



## NFL EUROPE: NEXT NFL STARS COMING UP!

The **NFL EUROPE LEAGUE** completed an outstanding 13th season this spring and now a talented group of players return to the United States eager to make their mark in the NFL.

The new NFL Europe veterans, who played before record crowds across the pond, as attendance averaged 18,965 – the most since the league began play as an all-European competition in 1995 – can find inspiration all over the field, as NFL players at every position have used their time abroad as a springboard to success.

Perhaps that’s most evident at quarterback, where 27 NFL Europe veterans have gone on to start in the NFL, including **JAKE DELHOMME** of the Carolina Panthers, who sharpened his skills with the 1998 Amsterdam Admirals and 1999 Frankfurt Galaxy.

“I will always be grateful to NFL Europe,” says Delhomme. “I was able to play in games and win a championship with the Galaxy, and that’s something I am extremely proud of.”

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

“If not for NFL Europe, I would not be where I am today,” says Hall, a standout with the 2001 Scottish Claymores.

A sampling of NFL success stories who first tasted success in NFL Europe:

Pos.	Players	Pos.	Players
QB	J. Delhomme, J. Fiedler, B. Johnson, J. Kitna, Kurt Warner	DL	La’Roi Glover, Gary Stills, Keith Traylor
RB	Aaron Stecker	LB	Mike Maslowski, Donnie Spragan, Nate Wayne
WR	Brian Finneran, Marcus Robinson	DB	Deke Cooper, Nick Ferguson, Kelly Herndon
TE	Byron Chamberlain, Daniel Wilcox	K	David Akers, Lawrence Tynes, Adam Vinatieri
OL	Joe Andruzzi, Matt Lepsis, Marco Rivera, Brian Waters	P	Darren Bennett, Brian Moorman, Scott Player
KR/PR	Dante Hall, Michael Lewis		

So who’s next? A position-by-position look at 2005 NFL Europe standouts who may make an impact in the NFL this season:

**QB – DAVE RAGONE, Houston/Berlin** – NFL Europe’s Offensive Most Valuable Player, he set the pace with a 97.5 passer rating; 1,746 yards; and a 62.9 completion percentage. Ragone threw two interceptions in 251 attempts, finishing with a league-record streak of 174 consecutive passes without a pick. “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.”

**RB – JARRETT PAYTON, Tennessee/Amsterdam; JOE SMITH, Tennessee/Rhein** – Payton, son of NFL legend **WALTER PAYTON**, tied a season-high with seven rushing touchdowns. He gained 578 yards and ranked second with a 5.6 yards-per-carry average. “NFL Europe really helped me improve,” says Payton. “Now it’s all about showing that improvement and trying to earn a job.” Smith led NFL Europe in rushing (1,026), becoming only the third player in league history to run for 1,000 yards.

**WR – AARON BOONE, Carolina/Berlin; RUVELL MARTIN, San Diego/Amsterdam** – Boone led NFL Europe with 43 catches and 14 special teams tackles. “I feel like I’m so much better now than I was coming out of college,” says Boone. “I feel a comfort and confidence level that I’ll carry back to Carolina.” 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.

**OL – TYSON CLABO, Denver/Hamburg; CHAD SETTERSTROM, New Orleans/Amsterdam** – Clabo, an all-league choice, is hoping to be the next European success story in Denver, as Broncos linemen **MATT LEPSIS** and **BEN HAMILTON** both were standout players abroad before earning their current starting jobs. Setterstrom helped Amsterdam lead NFL Europe in rushing.

**TE – MARK ANELLI, Atlanta/Frankfurt; BOBBY BLIZZARD, Arizona/Hamburg** – Blizzard posted 34 receptions for 335 yards. “The players we sent to NFL Europe had to develop, and the best way to develop would be to play in games,” says Arizona head coach **DENNIS GREEN**. “It was a chance to play well and to show they can be a legitimate NFL player.” Anelli led tight ends with 36 catches, finishing fifth in the league in receptions.

**DL – TIM MC GILL, New York Jets/Hamburg; GREG WHITE, Chicago/Cologne** – McGill was one of NFL Europe’s best defensive linemen. He is hoping to follow in the footsteps of Jets defensive tackle **ALAN HARPER**, who was a standout with Scotland in 2004 before earning a job with New York, playing in 11 games last season.....White led the league with 7.0 sacks.

**LB – NICK MC NEIL, Green Bay/Hamburg; RICH SCANLON, Kansas City/Berlin** – Scanlon, the league defensive MVP and leading tackler, will compete for a starting job. “He was the Tazmanian Devil over there,” says Chiefs head coach **DICK VERMEIL**. “He was all over the field making plays. It was good for his confidence.” McNeil was an all-league choice, finishing with 61 tackles.

**DB – BLUE ADAMS, Tampa Bay/Rhein; SCOTT CONNOT, Kansas City/ Amsterdam; B.J. TUCKER, Seattle/Amsterdam** – Tucker, a cornerback, finished with five interceptions -- tying for the league lead -- including two scores. “Going to Europe was about getting my feet wet again,” says Tucker. “Last year I didn’t see any time, so I was glad to get some playing experience.” Cornerback Adams led NFL Europe with 16 passes defensed and was all-league, as was safety Connot, his club’s leading tackler.

**K – TODD FRANCE, Tampa Bay/Hamburg** – France set a record with 91 points and will compete for the Bucs’ kicking spot. “I believe I can win the job, and if I didn’t, I shouldn’t be there,” he says. “NFL Europe was a positive thing because you get game experience and film to show the coaches you can compete at this level.”

**P – B.J. SANDER, Green Bay/Hamburg** – Sander led the league with a 36.6 net average and will compete for a job. “He had a solid season,” says Packers special teams coordinator **JOHN BONAMEGO**. “The biggest thing was getting game experience. You can’t simulate what it’s like in a game. Getting yourself ready during the week, to the pregame, to game time, a punter has to be ready the entire game. It’s a mental exercise.”

