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<a href="#">Cologne</a>	1	3	0
<a href="#">Scotland</a>	0	4	0

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Which of NFL Europe's losing teams is most likely to turn their season around and play in World Bowl XII?

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## Holding the key

April 26, 2004  
NFL Europe

The Rhein Fire's 14-10 loss to the Berlin Thunder was bitterly disappointing for head coach Pete Kuharchek after he watched his team cede a ten point first-half lead and allow two touchdowns in the final period.

The loss dropped the Rhein Fire to 2-2 after the team had jumped to a 2-0 start, and put them two games behind the Berlin Thunder in the race for World Bowl XII, which will be played at their home field - Arena AufSchalke.

"Like a lot of times in football it came down to three or four plays, and that's what happened to us today," Kuharchek pointed out after the game.

"It was a disappointing loss. I think that our players played hard, but there were some key plays that they had to make."

Having held Berlin's potent offense - led by quarterback Rohan Davey - for three quarters of the game, the Fire defense gave up three big plays to allow the Thunder to take the lead.

First running back Ray Jackson exploited a gaping hole in the Fire defensive front for a 21-yard gain - the longest run from scrimmage on a poor day for Berlin's ground game. The Rhein Fire regrouped, and had Berlin at 3rd and 26 - but could only look on in horror as Davey completed a 45-yard pass to Aaron Boone to put the ball on the 1 yard line, before Eric McCoo capped the drive with a 3-yard run in to the endzone.

Berlin sealed the win when defensive end Corey Smith forced Chad Hutchinson to fumble on a sack after the Fire offense looked like they may get back into scoring range.

"On that touchdown drive they had a 20-yard run to start the drive off, then they had that long pass to get to the goal line, converting on a third and 26 - when I think we should have made a play on the ball," Kuharchek said.

"Then, of course, at the end of the game we were moving the ball down the field and convert a big fourth-down only for them to get to our quarterback and cause a fumble."

"At that time I felt good about our position - we had a first down and three minutes on the clock, and I felt positive about our chances of winning the ball game," added the fourth-year Fire head coach.



Pete Kuharchek was disappointed with his team after they gave up big plays to lose having held a 10-0 advantage.  
photo: photo-stock.co.uk



Rhein's problems in maintaining their lead stemmed from a lack of running game - the team managed just 23 yards on 18 running plays, and starting running back Joffrey Reynolds was held to -4 yards after scoring the opening touchdown. The team entered the game with a revamped offensive line after being hit by injuries along the front five, but were unable to get the production needed to hold their ten point advantage and keep the clock running.

Kuharchek defended his offensive line, saying: "We were playing the guys that had been with us longest and gave us the best chance to move the ball."

"We tried to run the ball today, and believe me, we do want to run the ball" he continued. "It's not because we don't work at it. The difficulty is that it hurts us in a game like today."

Rhein will travel to play the 0-4 Scottish Claymores in week five of the NFL Europe season. The team has not won in Scotland since 1998, a fact that Kuharchek believes will stop his squad from underestimating the 0-4 Claymores.

"No, we haven't won in Scotland in a long time, but we will be ready - we have an extra day to prepare for this game, and the players will have two days off to get some rest - I believe that will help us," he said.

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