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LEMOND: Aaron Boone seeking to be a Panther



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.

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"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."

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