

Lucky Who Dats Are Saints for a Day

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Even though the 2011 NFL season remains in doubt with its players and owners on opposite sides of a lockout, that didn't stop 30 players from the New Orleans Saints from giving four fans of the Who Dat Nation a once-in-a-lifetime experience on Wednesday (May 25) at Tulane's Westfeldt Practice Facility.



For 11-year-old Dawson Schoening, working out with Drew Brees in the Tulane weight room is a dream come true. Schoening's mom was one of the raffle winners but passed the opportunity on to her son. (Photos by Sally Asher)

Quarterback Drew Brees hatched a plan several weeks ago for a raffle contest called "Be a Professional Athlete for a Day," where four grand-prize winners won an opportunity to [work out](#) with Brees and other Saints players. Brees' plan was an instant hit and generated \$43,000 from \$2 ticket sales in just four days. The proceeds will benefit various Louisiana charities and the [Tulane Athletics Fund](#).

The four winners were Shane Dunshee, 35, of Luling, La., James Begnaud, 34, of Youngsville, La., Emily Gilly, 29, of Columbia, Md., and Dawson Schoening, 11, of Forney, Texas.

The highlight of the day came during a passing drill when young Schoening broke through the middle of the defense and hauled in a pass from Brees for a touchdown.



The four winners of the Saints workout huddle up with Brees and other players on the practice field.

Wednesday's experience for these loyal Saints fans began with breakfast with Drew Brees at the Ritz Carlton New Orleans. The group then drove to the Tulane campus to get down to business. The winners were introduced to the players and for the next two and a half hours, the four fans participated in warm-ups, passing drills, running drills and a weight-lifting session, followed by a catered lunch.

"Today was a win-win situation for these fans and it gave them a very unique experience with our players," Brees said. "I feel like our team has a special bond with our fans that no other professional team can share. It really makes you happy to give someone the opportunity that otherwise they would not have."

The day went so well for Brees and the Saints players that the Super Bowl MVP hinted there might be another opportunity for Saints fans in the near future.