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## NFL Europe Stars: Ready For the Next Step



By [Seahawks.NET Staff](#)

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**In the NFL Europe League, they were stars. Now, several players have returned to America with a notion to make the NFL their home. Hoping to follow the likes of Kurt Warner, Jake Delhomme and Adam Vinatieri, players such as B.J. Tucker of the Seahawks get ready for the next step.**

CB B.J. Tucker (30) hopes to make the Seahawks.

They proved themselves abroad, and soon it will be time to do it again at home.

The NFL Europe League brought down the curtain on its 13th season in exciting fashion on Saturday, June 11 as the Amsterdam Admirals earned a 27-21 victory over the Berlin Thunder in World Bowl XIII before a crowd of 35,134 at the LTU Arena in Düsseldorf, Germany.

"The season in Europe ended with a thrilling World Bowl that featured terrific performances all over the field," NFL Commissioner **PAUL TAGLIABUE** told NFL Network last week. "It was exactly what we had hoped to see at the conclusion of the season. We have so many young, talented players who get an opportunity to play in Europe, to mature and to develop. It's very important for people to see how they do in game conditions. There were many players in the World Bowl that will follow in the footsteps of the players who first achieved success in NFL Europe before accomplishing great things in the NFL."

The Europe League, which enjoyed record attendance in 2005 by averaging 18,965 fans per game, has provided players with valuable experience through the years that has been an integral factor in their development.

In 2004, 262 players with NFL Europe experience appeared on NFL rosters, including five All-Stars – kicker **DAVID AKERS**, defensive tackle **LA'ROI GLOVER**, guard **MARCO RIVERA**, kicker **ADAM VINATIERI** and guard **BRIAN WATERS**. Countless other NFL players made a positive impact, such as return specialist **DANTE HALL**, quarterbacks **JAKE DELHOMME** and **KURT WARNER**, and guard **JOE ANDRUZZI**.

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So who's next?

**A position-by-position sneak preview of the 2005 NFL Europe League standouts who may be poised to make an impact at NFL training camps this year:**

**QUARTERBACK – DAVE RAGONE, Houston/Berlin**

Ragone was NFL Europe's top-ranked quarterback and Offensive Most Valuable Player, finishing with a 97.5 passer rating and leading the league with 1,746 yards and a 62.9 completion percentage. His 13 touchdowns tied for an NFL Europe high, but perhaps most impressive, he threw only two interceptions in 251 attempts, finishing with a league-record streak of 174 consecutive passes without a pick. NFL Europe veteran quarterbacks have made a big impression, as 27 such QBs have started in the NFL. "NFL Europe is a great opportunity to improve your game by actually playing in games," says Texans head coach **DOM CAPERS**. "Dave took full advantage of the experience." Added Texans starting quarterback **DAVID CARR**: "I think what Dave did was great for him. The confidence he has now from actually playing in games is great."

**From NFL Europe QB to the NFL: JAKE DELHOMME, JAY FIEDLER, BRAD JOHNSON, JON KITNA, KURT WARNER**

**RUNNING BACK – JARRETT PAYTON, Tennessee/Amsterdam; JOE SMITH, Tennessee/Rhein**

The Titans watched a pair of backs excel in Europe and now **JARRETT PAYTON** and **JOE SMITH** return to compete for a job behind starter **CHRIS BROWN**. Payton, son of NFL legend **WALTER PAYTON**, tied an NFL Europe 2005 season high with seven rushing touchdowns. He rushed for 578 yards and ranked second with a 5.6 yards-per-carry average. "NFL Europe really helped me improve my game," says Payton. "Now it's all about showing that improvement and trying to win a job with the Titans.".....Smith led NFL Europe in rushing, becoming only the third player in league history to run for 1,000 yards in a season, finishing with 1,026.

**From NFL Europe RB to the NFL: AARON STECKER**

**WIDE RECEIVER – AARON BOONE, Carolina/Berlin; RUVELL MARTIN, San Diego/Amsterdam**

Boone was a sure-handed option for the Thunder, leading NFL Europe with 43 receptions for 582 yards and five touchdowns. And in what might be a crucial factor in winning a roster spot with the Panthers, he led NFL Europe with 14 special teams tackles. "I feel like I'm so much better now than I was coming out of college," says Boone. "I really feel a comfort and confidence level that I'll try to carry back to Carolina." Adds Panthers head coach **JOHN FOX**: "Aaron did very well in NFL Europe and we're looking forward to getting him in here and seeing what he can do.".....In San Diego, **RUVELL MARTIN** will seek to capitalize upon his success abroad. Martin was perhaps the league's foremost big-play threat, leading NFL Europe with a record-tying 12 touchdown receptions and 679 receiving yards on 37 catches.

**From NFL Europe WR to the NFL: BRIAN FINNERAN, DANTE HALL, MARCUS ROBINSON**

**OFFENSIVE LINE – TYSON CLABO, Denver/Hamburg; CHAD SETTERSTROM, New Orleans/Amsterdam**

Clabo started all 10 games at guard for Hamburg and was named to the All-NFL Europe League team. He is hoping to be the next success story from NFL Europe to make a contribution along Denver's offensive line that has produced 1,000-yard rushers in nine of the past 10 years. Broncos starters **MATT LEPSIS** and **BEN HAMILTON** both were standout players in the NFL before earning their current jobs with the team.....Setterstrom helped Amsterdam lead NFL Europe in rushing, starting all 10 games.