



Admirals



Centurions



Fire



Galaxy



Sea Devils



Thunder

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## To the wire

May 16, 2005

NFL Europe



**Hamburg's Ivory McCoy returned a fumble 29 yards in the dying seconds of overtime. (waynepaulo.com)**

They climbed back into the race when defensive end Ivory McCoy returned a fumble 29 yards for a score as the second ticked off in overtime in Hamburg. With the contest seemingly heading for only the second tie in NFL Europe League history, McCoy scooped up the loose football after Admirals quarterback Kurt Kittner was sacked by defensive end Sacha Lancaster and raced to the end zone to send 16,000-plus fans at Hamburg's AOL Arena into a frenzy.

"We are very disappointed – it's tough to lose on the last play of overtime like that," said a frustrated Amsterdam head coach Bart Andrus. "We didn't play very well offensively tonight and that was a big part of what happened out there on the field.

Amsterdam had taken a 14-0 lead and looked set to run away with the game after scoring on two of their first three possessions. The second touchdown was a 50-yard throw from Kittner to Ruvell Martin – the Amsterdam receiver's seventh straight game with a touchdown.

By halftime Hamburg had pulled back to 17-13, on Casey Bramlet's touchdown run and a pair of Todd France field goals. France's third brought the Sea Devils within a point at the end of the third period, but the Admirals advantage was stretched when Jeff Sanchez picked off a Bramlet pass – one of four interceptions thrown by the quarterback in the game – and took it 92 yards for an Amsterdam score.

The Sea Devils tied it on their very next possession with Ryan Dinwiddie – who had replace Bramlet behind center, tossing a 26-yard strike to Derek McCoy for a score, and then hitting Chris Collins on a two-point conversion to make it 24-24. Both teams had opportunities to win it as the fourth quarter wound down – first when France was short on a 58-yard field goal with 23 seconds left, and then when Amsterdam's Chris Snyder was wide left on a 51-yard attempt.

The pressure of the race to Yello Strom World Bowl XIII could not have been more evident as all three games in Week Seven went right down to the wire. In Hamburg the Admirals and Sea Devils had to go into sudden death overtime to be separated, with the home team coming up with the game-winning touchdowns just 26 seconds before the final gun to take it 30-24. It took a fifth period in Frankfurt too, before the Centurions kicked a game-winning field goal to take the game 20-17.

Berlin's 24-15 victory over the Rhein Fire means that the Thunder are tied at 5-2 on top of the standings with Cologne. If the Thunder can beat Hamburg in Week Eight and the Centurions overcome the Admirals in Amsterdam they will qualify for their second consecutive World Bowl.

The Sea Devils victory means that they are tied with Amsterdam at 4-3, one game behind the leaders, but with Berlin and a rematch against Amsterdam on the schedule in the next two weeks they have their destiny very much in their own hands.

Kittner was intercepted on Amsterdam's first possession of overtime, but the Hamburg offense was unable to move the ball beyond the Admirals 38, and from there France was short again on a 55-yard kick. After the teams traded punts, Amsterdam took over with 1:47 remaining and reached midfield. but Kittner was sacked on consecutive



**Kurt Kittner fumbled as he was sacked to hand the game to Hamburg.**  
(waynepaulo.com)

plays, turning the ball over on the second for McCoy to rumble the distance and give Hamburg the win.

"I judge a team by how important a game is to them and to these kids it's real important, said Hamburg head coach Jack Bicknell after seeing his team jump back into the race for a World Bowl berth. "Obviously we made a bunch of mistakes but that's why these guys are here – to solve those errors. It might not always look pretty, but the effort will be there with these kids.

"They're just weren't going to lose. I have never been around a team that has thrown six interceptions and won. You have to have a lot of belief in yourselves as a team when you play that hard when things are definitely not going your way."

The two teams combined for an NFL Europe record ten interceptions in the game, beating the previous mark of seven which has been done on three occasions.

The Admirals were held to just 106 yards rushing one week after setting a new mark with 334, and their much vaunted offense turned the ball over five times. Amsterdam faces a Monday night clash with the 5-2 Cologne Centurions in Week Eight, a team they beat in Week Four, but will need to do so again to tie the record of the current league leaders.



**Jimmy Kibble's field goal in overtime gave the Centurions a win against Frankfurt.**  
(waynepaulo.com)

Cologne maintained their lead of the league with an overtime win in a surprisingly tight game against the Frankfurt Galaxy. Jimmy Kibble landed a 37-yard field goal with 1:14 remaining in overtime to make Frankfurt rue a missed 33-yard field goal on the final play of regulation that would have won it for them.

"This was probably the toughest one of all," said Frankfurt head coach Mike Jones. "In the game last week, we just got our britches beat off. This is the hardest to take because you're so close and still so far away. Our players came out and played their hearts out and made some great contributions. Cologne played like a first-place team today, even when they were down. We had the opportunities to win and we let them slip away."

The injury-hit Frankfurt team jumped out to a 14-0 lead on a pair of touchdown passes from Kevin Eakin to Aaron Hosack, but the Centurions roared back into the game when Kory Chapman – who rushed for 118 yards on the day – scored on an 18-yard run to finish a six-play, 73-yard drive.

Chapman's backfield partner Keylon Kincade scored from a yard out at the start of the fourth quarter to make it 17-14 to Cologne, but the Galaxy tied it with Stephen Scaldaferrri's 29-yard kick with five minutes remaining. Scaldaferrri had his chance to win it after Galaxy cornerback Lamont Brightful picked off a Kevin Thompson pass - his second interception of the day - and returned it 44 yards to the Cologne 18. The Indianapolis Colts allocated kicker pushed his attempt wide right with three seconds remaining to send the game into overtime.

The teams traded punts on their first possessions of the extra period, before Cologne drove 35 yards to set up Kibble's game winner, which he made for his second successful kick of the day to hand his team victory.

"I think today showed the character that we have on this team through each and every player," said Centurions quarterback Thompson. "From guys that's are starting, to guys that are subbing, to guys on the bench, everybody is into the game, we're all pushing for one another and that just proves the character that we have, we're never going to stop and we're fighting for each other until the game ends."

The Berlin Thunder joined the Centurions at the top of the standings with a 24-15 victory over the Rhein Fire. The 1-6 Fire played the league-leaders close, but three turnovers in the final 16 minutes allowed Berlin to break a 15-10 Rhein advantage and run away with the win.

Berlin had a good day passing the ball despite the persistent rain at the Olympic Stadium. Dave Ragone completed 13 of his 26 passes, and Aaron Boone had 112 yards receiving. The Fire got 166 yards rushing from league-leading running back Joe Smith, but were unable to ride his performance – the largest individual rushing total of the season – to victory.



**Aaron Boone opened the scoring and had 112 yards receiving on the day.**  
(city-press.net)

The Fire answered Berlin's opening touchdown – a 5-yard strike from Dave Ragone to Boone – with a 38-yard pass from Scott McBrien to Cedric James. Seconds later the Fire took the lead with a safety when Klaus Alinen fired a long snap over punter Brian Simnjakovski's head and out of the back of the endzone.

Rhein extended their advantage with a field goal with a minute left in the first half, but the Thunder answered immediately with a 42-yard kick from Kevin Miller as time expired in the second quarter.

"It was just the kind of game I thought it was going to be; really tough and hard fought," said Berlin head coach Rick Lantz. "We got behind, but one of the key, critical points of the game was the two-minute drive we made right at the end of the first half to answer their field goal. I felt that was extremely important, and it gave us some confidence and momentum in the second half."

In the second half Berlin's defense, which leads the league with a +10 turnover differential, came up with three game changing plays. After Cal Murray's 24-yard scoring run restored the lead to the home team, linebacker Michael Brown recovered a McBrien fumble to end a threatening Rhein drive. Little John Flowers' 57-yard run gave the Thunder a 9-point lead, and the Fire's final two possessions ended in turnovers – first when national defensive end Christian Mohr stripped the ball from McBrien as he sacked him, and then when safety Adrian Mayers stepped in front of a McBrien pass to end the final Rhein drive.

Berlin can clinch their second consecutive World Bowl berth – and their fourth of the new millennium – with a victory in Hamburg in Week Eight allied with a Cologne win at Amsterdam.

The Rhein Fire will play their own World Bowl when they host their arch-rivals, the Frankfurt Galaxy – in a Deutschland Derby rematch at the LTU arena on Saturday.

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