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Action packed weekend

March 28, 2005

By Matt Kramer

NFL Europe



The Berlin Thunder spent the weekend catering to its ever-growing fan base in Berlin this past weekend, hosting two hugely successful events over the Easter holidays.

On Sunday, the Thunder held its fan day on its practice field to a crowd of nearly 500 fans. Berlin players who had been at this event before were impressed with the turnout of the Berlin faithful.

"I think the player-fan interaction is crucial to not only our success on the field, but to the fans understanding of American football," wide receiver Aaron Boone said. "I was here last year and I'd say that there were probably double the fans here than there were last season."

Berlin's quarterbacks threw passes to fans on Saturday. ([waynepaulo.com](#))

Thunder players opened the day with a walk-thru in which fans were able to see the players practicing the basics of a pregame warm-up. Instead of heading into a full practice, however, Thunder players and coaches turned to the stands and welcomed the fans to the playing field for some hands on interaction.

Quarterbacks Dave Ragone, Chris Finlen and Bret Engemann threw passing routes to Thunder fans, while wide receivers and defensive backs coached the fans on having proper technique. "It was fun to get the fans down there and show them a few different moves," Boone said. "Some of the fans out there were really athletic and it seemed like the fans were really excited to interact with all of the players."

Quarterback Chris Finlen, also a veteran of the NFL Europe League having playing for the Barcelona Dragons in 2003, says he was incredibly impressed by the outpouring of support from the German fans.

"It's nice to go out there and try to increase our fan support even more," Finlen said. "There is a difference in the German fans. I think the fans here in Berlin really do understand our game, and especially with the success that they have had over the years they really showed up with support for this team."

After the Thunder participated in Fan Day on Sunday, all members of the 2005 squad went to the first annual Berlin Thunder Run for Fun, which was a 5K race starting at the famed Brandenburg Gate.

After watching the start of the race – in which head coach Rick Lantz walked with his wife, Peggy, and served as the honorary trophy presenter – Thunder players were introduced onto the stage, where they answered questions

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