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Tebow and Elway So Close and Yet So Far Apart

South Shore, Lake Tahoe, Nev. – Tim Tebow has always done things his own way, but tackling the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course for the start of the American Century Championship without much practice and having never had a golf lesson might be more than even he can overcome.

“I get my money’s worth out of every swing,” said the Denver Bronco quarterback after taking a mighty rip at his drive from the 16th tee. “I’m not an expert at this, and if I break 90 each day out here I’ll be happy.”

But while quarterbacks like Tony Romo, Billy Joe Tolliver and John Elway have perennially been among the favorites to win the 54-hole Stableford event that is in its 22nd year, Tebow reluctantly has accepted his fate long before play begins.

“It’s hard to accept that I don’t have a chance before I get started,” said Tebow. “I’m competitive and I’ll try my hardest, but I don’t practice and I don’t take lessons. I really just enjoy going out and betting against my brother (Robby). Some day, I’ll find time to practice and get good at this game.”

But for the foreseeable future, Tebow is concentrating on his football career and winning a starting job as the Broncos quarterback. His boss, John Elway, the executive vice president of football operations for the Broncos, would expect nothing less of his 2010 first-round draft pick.

“I hope people don’t get the wrong impression seeing me here,” said the 23-year old Tebow who started three games in his rookie season. “I’m very proud of the work that I’ve put in during this off season and I’m looking for a chance to compete and handle our offense.”

Meanwhile, Elway has had the time to practice his golf game, and it shows. He finished in a four-way tie for second place last year. And he regularly is around par for 18 holes.

“I think I’m still getting better,” said the 51-year-old Hall-of-Famer who is one of four golfers who has played in every Tahoe celebrity golf championship. “I really enjoy this week. It’s chance to see everyone again and it gives me a chance to compete. We never seem to lose that.”

Elway also was looking forward to sharing pleasantries with his sophomore quarterback on this practice day, knowing that Tebow was playing three groups in front of his. But the two will not be allowed to talk business due to the ongoing player lockout.

“I sure don’t want to get on his bad side and I don’t think I’ll be in trouble if I just say ‘hey,’” said the former Heisman Trophy winner, not fully knowing the league-imposed rules during the lockout.

Elway chuckled at the craziness of the situation. “We can’t talk shop, but I’ll be able to say, ‘Hey, how are you? How’s the family?’”

The two will not be paired together during the three rounds of play in order to respect the league rules. But each hopes they will be together in Denver for football practices before the month is over.

Playing a round of golf together can wait.

By Craig Smith, former director of media relations for the U.S. Golf Association.