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### GAME OF THE WEEK



**For First Place** : If you would have told anyone that a Week Four match up between these two teams was for first place in the league, fans would have looked at you like you were simply crazy. After all, Amsterdam has played below expectations during the **Bart Andrus** era. In Berlin and then Cologne last year, **Peter Vaas'** teams have started slow. But wait. Amsterdam obliterated Rhein opening day and lost to Frankfurt in a game they could have and should have easily won then came back to stun Berlin. Cologne won a disputed game versus Hamburg on opening day but then bested Rhein in the backyard brawl in Dusseldorf then beat up on Frankfurt by playing turnover-free ball. What gives? Amsterdam 2-1 and having beaten the World Champs? Cologne 3-0? What is the world coming to?

Both teams have explosive potential on offense. Start with Amsterdam. With QB Gibran Hamden, they have a QB who is in his second year in this offense. In this league, that is huge. RBs **Jarrett Payton** and **Jonathan Smith** may be the best duo in the league. Both ripped off huge runs last week - Smith for 56 yards and a TD and Payton for 53 yards and Smith went for 133 yards and Payton 92. Cologne fans can argue, and rightly so, that the Centurions have a running game equal to if not better than Amsterdam. With **Keylon Kincade**, who went for over 100 yards himself against Frankfurt, and **Kory Chapman**, the Cologne offense is not the pass-happy version it was last year. With both offenses ground oriented, why put the ball up if you don't have to?

Where Amsterdam has the advantage and matches up well is the hole on the right side of the Cologne defense where Frankfurt did

most of their rushing damage last week. Where Cologne has the advantage is in playing smart. Neither QB - **Kevin Thompson** or **Chris Lewis** has thrown a pick this year.

The winner here may have the inside shot at the World Bowl. It should be entertaining.

**Keys to Winning:** Both teams have won by being extremely physical on the ground. Both have huge lines and both have one with a simple formula - pound the ball to set up the pass. Of course, what goes hand-in-hand with that philosophy is not turning the ball over or making mistakes, and this is where both teams have to concentrate more. Amsterdam was nailed only four times and Cologne eight (both down from the week before), but Cologne started committing mistakes towards the end of the game against Frankfurt. That's something neither team can stomach. Also, Payton's fumble deep in Amsterdam territory late led to a Thunder TD last week and almost a loss.

Cologne made most of its rushing yards running straight up the middle behind C **Mike Mabry**, who along with **Zach Wilson**, **Tam Hopkins**, **Jason Jimenez**, and **Brandon Evans** form one of the best lines in the league. Amsterdam comes at the ground game with a slightly different approach as Payton provides the speed, and Smith the between-the-tackles punch to batter defenses. If either defense wears out, it could be a long afternoon. The team that is up to the challenge physically, gets the win.

**What to Look For:** In Andrus and Vaas, both teams have coaches who are not afraid to gamble. Amsterdam has used reverses and flea flickers this year. Cologne has gone for it on fourth down deep in its own territory. Nothing would be a surprise, except, no surprises. You know each coach will have a trick or two up his sleeve. Look for plenty of bruising running, perhaps chippy play. That means plenty of lower-risk throws, and both starters, Hamden and Thompson possess good command of their team's offense. Both occasionally try the homerun ball, and Thompson has the stronger arm. Look for each team to go deep as a change of pace.

If there are any turnovers, the team that capitalizes on them will walk away with this one. Turnovers very well may decide this one.



vs.





**Overview:** Here's the line on the present Berlin season: A win by 23, a win by two and a loss. If it were a stock, there would be no way anyone would invest in it, not at this present rate. For the Fire, they find themselves in an unfamiliar place - at the bottom of the standings, and that is courtesy of three poundings in a row. That was until the second half at Hamburg, when **Scott McBrien** came in and lit the offense - 24 points on his watch. When trends intersect like this, who knows what can happen? A Rhein win? Well, if they play like they did that is possible. After McBrien came in, WRs **Jeris McIntyre** and **Cedric James** each put in 100-yard days. So there is hope for the Fire. As for Berlin, following their opening night win over Frankfurt, they looked like the championship club they were last year - they were going to stomp everyone on their way to Championship number four in five years. Then Amsterdam happened - a TD pass with less than a minute left gave the Thunder their first loss since the middle of last season. Even more disturbing was the defense which gave up 246 yards on the ground and two runs of 56 yards and 53 yards respectively. Should **Joe Smith** be back for the Fire to compliment RB **Dahhran Diedrick**, Berlin might see another ground assault.

**What to Look For:** The Berlin defense couldn't be that bad could it? We don't think so, but it would be a sign of things to come. The offense has to play better. RBs **Cal Murray** and **Little John Flowers** managed 140 yards and solid per-carry average numbers,

**Overview:** Question: Which team will show up? Will the t have a team to show up? Th Devils have had the most ur of seasons. A loss by one, a two and a win by seven afte lead. It has more twists and a soap opera. Frankfurt on t hand, would just like to field team. Hamburg has done ex well doing the little things it t win. The offense doesn't sca but it executes well. With QE **Bramlet** in charge and ably by **Ryan Dinwiddie**, there's talent at the pivot. Throw in i hands of TE **Bobby Blizzar**, **Ricky Bryant**, with the hard running of **Larry Croom**, an offense is can move the ball else. Frankfurt's explosivene to show and the reason is si make too many mental mist: **Akili Smith** opened the gar laser-like passes, but the rec continued to drop balls, ther many penalties and to add i insult, leading rusher **Ahma Galloway** hurt his hamstring Cologne. Injuries and menta have doomed this team that of playing much, much bette doesn't here, the season ma Frankfurt already looks like : unit.

**What to Look For:** **J.R. Nik** well for Galloway, so if Gallc unable to go, look for the foc offense to be on Niklos' sho With the defense continuing hammered by roughing the ( penalties, if **Louis Gachelin** **Seante Williams** played with

but QB **Dave Ragone** threw for 186 yards on the day, about his average output, but not the numbers of an offense that can move the ball. Look for Berlin to reestablish dominance on the ground which in turn makes Ragone that much more effective. Rhein gave up plenty of yards running in Week 2 against Cologne and then didn't have an answer versus the short passing game of Hamburg. In the match up battle, it means Berlin WR **Aaron Boone** has a distinct advantage as Berlin uses him everywhere. Rhein's offensive strength will be via the pass. While Smith did fine against Cologne in Week 2, Diedrick never got untracked at Hamburg. If that's the case here, Berlin may just get back on the winning track.

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themselves and quit making mistakes, Bramlet and Dinw be in for long days. Wile Col at will against Frankfurt, Har not that kind of team so Frar match up well defensively. T going to be getting Hamburg **McCready** free. The bet her Bryant and Blizzard get mos attention. Hamburg may hav day with their defensive line **McCoy** and **Aaron Hunt** in against a banged up Frankft which everyone is playing ot position. If Frankfurt cuts do penalties - 15 last week for e could be in this game. Other going to be a long day.

