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DELHOMME PREACHES PERSEVERANCE

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There was a time in Jake Delhomme's life when it seemed football was not his future. The undrafted free agent had been waived three times by the New Orleans Saints and found himself sitting idle in Amsterdam as the backup quarterback on an NFL Europe team. If there is such a thing as a crossroad in one's career, Delhomme was standing in the intersection.

"My confidence level wasn't all that high, but I didn't know I was backing up Kurt Warner at the time," Delhomme said, referring to the Amsterdam starter who went on to become a Super Bowl hero and NFL MVP.

"That's just one of those deals where everything in my body wanted to call it quits and go back home and get on with my life," Delhomme said. "But I learned from a young age never to quit, never to give up."

That is the message Delhomme will share with more than four dozen Boys & Girls Club members from across the Carolinas today at the Panthers' practice field. The participants will meet with Delhomme and two other Panthers and then be divided into teams for a flag football game. Clover High quarterback Matt Endicott also will participate in the event, as will his North Carolina counterpart from Independence High.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Midlands is among the chapters taking part in the day's festivities. SunCom donated \$12,000 to the Midlands chapter to support "Project Learn," a program designed to reinforce and enhance skills taught in the classroom by promoting curricular and extra-curricular involvement.

It's a project that is close to Delhomme's heart. Growing up in Breaux Bridge, La., he learned the line between a bright future and no future was established in childhood. "Growing up in south Louisiana, I was lucky," Delhomme said. "Things worked out well for me, so when I got in a position to give back, I learned more about the Boys & Girls Clubs. If you have a kid and get him an education, good things happen."

Another message Delhomme will share is that of the common man. While he knows many kids look up to him as the starting quarterback of a top NFL team, he wants them to understand their futures can be just as bright. "I'm just a regular person who was lucky enough to make it," he said. "I made it because I knew the right way, I was taught right from wrong and the need to do well in school. I had the right guidance. If you start with someone early, even if it's just one kid you touch, it means you helped out."

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