

The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah Jazz: Son's disease to delay Boozer

Camp is 2nd to sickle cell treatment

By [Lya Wodraska](#)

[The Salt Lake Tribune](#)

Article Last Updated: 09/28/2007

By his own estimation, Carlos Boozer has been "working his tail off" in the offseason so he will be in the best shape possible when he joins the Jazz in training for the upcoming season.

But his reunion with his teammates in training camp has been delayed while he cares for his year-old son, Carmani, who recently underwent a bone marrow transplant to treat his sickle cell disease and remains in a Miami hospital.

The Jazz have media day Monday, after which they'll travel to Boise, Idaho, for training camp that runs through Oct. 6. The Jazz have given Boozer permission to report late. It's unknown when he'll join the team.

"As soon as my son is home from the hospital and stable, I will join my teammates," Boozer said in a statement. "Your thoughts and prayers are appreciated by me and my family during this time. We have been in contact with the Jazz organization, including Mr. [Larry] Miller, Kevin O'Connor, and Coach [Jerry] Sloan, and all of my teammates, and everyone has been incredibly supportive of my family during these days. We want everyone to know how grateful we are for that."

Sickle cell disease affects more than 100,000 Americans and is particularly prominent in minorities, according to Willarda V. Edwards, president of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America. On average, 1 out of 400 births in blacks and 1 in 1,000 Hispanics have the disease, she said. The disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects red blood cells that contain an abnormal type of hemoglobin, which causes the cells to become sickle shaped. The abnormal cells have a hard time passing through small blood vessels, which can cause pain, blood clots, anemia and damage to organs such as the spleen, kidneys and liver. The symptoms can be aggravated by altitude, which is why Boozer's family has not lived with him in Salt Lake City in past seasons.



All-Star Carlos Boozer will report late to the Jazz. He will remain in Miami to care for his son, who had a bone marrow transplant in treatments for sickle cell disease. (Danny Chan La/Tribune file photo)

While there is no universal cure, bone marrow transplants are believed to be some of the first that can completely eradicate the disease, although Edwards was cautious about the success. "It's difficult to find a proper match and it's not without the risk of infection or death," she said. "It's not the end all for everyone because it can be hard to find a match."

Doctors used stem cells in the procedure from the umbilical cord of Boozer's wife, CeCe, who gave birth to twins in the summer. The procedure is one of the many new treatments researchers are studying, Edwards said.

"It's an exciting time because there are a lot of new treatments, but it's also depressing, because we don't have the funding for them," she said. "There is one genetic defect that causes this, and if we put some energy into it, this could be the first genetically cured disease."

Boozer led the Jazz last season in points (20.9) and rebounds (11.7) during the regular season, and 23.5 points and 12.2 rebounds in the playoffs. "Carlos has been working out all summer in Miami and coordinating efforts with Gary Briggs, our team trainer, and Mark McKown, our strength and conditioning coach," general manager O'Connor said. "We are confident that when he rejoins the team he will be ready to compete. Carlos needs to be with his family right now and we fully support his decision."

This is the second recent major illness to affect a child of a Jazz player. In May, Derek Fisher's daughter was treated for a rare form of eye cancer. At his request, he was released from his contract with the Jazz so he could relocate to a city that provided better care for his daughter. He signed with the Los Angeles Lakers shortly after the release.