jed York**, inherit ownership and obviously outshine their parents. **Mark Davis** is Tommy Boy, trying not to face-plant on a table full of beers. And the thought of presiding over a team with a brash, intelligent and charismatic coach who knew how dismissively his father used to treat him had to be a daunting prospect.

- **Michael Silver** on the internal image some Raiders employees have of Davis, whose father, **Al Davis**, dominated the franchise for more than 40 years. (Yahoo! Sports)

» The Patriots might have won, but it would have been close without the fumbles. These are not the Patriots of Super Bowl years. Their defense is mediocre. So who knows honestly? I have a moment here and there during which I think the Broncos can win. But about 23 hours of each day I'm sure the Patriots will win.

- **Woody Paige** still picks the Broncos to beat the Patriots in a rematch when they meet in this week's AFC divisional playoff game. (Denver Post)

» Do the Manning boys want to share a stadium in Jersey? It seems a bit far-fetched. So did the notion that two brothers would ever have been MVPs in back-to-back Super Bowls. All you have to know is that if **Peyton** is in play and the Jets don't do everything possible to try to bring him to Jersey, then they must not be nearly as desperate as they've been acting since the end of the season.

- **Mike Lupica** envisions a Manning quarterbacking every Sunday next fall at MetLife Stadium. (New York Daily News)