



Everything New Orleans

Backup QB has run-in with T-Rac Brees-to-Bush could be start of something good

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NASHVILLE, TENN. -- Alert Gumbo the mascot.

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The Titans' mascot, T-Rac, was driving a golf cart during halftime when he crashed into Saints reserve quarterback Adrian McPherson.

Seriously.

McPherson stayed on the ground for several minutes and did not return to the Saints' sideline in the second half. He had played earlier on the second kickoff return team but wasn't scheduled to play quarterback.

McPherson's knee injury was not serious, and he is expected to practice Monday.

"I'm all right," said McPherson.

T-Rac is a five-time Pro Bowl mascot, according to the team's public address announcer.

NEW ERA BEGINS: With 11:07 left in the first quarter, quarterback Drew Brees threw his first pass in his first Saints appearance, a one-yard gain to running back Reggie Bush. It was Bush's first NFL play. That was on second-and-four on the Saints' 20, followed by a Brees incomplete pass on third, forcing a Steve Weatherford punt (starting punter Mitch Berger is out with a groin injury).

PACMAN GOBBLES: In the second quarter, Bush caught a pass, but instead of slipping out of

bounds, he viciously collided with Titans cornerback Pacman Jones near the first-down marker. After the play, Jones jumped up and got in Bush's face, earning a flag for unsportsmanlike conduct.

NO SURPRISES: As planned, running back Deuce McAllister did not play, resting his injured knee. Also, tight end Ernie Conwell, receivers Donté Stallworth and Michael Lewis and guards Montrae Holland, Jermaine Mayberry and Chad Setterstrom took the night off.

On defense, Rodney Leisle (defensive tackle), Willie Whitehead (defensive tackle), Tommy Polley (linebacker) and Mike McKenzie (cornerback) didn't play, and their penciled-in replacements all started – Hollis Thomas, Brian Young, Colby Bockwoldt and Jason Craft.

Backup quarterback Jason Fife didn't play.

MIRACLE MAN: Remember Marcus Randall? He was the LSU quarterback who threw "The Bluegrass Miracle," the Hail Mary touchdown to beat Kentucky in 2002. He is trying to make the Titans' roster as a linebacker. He made four tackles on defense and one on special teams, mostly during the third quarter.

Matt Mauck, the LSU quarterback who led the team to the 2003 national title, also is a Titan. He is battling for the third quarterback spot on their roster, and he played the lifeless final series in the fourth quarter.

Also, 13-year veteran Kevin Mawae, a former Tigers center, played in the first half.

EXTRA POINTS: Reserve running back Aaron Stecker was carted off the field with a sprained left ankle in the third quarter. He did not return. . . . In the first quarter, Craft was badly beaten by wide receiver Drew Bennett, who tried to corral a 45-yard pass five yards from the end zone. But the cornerback grabbed Bennett's arms from behind, forcing him to drop the ball before he secured it. . . . Receiver Bethel Johnson and running back Fred McAfee lined up as kick returners in the first quarter. Michael Lewis, a regular return man, is out with a knee injury. . . . Twice in the second quarter, the left side of the Saints' offensive line – notably left tackle Jammal Brown – was beaten, resulting in a sack and a hurry. . . . Saints defensive end Will Smith tackled Young in the second quarter for a four-yard loss, the Saints' lone sack of the first half.

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McPherson: Never saw T-Rac coming

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JACKSON, Miss. — Shortly after the New Orleans Saints gathered for Monday morning's practice, reserve quarterback Adrian McPherson limped over to an exercise bike, climbed aboard and started pedaling toward another comeback.

McPherson was run over by Titans mascot T-Rac during second-half warmups of the New Orleans-Tennessee game Saturday night at LP Field. He said he never saw the golf cart coming as he prepared to catch a punt.

"I got hit directly on the knee cap by the cart, or whatever it was," McPherson said.

The second-year player had one MRI and is planning a second one to confirm the painful injury is no worse than a severe bruise of his right knee.

Saints Coach Sean Payton said he thinks McPherson is "going to be all right. ... It's more of a bruise."

McPherson is perhaps best known as the quarterback kicked off the Florida State football team for gambling. He served a stint in the Arena Football League before the Saints took a chance on him in the 2005 draft.

He has been returning kickoffs and punts to add value to his bid to make the team as the third quarterback.

"I'm just a little disappointed, because I worked so hard this season," McPherson said. "I know it was an accident, but something like that should never happen."

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said the league's football operations department was investigating the incident, but it was just in the fact-finding phase.

Titans Coach Jeff Fisher and Payton discussed the incident Monday afternoon. Fisher said it was a "pleasant" conversation but otherwise wanted to keep it private.

General managers Mickey Loomis of the Saints and Floyd Reese of the Titans also have discussed the accident.

T-Rac — Pete Nelson, director of mascot operations for the Titans — uses a variety of motorized vehicles in his routines.

The mascot was leaving the field after Saturday's halftime show when he hit McPherson.

Payton said encroachment on the field was a problem before the game, as well. A photographer stepped into the way of receivers running routes, something that also could have led to injury.

— STAFF, WIRE REPORTS