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THE ASIAN ASSASSIN

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Kids half his size would walk up to **Scott Fujita** and just stare. "Hi, I'm Scott," said the 6-foot-5 Fujita, putting his larger than life hand out.

Often the first words returned were, "Do you play for the New Orleans Saints?"

When Fujita, nicknamed the Asian Assassin for his punishing hits as a linebacker answered, "Yes," the next question was "Do you know Reggie Bush?"

"Yes I do," Fujita said. "And I can squish him just like that — if I could just catch him."

It didn't take long for one of the Peninsula's newest residents to make an impression on 400-plus kids at the 14th Herm Edwards Football Camp this weekend at Monterey Peninsula College.

Fujita, who will begin his eighth season in the NFL, now calls Carmel home.

"I made it a hobby to research areas to live in California," Fujita said. "The Carmel area came up. We fell in love with the place. My wife and I pulled the trigger. There's something magical about the Peninsula."

When he learned about Edwards' camp, Fujita did more research to find out how he could help.

"I didn't know Herm at all," Fujita said. "I shot an e-mail to his wife to let them know I am available. Herm said he'd love to have me. We just finished up mini-camps. I'm home for a month. The timing was perfect."

Fujita was a hit with kids of all ages during the two-day camp.

Coaching the 15-17 year-olds, his competitive juices came out when

he spent two hours on Saturday night putting together a mini-playbook of options that only he could explain for Sunday's games.

"I didn't know what to expect," Fujita said. "This is amazing. I've done camps before. There is a lot of attention to detail here and it's competitive. I installed a playbook this morning. We'll see what happens."

"I see you've got your playbook," smiled Edwards as he put his arm around Fujita.

When someone shouted "Asian Assassin" and bowed, Fujita turned, smiled and said, "You've done your homework. I'm impressed." Fujita's last name comes from his adoptive father who is Japanese-American.

Fujita, 30, has been impressive during a seven-year run in the NFL, compiling 81 tackles in 14 games for the Saints last fall while intercepting two passes.

After three years in Kansas City and one in Dallas, Fujita signed a four-year free agent deal with the Saints the year after Hurricane Katrina, not knowing if the Saints were coming or going to Los Angeles.

"People thought I was crazy," Fujita said. "The city was a mess. But my wife and I loved the city. We wanted to be a part of the cleanup. The city and the Saints is a marriage that has to continue."

Fujita's first season with the Saints saw every home game sell out, as well as the franchise's first postseason win in 40 years against Philadelphia in 2006.

"After the playoff win, I showered and went back on the field 30 minutes later and the place was still full. Fans had tears streaming down their faces. I'll never forget it."

The Saints, who play in arguably one of the strongest divisions in the NFC South, lost 16 players last year to injury, finishing a disappointing 8-8.

"The talent across the board is pretty even," Fujita said. "We lost six games by eight points or less. You get three of those wins and you're a No. 1 or No. 2 seed in the playoffs. There is small margin of error in the NFL."

Fujita had an immediate connection with the camp. One of the first people he ran into was Seaside graduate and Chiefs tight end Tony Curtis, with whom he played in Dallas for one season.

Edwards and Fujita each played at Cal. Both have defied long odds as Edwards was an undrafted free agent who spent nine years in the

NFL while Fujita was an unknown walk-on at Cal.

"I went to Cal for the education," said Fujita, who attended Rio Mesa in Oxnard. "I was fortunate that I got to walk on."

One of Fujita's teammates in New Orleans is former North Salinas and Hartnell College lineman Carl Nicks.

"Carl is so big and mobile for his size," Fujita said.

With nearly 500 solo tackles and 18 sacks in his career, Fujita is at the prime of his career. He's in the final year of a contract with the Saints, with hopes of finishing his career in New Orleans.

"I'd like to play three to five more years," Fujita said. "If it's not in New Orleans, than I'd like to come back to the West Coast. It's a tough commute in the off-season. I'll play as long as my health allows me. I went to college with the thought of life after football."

He did label Oakland as one of the two best places to play a football game.

"In Green Bay, they shower you with compliments and knowledge," Fujita said. "In Oakland, I like to go down to the 'Black Hole' during warm-ups and listen to all that crap. Raiders fans are some of the best."

Once the Reggie Bush questions stopped, the next question was, "Have you ever beaten the Raiders?"

"Quite a few times," Fujita said.

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