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## New Orleans Saints Beat

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## The Flying Fujita

By Jimmy S Smith

August 12, 2007, 6:46PM

Injured linebacker Scott Fujita spoke Sunday evening for the first time since injuring his heel in an accident at the Saints' water park outing last week, describing how he flew off the end of the water slide, broke through a 2-by-4 wooden barrier, skidded on his back on a concrete patio and drove his right heel through 2-by-2 fence board.

"It was all in the name of friendly competition," Fujita said. "We had this offense versus defense competition that started last year and I was the defending champion. I had to defend my belt. I don't know what it is; the aerodynamics of my body or something. But I come down those slides extra fast and I actually just flew right off the end of the slide into the wooden fence. It could have been a lot worse. I busted through a couple of 2-by-2s. I'm hoping if we go back next year, they actually extend the bottom of that slide a hundred feet or so.

"The important thing is I'm fine, and the defense won."

Fujita said the slide is designed for users to slow down at the end of the ride, "but there wasn't enough room for me to slow down because I was going so fast. I just shot off the end of it and my back was kind of skipping off the concrete and I went right through the fence. I was actually pretty lucky. The guys got a good laugh out of it after about 30 seconds of complete silence. I popped up in celebration, and two minutes later I realized I had some pain in my right foot."

Fujita did not practice on Sunday, but was not on crutches nor in a walking boot that immobilized the foot following the accident last week. As late as Saturday, he said, he was using a cane to get around.

"It's OK to laugh about it now," he said, "but I was pretty shaken up there for a minute. I'm glad I'm fine. Nothing is broken. I'm fine."

Fujita's status is day-to-day. He could return to practice this week.

Some other Sunday afternoon musings:

--Another blast from the past. Seen being worn by a fan in the stands at Millsaps: a black No. 34 RICKY Williams jersey.

--Quarterback Tyler Palko, who has been the first offensive player on the practice field just about every day since training camp began last month, had some company on Sunday: newly signed quarterback Matt Baker.

--The Saints worked in just helmets and shorts on Sunday as the temperature reached the 100-degree mark and Coach Sean Payton halted the proceedings about 30 minutes before the scheduled finish, at 5:28 p.m.

--With the Saints currently a couple of centers short because of injuries to Jeff Faine (calf) and guard-center Dave Yovanovits (knee), guard Jamar Nesbit was acting as a center while the quarterbacks warmed up in the early stages of practice. Nesbit has played every position along the Saints offensive line. He worked alongside Jonathan Goodwin, Jake Kuresa and Andy Alleman in the drill. An equipment assistant snapped the ball to a fifth quarterback.

--Both Thomases, Fred and Hollis, were with the second defensive unit during team drill walkthroughs at practice on Sunday. Fred has apparently been replaced as the starting right cornerback by Jason David, while Hollis, for now, is running No. 2 at defensive tackle behind Kendrick Clancy.

--During the first full-squad team period of Sunday's practice, the Saints' quarterback rotation looked like this: Drew Brees, Jamie Martin, Palko and Baker. Jason Fife didn't take a snap during either team drill period. Writing on the wall?

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--The Saints' don't lose much in the way of ability with Jammal Brown out of action. Second-year player Zach Strief looks every bit as talented as Brown. And Strief will only get better in the coming days working against defensive end Will Smith in practice every day.

--Tailback Jamaal Branch, getting caught up in a numbers game at that position - Deuce McAllister, Reggie Bush, Aaron Stecker and Antonio Pittman - is seeing some time at fullback lately. It's going to be difficult for Branch to make the final roster. The Saints will likely keep just one fullback, Mike Karney, because the tight end can also play fullback in this offense.

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