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[Feb 04, 2010](#)

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MIAMI -- Talk of an owner-driven, 2011 lockout is the elephant in the room at Super Bowl XLIV. A lockout that would jeopardize the future of America's most popular sport that earns \$8 billion a year?

"I don't like the idea of it," Saints LB and union rep **Scott Fujita** said Thursday. "None of us do.

"We want to work. And we all maintain that position. Football right now is the most celebrated sport in the country. I feel like we have a great thing going.

"Why mess that up?"

Fujita was asked about the issue after NFLPA executive director **DeMaurice Smith** told USA TODAY Wednesday that the owners are not only bracing for a lockout, but are trying to break the resolve of the players.

"We all saw what happened to baseball and what happened to hockey," Fujita said. "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 seems incongruous to be talking about labor strife during pro football's week of Super Bowl glitz and celebration. But the storm clouds are building on the labor front as owners and the players negotiate to replace the CBA that expires at the end of the 2010

Fujita praised a letter written last month by quarterback **Drew Brees**, a member of the NFLPA's executive committee.

"The op-ed piece Drew wrote for the *Washington Post* last month, I was so proud of him for doing that, because it's not often that you see those high-profile, poster-boy types lend their profiles for the labor side of things," Fujita said. "For me, I'm a blue-collar guy. I think a lot of quarterbacks, those big-time guys have been accused of being like **Michael Jordan**. He was one of my childhood heroes, but, 'Hey, Republicans buy sneakers, too.' (One of Jordan's famous quotes on his pitchman skills).

"C'mon, man take a stand on an issue. But Drew did that. And I was so proud of what he did. What he did was on point. He really tapped into how much 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.

"For Drew to do that was huge." -- *Jim Corbett*

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