

Caddying for Super Bowl QB nothing new for Tahoe local

By Kathryn Reed

Aaron Rodgers has played the American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament in relative obscurity for the past six years. That's not likely to be the case this year for the quarterback who spearheaded the Green Bay Packers Super Bowl win.

Rodgers is not letting his fame influence who carries his clubs during the July 12-17 tournament. It will again be Todd Echan. The 2000 Whittell High School grad is back in Zephyr Cove after getting his MBA last month from the University of Hawaii.

Echan grew up playing the links at Edgewood Tahoe. He knows the lay of the land, the water features, the greens, the fairways, the hazards.



Todd Echan watches Aaron Rodgers make a putt at Edgewood Tahoe. Photos/Provided

“The number of people following us on the course will be a

huge difference,” Echan predicted. Other than that, he doesn’t expect much to be different.

“It’s amazing how grounded and real of a person he is,” Echan said of Rodgers. “He doesn’t take anything for granted. He is real thankful for everything that comes his way.”

Chico, the town where Rodgers grew up, wanted to put on a parade for him after the Super Bowl. He didn’t want the city to go to that expense or have that kind of attention thrust upon him. Instead, Rodgers bought a full-page ad in the local paper to thank the community for its support.

Echan calls it a fluke that he was paired with Rodgers a handful of years ago. Since then the two have become friends. And Echan is now a Packers fan.

Most of the players travel with a caddy – who is likely to be a friend. Others take a recommendation from a pro at Edgewood and wind up with a local like Echan.

When it comes to offering advice, Echan said each celebrity is different. Some just want the caddy to carry the clubs, others want pointers, some need to be calmed down after a bad shot.

“I remember one time Aaron hit his golf ball into a hazard. The ball was in a Safeway shopping bag. He had to play it,” Echan told *Lake Tahoe News*. “He hit the ball out of the shopping bag and licorice went flying everywhere.”

What was amazing it the ball landed pretty close to the hole.

Caddies see it all on the course. Bad behavior by players gets back to tournament officials.

Echan witnessed a celebrity push over a little kid, others who blatantly ignored people wanting autographs, and some who have thrown clubs at caddies.



Todd Echan follows Jerry Rice and Aaron Rodgers at the 2010 tournament.

“The No. 1 thing is it’s always the caddy’s fault. We won’t say anything and it’s the caddy’s fault,” Echan said.

While there is serious money to be made by the top echelon at this tournament, it’s not the PGA. This isn’t the players’ career after all.

When the likes of Charles Barkley and Michael Jordan are puffing away on cigars on the course, it’s clearly not about setting a healthy lifestyle image. Barkley is still “threatening” to play left-handed this year. And sometimes the headlines are more about the girlfriends’ of the players – like the year Tony Romo and Jessica Simpson were an item.

For many fans it’s all about seeing their sports, political, TV, movie or comedic hero in person. Maybe it’s saying a few words, getting that person’s signature or even a photo together.

And when it comes to partying, the 17th hole at Edgewood Tahoe is always the place to be. Beach, boats, half naked bodies and that white ball on that pristine green lawn, um, fairway.

“The football players are throwing footballs and people on the boats are diving and trying to catch it,” Echan said.

Look for Rodgers to be hamming it up again with the throngs of spectators.



Aaron Rodgers looks for a receiver on the beach on the 17th hole of Edgewood.

“Aaron is on a personal level with everyone. He remembers names. A lot of celebrities, a week later, they will forget,” Echan said. “You can see with the Brett Favre situation he handled that like a dream. He makes good decisions and treats everyone well.”

As for Echan, he plans to do some networking while he’s on the course this year in hopes of putting that MBA to use. After all, this five-day caddying gig doesn’t pay a dime.