

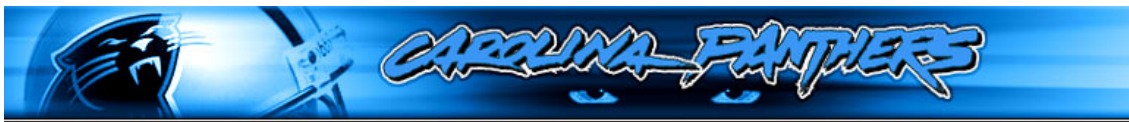


Wednesday, August 24, 2005

By David Kravetz

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Panthers Training Camp Officially Ends Today

Today the Panthers Training Camp finished. The team will soon be heading to Cleveland to play against the Cleveland Browns. Shortly thereafter, on the 30th, is the roster reduction to 65. Aaron will make this cut as an NFLE exemption. They will then play the Pittsburgh Steelers at home on Sept. 1 and the final cuts will take place on Sept. 4. Hopefully this will be Aaron's year to make it.

After catching his first TD pass against the Redskins, Aaron Boone played again this last weekend against the New York Giants. He was able to see his old UK quarterback Jared Lorenzen and also his former Berlin teammate and fellow wide receiver Michael Jennings. Unfortunately, there was only one pass that came his way and it was incomplete. Ironically, it was from Stefan LeFors. The Louisville QB to UK WR connection continues.

The Forums have been very active this week as far as commentary on Aaron Boone. There were also a couple of feature articles about Aaron, this time in the *Gaston Gazette* and another in the *Kentucky Sports Report*. These articles are noted below.



Aaron gets around the defense to blaze a trail

GastonGazette.Com

Boone set to battle against the odds — again

By: [Steve Reed](#)
Gazette Sports Reporter

SPARTANBURG, S.C. — Aaron Boone knows the odds of making the Carolina Panthers roster are stacked against him.

But hey, that's nothing new to Boone.

It seems Boone has been battling stiff odds ever since he chose to postpone playing college football to go on a two-year Mormon mission to Peru at age 19.

Boone ranks no higher than eighth on the Panthers depth chart at receiver, behind starters Steve Smith and Keary Colbert, and reserves Rod Gardner, Ricky Proehl, Drew Carter, Karl Hankton and J.R. Tolver. Since the Panthers normally only keep five receivers on the 53-man roster, it's fairly obvious Boone has plenty of ground to make up.

But he's clearly giving it a shot, having put forth a strong effort in training camp so far.

"There's a lot of talent here at the wide receiver position," said Boone. "My mindset is like every other place I have been. I've always had to start from the bottom and

work my way up. Coach (John) Fox always preaches it's not where you start it's where you finish."

But to get to know Boone and truly understand his inexhaustible desire to make an NFL roster, you must go back to the start.

He was an all-state quarterback at Millard Fillmore (Utah) High after leading his team to an 8-2 record and a Class AA state championship as a senior. He had a handful of scholarship offers from some smaller colleges, but Boone, who was born into a Mormon family, had always wanted to go on a mission.

So, at age 19, he decided to put off his football career on hold and spend the next two years of his life in Peru. There, he helped victims of the El Nino disaster rebuild their homes and provided other services to the country's poor.

When he returned home he was 20 pounds lighter and his body hunched over, stricken with parasites.

Needless to say, there were no longer any scholarships on the table.

He ended up at Snow Junior College in Utah, where he was moved to receiver two days before the start of the regular season. It turned out to be a blessing as Boone earned All-America status with 81 receptions for 1,505 yards and 19 touchdowns. Boone transferred to Kentucky and by his senior year led the SEC with 41 receptions for 706 yards and 10 touchdowns.

It seemed Boone might have a shot at the NFL.

But a few weeks before the NFL Scouting Combines he pulled a quadriceps muscle in his leg and was unable to workout. All 32 NFL teams bypassed him in the draft.

Since then, you might say Boone has been on another mission - a mission to beat the odds and make a 53-man roster.

Boone caught on as a free agent with the Dallas Cowboys in 2003, but injured his shoulder the third week of training camp sidelining him for the season. After being released, he latched on to the Chicago Bears and was allocated to NFL Europe. After a productive season overseas playing for the Berlin Thunder, he came back to attend the Bears camp, but wound up in the hospital with a torn muscle in his abdomen and a bruised kidney.

Again, he was released.

"That's the way my career has been so far - ups and downs," Boone said.

He worked out for the Panthers last year and was signed to a free agent contract this spring and again allocated to NFL Europe. This time he made the most of his opportunity leading the league with 43 receptions for 582 yards and five touchdowns in 10 games. He had eight receptions for 83 yards for Berlin in World Bowl XIII.

Now Boone is battling for a roster spot here with the Panthers.

But despite the long odds, Boone keeps pushing on.

"It seems like the longer I can stick around I will get a chance to prove myself," he said.

So far, so good.

In Carolina's first preseason game he showed great field awareness in hauling in a 26-yard touchdown reception from Stefan LeFors on a broken play. When LeFors scrambled out of the pocket, Boone broke off his route and followed the quarterback across the field before making a sliding grab in the end zone.

"It seems like that is when I make a lot of plays when the route breaks off and everything is chaos," Boone said. "You just have to get open and be an athlete. I thought I was going to come out of the end zone to get it. That was fun. That is what you play for."

In all likelihood the Panthers will release Boone in late August and think about re-signing him to the practice squad if he clears waivers. That would give him a year to learn Carolina's offense and continue to develop his skills.

Boone doesn't wonder about what might have been had he gone to college instead of Peru, saying that was something he needed to do to become a better person.

"Honestly, it was the best two years of my life," Boone said. "It was two years where I didn't have to worry about girls or work or school. I was able to be with the Lord. And it was two years of service."

Now 27, Boone isn't about to give up on his NFL dream anytime soon. He's come too far.

"Right now, I just have to survive," Boone said. "All of the other places I've been started at the bottom. I've always been written off. I just have to fight through. I think I will get my break sooner or later."

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8/17/2005

LEMOND: Aaron Boone seeking to be a Panther

From KentuckySportsReport.com



Ryan Lemond

By [Ryan Lemond](#)

Date: Aug 20, 2005

He was a star at Kentucky. He became a star playing in NFL Europe. Now he's just hoping to get a shot in the NFL.

[Aaron Boone](#) is one of the newest members of the [Carolina Panthers](#). He's got a tough job to do. He's trying to make the team.

"It's been slow," Boone said. "The first couple of weeks were kind of slow, but you've got to put yourself in my shoes. I wasn't familiar at all with the offense. These other guys, even the rookies, were here all season and spring. I've had two weeks to learn the offense, but it's sinking in."

Boone signed with the Panthers after an outstanding season playing in NFL Europe for the Berlin Thunder. He earned All-NFL Europe honors after leading the league in catches with 43 and was second in the league in receiving yards with 582. He also scored five touchdowns in helping lead the Thunder to the World Bowl. Now he has to prove he belongs stateside.

"The idea of going over to NFL Europe is to get some game experience, develop as a player, and I feel like that's what I did," Boone said. "I went over there and showed that I can play at this level. Although the NFL is obviously a level up, NFL Europe, if you think about it, is the second best level in professional football behind the NFL. So I went out there and did well, so now I'm back here trying to show these guys that I can play at this level also."

This is Boone's third team in the NFL. He has also spent time in the Dallas Cowboys camp, and had a brief stint with the Chicago Bears.

His quarterback with the Berlin Thunder was former Louisville quarterback Dave Ragone. Ironically, the quarterback he works out the most with at the Carolina Panthers summer training camp is another former U of L quarterback, Stefon LeFors. Boone caught a touchdown pass from LeFors in last Saturday's game.

"I'm feeling comfortable out there," Boone said. "I know what I'm doing. I know my responsibilities. That's a lot of the game. Coach (John) Fox says 95% of the game is mental, and it really is. When you get to this level, there are a few superstars, but the majority of people, athletic wise, are the same. It's the mental part that separates them."

Even though Boone is now a professional, and is three years removed from his days in [Kentucky](#) "blue", he still brings a little "UK" flavor with him onto the playing

field.

"It really felt like I belonged there," he said. "There is nothing more that I liked to hear than 'First Down Kentucky' or 'It's football time in the Bluegrass'! Those things always stick with you, and I say it when I'm running out onto the practice field. I'll yell out, 'It's football time in the Bluegrass!' Everybody kind of looks at me, but I love it. That's part of me."

As far as a prediction for the upcoming Kentucky/Louisville game, Boone said, "We've got a couple of Louisville guys here (Lefors and Eric Shelton). They lost a few weapons. I'm hoping we rebound this year and get after them. I'm going with Kentucky 24-17."



KEY DATES

8/26 - Panthers @ Cleveland Browns pre-season game

8/30 - Roster cut down to 65 players

9/1 - Panthers vs. Pittsburgh Steelers pre-season game

9/4 - Roster cut down to 53 players

9/11 - Regular Season begins

<http://www.panthers.com>