

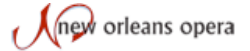


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# NEW ORLEANS SAINTS CENTRAL

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## NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VIDEOS

[Mike Triplett's New Orleans Saints Video Log, 2/26/10](#)



Sports, Super Bowl »

## Answering New Orleans Saints' call in 2006 proves rewarding

By [Mike Triplett, The Times-Picayune](#)  
January 31, 2010, 6:00AM

**New Orleans Saints** linebacker **Scott Fujita** said his wife, Jaclyn, would probably be embarrassed if he shared her pregame motivational text publicly. But he was so proud of her words that he couldn't help himself.

"I almost read it on the podium (after the Saints' NFC championship game victory) because it made me pretty emotional," said Fujita, who was the first free agent to sign with New Orleans in 2006 -- two days before quarterback Drew Brees.



Chuck Cook/The Times-Picayune

"Before the game, she sends me a text from her and the girls (daughters Isabelle and Delilah)," Fujita continued. "She says, 'We love you babe. You make us proud every single day. Today is no different. I hope you grab this championship and run with it. You deserve it as much as this city does. You are a huge part of something great. Thank you for bringing me somewhere that changed my heart forever. NOLA will always be our city, our home. It's where our life took off.'"

Linebacker Scott Fujita, celebrating the New Orleans Saints' playoff victory over the Eagles in 2006, decided to leave Dallas for New Orleans with the hope of getting more playing time.

"I mean, she sends me that a couple hours before kickoff, and that just hit me so hard. I mean, that's what it means to me. And I said it on the podium after the game, and I meant it: 'This is where my kids were born; I really feel like this is where my career was reborn.' And just that connection runs so deep, so for us this is just the pinnacle."

Fujita is one of a handful of players and coaches who chose to come to New Orleans in 2006, in the months after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city and a 3-13 season sent the team into a major rebuilding mode.

Coach Sean Payton and Brees are the two key building blocks that have received their due amount of credit for taking a chance on the Saints and New Orleans, but there are others who took the same leap of faith.

Payton took time last Sunday night to thank those coaches and players -- even the ones who are no longer with the team.

"There are a handful of coaches and players that were on that first team, and I would just say to those players and coaches that aren't here now, they're just as much a part of this," Payton said. "They know who they are. I can't go through every one of the names, but there are a lot of people who came when no one else wanted to come."

Fujita admitted that most people thought he and his wife were "crazy"

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### New Orleans Saints 2009 season review

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Michael DeMocker/The Times-Picayune

New Orleans Saints center Jonathan Goodwin, like quarterback Drew Brees, signed with the team after Hurricane Katrina. Goodwin said he 'saw the potential' of what could be.

when they chose to come to New Orleans, especially since they were leaving Dallas and "America's team," the Cowboys.

But Fujita had been a role player in Dallas, and he felt like he could play a bigger part of something special in New Orleans, especially after he came on his free agent visit.

"Within a few hours of our visit, Jaclyn and I both felt like we had to be here," said Fujita, who said he had no connection to New Orleans and had never really spent any time here before that visit. "Like a lot of

people, you saw what happened during Katrina on CNN, but there's always that disconnect. . . . You don't really understand it until you get here. And I think within a couple of hours, Jaclyn and I both got it."

Fujita, **who was selected the Saints' Man of the Year last month** for his contributions on the field and in the community, shared another text message from his wife, sent earlier this week.

"The people of New Orleans love the Saints not because they provide a distraction from their fall, but because they are a reflection of their rise," Jaclyn wrote.

Fujita was equally excited to help turn around the Saints' fortunes on the field. He had a connection with several coaches -- including Payton and former defensive coordinator Gary Gibbs from their time in Dallas, and linebackers coach Joe Vitt from their years in Kansas City.

"Really, in every sense of the word, we wanted to be here to help rebuild. And I feel like that's what we've helped to do," Fujita said. "And for me now to be sitting at this point as a culmination of all that, it's just perfect."

Payton said his biggest concern when he took the job in January 2006 was his ability to recruit coaches and players. That's always the most difficult part of any first-time head coach's job, and in 2006 Payton was competing with a group of 10 new head coaches trying to build their staffs.

But he faced an especially tall task, considering the "uncertainty of the quality of life and everything that had taken place."

Last week, he shared an example of those unusual circumstances.

"Early on, we were all staying at the hotel, which is pretty common when you hire a staff and families haven't gotten here yet," Payton said. "My family was in town and I needed to get an antibiotic for my daughter and waited in line two hours at a Walgreens. And they had half a prescription of amoxicillin. In other words, it was different. It was hard to explain if you weren't here.

"I can recall that first trip as a family driving here in June, there was a lot of traffic going the other direction, not much going in."

Gibbs was the first assistant to join Payton in January, something Payton repeatedly credited him for and thanked him for, especially after he made the tough decision to fire Gibbs after last season and replace him with Gregg Williams.

Several others followed, including Vitt, a respected longtime NFL assistant, former offensive coordinator Doug Marrone, current offensive coordinator Pete Carmichael, current special teams coordinator Greg McMahon, current receivers coach Curtis Johnson, current tight ends coach Terry Malone, current secondary coaches Dennis Allen and Tony Oden and current strength and conditioning coach Dan Dalrymple.

Marrone said it was his confidence in people such as Payton, General Manager Mickey Loomis and Owner Tom Benson that convinced him to come to New Orleans.

"Those are three people you look at, you believe in them. Those are the type of organizations you want to be involved in," said Marrone, who left last year to become head coach at Syracuse. "I promise you, when I was there, I never believed we wouldn't get there. And it all starts with the organization. When you talk to those three men, there's a passion, and it comes out of

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### Gerry Vaillancourt

- [Gerry V audio: Hornets playing soft against league's top teams](#) 4:59 p.m. CT

## NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SCOREBOX

Sun, Feb 7					
Super Bowl					
Final	1	2	3	4	Tot
<a href="#">New Orleans</a>	0	6	10	15	31
<a href="#">Indianapolis</a>	10	0	7	0	17
<a href="#">Preview</a>   <a href="#">Box</a>   <a href="#">At the Stadium</a>   <a href="#">Recap</a>					

Leader	New Orleans	Indianapolis
<b>Passing</b>	<a href="#">D. Brees</a> 288	<a href="#">P. Manning</a> 333
<b>Rushing</b>	<a href="#">P. Thomas</a> 30	<a href="#">J. Addai</a> 77
<b>Receiving</b>	<a href="#">M. Colston</a> 83	<a href="#">D. Clark</a> 86



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## NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SCHEDULE Schedule 2009

Week	Date	Opp	Info
1	9/13	<a href="#">vs. Det</a>	<a href="#">W 45-27</a>
2	9/20	<a href="#">@ Phi</a>	<a href="#">W 48-22</a>
3	9/27	<a href="#">@ Buf</a>	<a href="#">W 27-7</a>
4	10/4	<a href="#">vs. NYJ</a>	<a href="#">W 24-10</a>
5	Bye Week		
6	10/18	<a href="#">vs. NYG</a>	<a href="#">W 48-27</a>
7	10/25	<a href="#">@ Mia</a>	<a href="#">W 46-34</a>
8	11/2	<a href="#">vs. Atl</a>	<a href="#">W 35-27</a>
9	11/8	<a href="#">vs. Car</a>	<a href="#">W 30-20</a>
10	11/15	<a href="#">@ StL</a>	<a href="#">W 28-23</a>
11	11/22	<a href="#">@ TB</a>	<a href="#">W 38-7</a>
12	11/30	<a href="#">vs. NE</a>	<a href="#">W 38-17</a>
13	12/6	<a href="#">@ Was</a>	<a href="#">W 33-30 (OT)</a>
14	12/13	<a href="#">@ Atl</a>	<a href="#">W 26-23</a>
15	12/19	<a href="#">vs. Dal</a>	<a href="#">L 24-17</a>
16	12/27	<a href="#">vs. TB</a>	<a href="#">L 20-17 (OT)</a>
17	1/3	<a href="#">@ Car</a>	<a href="#">L 23-10</a>
19	1/16	<a href="#">vs. Ari</a>	<a href="#">W 45-14</a>
20	1/24	<a href="#">vs. Min</a>	<a href="#">W 31-28 (OT)</a>
22	2/7	<a href="#">@ Ind</a>	<a href="#">W 31-17</a>



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[FULL SAINTS SCHEDULE »](#)

## BEHIND ENEMY LINES

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them."

Marrone was familiar with New Orleans, having played for the Saints in 1989, and he spent years recruiting the area when he was a college assistant.

He said when the Saints offered the job, he contacted Curtis Coach J.T. Curtis and Hahnville Coach Lou Valdin, and they said, "Come on down. Let's do this. We're rebuilding."

Marrone said he still marvels at how much the team and the players were able to affect the community, both through their performance on the field and their outreach efforts -- something he has made a priority in his new job.

And he said he'll never forget the atmosphere at the Superdome when it reopened for that first victory over Atlanta in 2006.

"I never knew the effect a sports team could have on a city. I always tell people that story, " Marrone said. "Very few times in your life do you have the ability to be part of something that's really special."

Marrone's arrival had a direct effect on center Jonathan Goodwin's decision to sign as a free agent -- they had worked together with the New York Jets.

The decision has obviously paid off for Goodwin, who earned his first invitation to the Pro Bowl this season, though he's happy that he won't be playing in tonight's all-star game.

"Once I got down here and saw it, I realized it wasn't like it was portrayed on TV, to me, as if nothing was here, " said Goodwin, who admitted that he and his wife had some reservations about coming to New Orleans, but most were eased during his recruiting visit. "Coach Payton, Mickey and those guys, they made me feel comfortable. And they made me feel like it was the best shot I had at playing and being successful.

"I saw the potential of what could be done here, and they were right."

Goodwin, Fujita and Brees are the only three free agents remaining from that 2006 haul. Others spent one or two years in New Orleans, including safety Omar Stoutmire, tight end Mark Campbell and backup quarterback Jamie Martin.

Many of the most important additions the Saints made came through the draft (Reggie Bush, Roman Harper, Jahri Evans, Marques Colston) and trades (Jeff Faine, Hollis Thomas, Mark Simoneau, Scott Shanle).

Then, of course, there were more than 20 players who had been in New Orleans even before that disastrous 2005 season, who stayed on for the rebuilding project.

No matter how they wound up here, they all take great pride in being part of that truly special experience.

"It's been one step at a time. It hasn't always been easy, " Brees said. "We've had to fight through plenty of adversity, just like this city has. We know what it's meant thus far to this community, not only the regular season, but also being able to host two playoff games, what it did for this economy, and what it did for the spirit of this city and these people."

*Mike Triplett can be reached at [mtriplett@timespicayune.com](mailto:mtriplett@timespicayune.com) or 504.826.3405.*

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Posted by **steeleagle**  
January 31, 2010, 7:00AM

Enjoy Super Bowl week you New Orlean Saints fans..... I am a Steelers fan pulling for your team to beat those whiny babys from Indy and hoist your first Lombardi trophy. I think it is fair to say that you have the support of most of the country. Good Luck!!!!

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Posted by **katzndawgs**  
January 31, 2010, 9:11AM

Thank you very much for your support, steeleagle!!!

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Posted by **jailbirdsoul**  
January 31, 2010, 7:01AM

Kudos to all of those players , coaches , and staff members who took a chance on our city/community when the rest of the world had left us for dead-----i can still remember people back then after the storm (in the national media) who questioned whether or not if our city should even be rebuilt or not, and it's those same pundits/detractors who are now 5 years later STILL hating on our community and telling us that we are NOT GOOD ENOUGH ; so to them all I have to say is that if you are not FOR New Orleans, then you are AGAINST us, and that same spirit and will to fight that help rebuild our hometown will be the SAME spirit and passion that you will get from OUR team in the Super Bowl next Sunday , so keep hating on New Orleans all that you want , because OUR city and community will ALWAYS still be here-----Go Saints , and thank you all, for what will be a year that none of us who have been waiting for what seems like forever will EVER forget.....

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Posted by **steeleagle**  
January 31, 2010, 7:03AM

And I hope the Saints cap off your season to remember with a nice shiny Lombardi trophy!!!

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Posted by **sololaverdad**  
January 31, 2010, 8:25AM

Thank you steeleagle....from the fans of the Black and Gold!

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Posted by **lordbyron23**  
January 31, 2010, 7:35AM

Bless u boys!!!!  
I'm a 33yr old fan who's always loved the Saints. It feels so good to have such genuine men lead us to the greatest season ever.  
Thank u

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Posted by **SouthTexasSaintsFan**  
January 31, 2010, 8:10AM

This is a BIG deal. Sean Payton is truly a hero. What a tremendous man!

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Posted by **southforever**  
January 31, 2010, 8:21AM

sorry but this is complete overkill. a high school coach who comes back after katrina, gets kids playing and puts together a winning season with limited funds, coaches and equipment for the kids is a hero. u guys are unreal with the nfl marketing. enjoy the game. it's not life r death. no one life changes win or lose but the players and organization and the purses.

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Posted by **tvlgds**  
January 31, 2010, 9:01AM

Do you even think before you open your piehole? Obviously you're not from the area and have zero knowledge or compassion about what it's like to rebuild from the ground up . There were no unlimited funds and there was doubt as to whether the team would even be able to remain in a devastated city with most of the residents scattered across the country,unliveable conditions, homes and lives destroyed. Who would even be around to GO to football games if the team did stay?Did it make sense to spend the money to rebuild a stadium when people weren't even sure whether to rebuild homes? Instead, the NFL and the city decided to rebuild TOGETHER and they've done a darn fine job for both the city and the team. Instead of ridiculing people who pulled themselves up by the bootstraps and dug in and made a difference, why don't you appreciate the hard work and determination? Maybe use your negative energy toward something positive and go help with a Habitat for Humanity build, or something. There's still a lot of areas of the city that need help.

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Posted by **jailbirdsoul**  
January 31, 2010, 10:16AM

tvlgds, you tell'em, bruddah (LOL) !!!

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Posted by **tvlgds**  
January 31, 2010, 10:20AM

Thanks! That would be "sistah!" LOL!

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Posted by **jailbirdsoul**  
January 31, 2010, 10:25AM

Yes , ma'am-----my bad (LOL) !

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Posted by **tvlgds**  
January 31, 2010, 12:36PM

No prob. There are no indications in this 2 dimensional medium. :)

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Posted by **catman63**  
January 31, 2010, 5:58PM

tvlgds - best post ever!! :^D

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Posted by **willkro**  
January 31, 2010, 8:43AM

Jeff Faine left for Tampa and won a division championship and quick exit from the playoffs. Meanwhile, his replacement is in the Superbowl, and a Pro Bowler. Well done Goody!

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Posted by **twotrue**



January 31, 2010, 8:59AM

Don't forget Arnie Fielkow sacrificed his JOB and possible NFL CAREER because he fought Benson to keep the team here. TELL THE TRUTH!!!!

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Posted by **kaj**  
January 31, 2010, 9:43AM

You are so right twotruue. As for TB.... he's a car salesman.... enuff said

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Posted by **reality002**  
January 31, 2010, 9:49AM

People that fight and die for our freedoms are heroes. People that run IN to burning buildings and come out with you or a loved one are heroes. People that play sports are not heroes. They can be people we should admire, and in the case of Mr. Fujita, Mr. Payton, Mr. Fielkow (we know the real score there), Mr. Brees, and all the rest of the team and coaching staff, and their respective families should be commended for their generosity and selflessness. But they are not heroes. No one loves this team more than I do, and I admire many of the team members and coaches for all of the work they do on the field, but especially OFF the field. It takes courage and a certain amount of intestinal fortitude to come to such a place as NOLA after such a devastating event, and the outpouring of generosity by so many of the team and staff should not go unnoticed. But let's save the "hero" tag for those that deserve it.

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Posted by **tvlgds**  
January 31, 2010, 12:48PM

I agree that the hero tag is used many times where it shouldn't be, but in this case I disagree with you. Coach Payton and these players ran INTO an area that many people were fleeing because of the horrendous conditions. They uprooted their families and moved to a very high risk area. (Katrina, crime, poverty, etc) They CHOSE to be part of the solution even with all the risk involved. They brought something to the team and the city that previous teams lacked-- heart and soul. The Saints have done more to give the city something to look forward to than any other entity in this country. They have given people hope and joy where there was nothing but devastation and despair since Aug. 29, 2005. They've dug in and become a huge part of the city, physically, monetarily, and emotionally. In that respect, they're heroes to me and to the city of New Orleans. It's not even about football--it's about faith, hope, charity, and bringing smiles to the faces of people who haven't had a lot to smile about. And now it's about making a dream come true-- the New Orleans Saints are in the Super Bowl for the first time in their 43 yr. history. Win or lose the game, this Saints team is a group of WINNERS!

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Posted by **IBDShark**  
January 31, 2010, 9:50AM

Congratulations Scott. Thanks for all you've done. The culmination will be to hoist the Lombardi trophy and bring it back to New Orleans. It won't be easy, but I'm confident you guys will get it done.

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