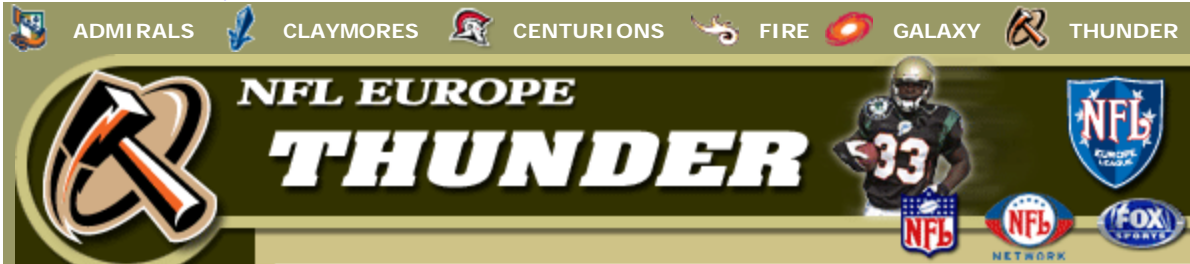


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Chalking up another win

April 26, 2004
By Mike Donnelly
NFL Europe

It took a while, but the right pieces finally came together for the Berlin Thunder, as they defeated Rhein Fire with a second half comeback by a score of 14-10 in front of the noisiest crowd heard so far on Berlin's road schedule.

With the Thunder offense struggling to put points on the board early in the ball game, Berlin's defense was called upon several times to put the clamp on Rhein's offensive attack. The Thunder's defensive unit put together four sacks, one interception and held the Fire running game to only 23 total rushing yards.

Berlin's Corey Smith fought his way to a two-sack performance, causing a fumble on his second sack late in the contest that was recovered by Jason Kazar to seal the Thunder's current 4-0 record.

"We put better pressure on Rhein's quarterback compared to some of our other games," defensive end Corey Smith stated. "They passed the ball more than we expected but that may be to us shutting down the run. We were able to do some different things inside on the line and I was able to bring a lot of pressure from the outside which helped me to get those sacks."

"That was probably our best defensive performance so far this season," safety Keith Davis said. "Overall, we ran to the ball well and did a good job wrapping guys up."

Despite a stellar effort on defense, the Thunder headed into the locker room at halftime down 10-0 and faced a tough uphill battle. Berlin, however, remained poised and broke out the offensive magic with a few big plays in the fourth quarter.

Thunder fullback Ed Ieremia-Stansbury became the newest player to shine on a talented offensive corps with 4 receptions for 34 yards and caught Berlin's initial touchdown on a 4-yard catch into the end zone. The Thunder took the lead for keeps in their next drive on wide receiver Aaron Boone's 45-yard leaping grab from quarterback Rohan Davey that set up running back Eric McCoo's 3-yard touchdown run.

"We started off very slow on offense and at halftime we were able to talk things out and came back strong," Ieremia-Stansbury explained. "I felt great



Ed Ieremia-Stansbury caught the first of Berlin's touchdowns and had more receptions than in any game before in his career. photo: photo-stock.co.uk

after the game because we got another win which is always exciting and I've never had that many catches in a game."

"There are some things that we certainly need to improve on offense," wide receiver Chas Gessner said. "We didn't deal with the crowd noise well but the team was able to make plays at the end of the game to secure the win."

Not only did Berlin keep alive their undefeated record but they also stuck together well as a team and managed to overcome adversity by rebounding late on the score sheet.

"We have a unified team and it showed with a team win at Rhein," defensive coordinator Jim Tomsula said. "Defensively we improved and played well together but we haven't accomplished anything yet."

"It feels real good to be 4-0 but we know that we have a bulls eye on our back," added Davis. "Right now though we're just staying focused on what the Thunder needs to do to win each week."

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