

"Through Pro Player Connect, I'm able to reach out to fans as well as make beneficial business connections. It's also a great way for me to let people know about my interests and involvement outside of football, whether it's with charities or with companies like Flex-Power, Training Day and Vibram Fivefingers." – **Scott Fujita**

Different Team, Same Goal

A Super Bowl ring... arguably the most coveted yet most elusive piece of man jewelry on earth. It screams, "Winner!" and it's something that linebacker Scott Fujita will add to his priceless list. The slightly weird part is that when he actually receives his symbol of a championship, he won't be playing for the same team with which it was earned. Such is the story of free agency. After four seasons in New Orleans, all of which the Saints were considered the saving grace after Hurricane Katrina, an adopted Cajun son has moved north. The ticker tape seems to have barely been cleared, and Fujita has traded his black and gold for brown, of the Cleveland variety.

"I've changed teams enough before to know that it was possible," said Fujita, who's on his fourth club in nine years (Chiefs, Cowboys, Saints and Browns). The Browns, a team that has never even reached the Super Bowl, are once again rebuilding in 2010. Lucky for them that's a bullet point on Fujita's resume. After all the Saints' one and only Super Bowl win was 43 years in the making, and when Fujita came to town, he was literally helping to rebuild the city of New Orleans as well as it's NFL franchise.

"First of all, my wife and I are both embracing the new challenge," said Fujita. "The idea of a turnaround program and being part of something new, something built from the ground up, we're excited about that part of it. I've always enjoyed the process of trying to turn teams around. We did that in New Orleans, and I'm so excited about the opportunity to try to do that again."

Of course it's still difficult to leave the city where your kids were born, a community that embraced you and, most importantly, the love of strangers who transformed into family during the ride of a lifetime. For these and many other reasons, Fujita will forever be connected to the "Who Dat" nation. Even upon leaving he was still giving back, donating half of his Super Bowl earnings to New Orleans charities, focusing on coastal restoration in Louisiana.

"My affection for the city will never change," Fujita said. "We love New Orleans whether we were going to be there or not, so we wanted to help any way we can to protect the city," Fujita said. "We plan on keeping a home there, and when I'm there, I'm there to serve."

Serving seems to be a huge part of Fujita's make-up. An NFL Players Association representative since 2008, he was recently elected to serve on the NFLPA's Executive Committee, a 10-man board.

"A leader is only as good as those around him," said Kevin Mawae, president of the NFLPA. "With the Executive Committee, the Board of Representatives and [Executive Director] De[Maurice] Smith, I believe we will continue to strengthen the NFLPA's position as the strongest sports union in the country."

With a lockout looming, the committee understands the elevated importance of their appointment and the possible compromise of the NFL and NFLPA's distinction as the country's best.

"We want to work. And we all maintain that position," said Fujita. "Football right now is the most celebrated sport in the country. I feel like we have a great thing going. We all saw what happened to baseball and what happened to hockey, and we don't want that."

"The relationship between the fans and the popularity of the game across the League is the best it's ever been. Why would we want to mess that up? It's a huge, pivotal moment in the history of the League. It's going to affect everybody if the owners choose to lock us (the players) out. It's not just the players, there's a lot more people (stadium workers, owners of bars and restaurants nearby on game days) who will be affected by that."

As always, Scott Fujita is thinking about others, a trait that has earned him well-deserved respect and a quality he inevitably carries with him to Ohio. "I do know the city to a certain extent is suffering right now," Fujita said regarding Cleveland. "Unemployment is really high, and I know they're craving to have football be big again. You always hear about Cleveland fans. It's a storied franchise, a lot of championships back in the day. And they want great football again."

Now that he's had a turn at hoisting the Lombardi Trophy and celebrating on Bourbon Street, Fujita would love nothing more than to take the Dawg Pound for a ride on the Super Bowl train.

"I'm on to the same mission, which is to win a championship and try to bring that to Cleveland," said Fujita. Just know that if you are with Fujita on that ultimate ride, you can expect to hop off long enough to help someone along the way.

To learn more about Scott Fujita, go to www.scottfujita.com.