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Panthers QB LeFors impressive in first NFL action



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

CHARLOTTE — When asked after Saturday night's game why the Carolina Panthers drafted quarterback Stefan LeFors in the fourth round, head coach John Fox said it was because there was "something sparky about the guy."

Well, Panther fans saw a little bit of Mr. Sparky himself during the preseason opener when LeFors improvised after being flushed from the pocket, rolled out and fired a 26-yard touchdown pass to Aaron Boone on the run.

"It was a downfield play and we had a guy run down the middle of the field and I felt like he was covered," LeFors said. "The clock in my head went off so I got out of there and I'm a lefty, so naturally I'm going to take off to the left, and Aaron Boone saw me scrambling and he did what he was supposed to do — run with me. And he made a play."

It was one of two touchdown passes for LeFors, the other coming on 1-yard fade route to Drew Carter.

LeFors has not looked overly impressive during practice at training camp, but he's rose to the occasion so far when the most eyes are on him.

In the team's intrasquad scrimmage last weekend at Bank of America Stadium, he threw two touchdown passes to Carter — the only two the offense scored that afternoon.

"One of our scouts lives in Louisville and the word was that they tried to replace him a couple of times with this young guy they have coming up now... and they never could do it," said offensive coordinator Dan Henning. "That tells you the guy plays good in a game and gets things done. He's shown that gift. He plays much better in a game situation."

It's not unusual for Carolina's other Louisiana quarterback, Jake Delhomme, to look terrible in practice and then light it up on game day.

Perhaps LeFors is the same type of player.

Maybe wide receiver Steve Smith knew something about LeFors when he dubbed him "Baby Jake," a name he cast upon the rookie because it turns out LeFors' wife is a distant relative of Delhomme's wife and both quarterbacks hail from the same state.

The name hasn't completely caught on.

"Baby Jake? Is that what they're calling him?" asked tackle Jordan Gross.

When it was suggested by a reporter that maybe he should be named "Baby Vick" because of his ability to scramble, Gross laughed and said, "If he was Baby Vick he wouldn't have been playing in the fourth quarter."

Good point.

But Gross has been impressed with LeFors' composure in the pocket, as has the coaching staff.

The Panthers took a chance on LeFors when others passed.

LeFors is listed at 6-foot, 201 pounds, but there's no way he's close to being that tall or that heavy. It's not uncommon, even at the NFL level, for teams to stretch the truth a little bit when it comes to listing a player's height and weight in the media guide.

But LeFors was successful during his career at Louisville and was a finalist for the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award as a senior after completing 74.5 percent of his passes and throwing 20 touchdowns. He had only three interceptions.

"I bring the ability to make things happen when things aren't going right," LeFors said. "The coach always says he grades us on when things don't go well, what are you going to do next? Are you going to make things happen or let one mistake lead to another mistake. I think I make things happen."

LeFors admitted being a little nervous when he checking into the game in the fourth quarter with Carolina leading 14-10. It showed. His first pass bounced about three feet before his intended receiver.

After that, things got better.

"I had to get that one out of the way," he joked. "The first throw wasn't much fun, but after that it got better pretty quick. That is what the game is about, having fun."

News and notes

The Panthers had Sunday off, but players were required to return to training camp last night. The team will practice twice today at 10:20 a.m. and 3:10 p.m.

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