



## Players to watch:

### QB Ben Holmes:

Ben Holmes, born on October 15, 1994, in Orchard Park, USA, has traversed the gridiron with his exceptional quarterbacking prowess, leaving an indelible mark on every team he's played for. His football journey commenced at Orchard Park High School, where he honed his skills before making waves at Nassau Community College from 2013 to 2016, earning accolades like Freshman of the Year and Junior College All-American. In 2017, Holmes took his talents to the collegiate level, suiting up for the Tarleton State Texans and showcasing his mastery of the game with 3,338 passing yards, 34 touchdowns, and a rushing touchdown in 25 college games, including playoffs. His stellar performance earned him recognition as a rising star in the quarterbacking realm. Transitioning to the professional arena, Holmes embarked on a journey across various teams, including stints with the Arizona Rattlers, Sea Lions, and a Grey Cup-winning season with the Montreal Alouettes in 2022. Despite encountering a foot injury that limited his playing time in 2022, Holmes's resilience and determination remained unwavering.

### RB Karri Pajarinen:

Karri Pajarinen, born on October 5, 1998, in Finland, has emerged as a formidable force in the realm of football, showcasing his exceptional talent and dedication across various teams and championships. His journey in football began with the Helsinki Roosters, where he rose through the ranks, earning accolades like SAJL Jugendspieler des Jahres in 2016. Transitioning seamlessly to the international stage, Pajarinen continued to leave an indelible mark, representing Finland with distinction and contributing to the team's success in prestigious tournaments like the Bronze Europameisterschaft. In 2022, Pajarinen embarked on a new chapter of his football odyssey, joining the Potsdam Royals and later making his mark with the Vienna Vikings. His stellar performance in the GFL earned him a spot in the All-Star Team, solidifying his reputation as one of the league's premier running backs. Throughout his career, Pajarinen's statistics speak volumes about his skill and impact on the field. From his impressive rushing yards and touchdowns to his contributions in receiving, he has consistently proven himself as a dynamic and versatile player.

**Last season's stats:** 115 Att, 560 Rushing yards, 4 TDs

### #10 WR Weston Carr: **On IR**

Born on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1997, in Benicia, California, Carr attended Benicia High School from 2011-2014, where he played football and ran track. He was a First-Team All-Conference selection and Team MVP his senior season. He committed to Azusa Pacific University, where he redshirted his freshman season. Carr started 11 games as a redshirt freshman and led the team with 48 catches for 903 yards and nine touchdowns en route to their first ever playoff berth. After making the All-Conference First-Team in 2016, the pass catcher played even better in 2017. After one of the best seasons in school history, recording 86 receptions for 1458 yards and 15 touchdowns, Carr was a First-Team All-Conference selection and an All-American. He was a First-Team All-Conference selection as a redshirt junior once again, recording 33 receptions for 644 yards and 12 touchdowns en route to a Conference Championship. After graduating with a degree in sociology, Carr transferred to Penn State



for his senior season, leaving Azusa Pacific as the school's all-time receiving yards (3005) and receiving touchdown (36) leader. He appeared in three games and caught three passes for 27 yards for the Nittany Lions. He won the Cotton Bowl and earned the Quarterback Club Award.

Carr played for the Kiel Baltic Hurricanes in 2021, where he caught 62 passes for 1318 yards and 15 touchdowns in 10 games and was selected to the GFL All-Star team. The Hurricanes' Offensive MVP signed with the Vienna Vikings for the 2022 ELF season but suffered an injury in a pre-season scrimmage against the Leipzig Kings, forcing him to sit out the 2022 season.

**Last season's stats:** 31 rec, 636 Receiving yards, 5 TDs in 9 Games

#### **WR Reece Horn:**

Horn was born on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993, in Carmel Indiana and attended Cathedral High School, where he won the State championship in 2010 and made the All-Conference team. He committed to Division II University of Indianapolis, where he redshirted his first season. Horn played in every game as a redshirt freshman and established himself as the team's best receiver and a weapon on special teams. The standout pass catcher ended his collegiate career with 272 catches for 3,562 yards, 31 receiving touchdowns and two return touchdowns. He made the All-Conference team three times, was the Conference Offensive Player of the Year (2014), Special Teams player of the year (2015) and an All-American (2015).

Despite his production, Horn was not drafted but signed with the Titans. After getting cut, Horn played with the Milano Seamen and Vienna Vikings. In the following years, Horn played in the AAF, XFL, CFL and was on the Miami Dolphins and Cincinnati Bengals roster.

**Last season's stats –** 61 receptions, 875 yards, 8 TDs in 12 games

#### **WR Jordan Bouah:**

Jordan Bouah, born on May 17, 1995, in Rome, Italy, has carved out a remarkable career path in the realm of football, showcasing his exceptional talent and versatility across various teams and championships. His journey began with the Gladiatori Roma, where he honed his skills before transitioning to the international stage. After a stint at Saddleback Junior College Gauchos, Bouah's talent caught the attention of scouts, leading to opportunities with renowned teams like the Ottawa Redblacks and Giants Bolzano. His journey continued with the Dresden Monarchs and Seamen Milano before finding a home with the Vienna Vikings in 2022. Bouah's contributions to his teams have been significant, earning him accolades like the CFL Global Draftpick in 2019 and a spot in the ELF All-Star Second Team in 2022. His standout performances have played a pivotal role in his teams' success, including winning the prestigious Europameister title in 2021 and the ELF Championship in 2022.

**Last season's stats:** 49 rec, 654 Receiving yards, 6 TDs in 10 Games

#### **TE Florian Bierbaumer:**

born on October 5, 1998. Bierbaumer started his football career with the Graz Giants, where he played until 2021. In 2022, he joined the Vienna Vikings and has since become a key player for the team. His career highlights include being a CEFL Bowl Champion in 2016 and a Junior European Champion in 2017. Bierbaumer's talent has been recognized with several accolades. He participated in the CFL Global Combine in 2020 and was named to the ELF All-Star First Team in 2023. His performance also earned him an invitation to the NFL Combine and the NFL International Player Pathway (IPP) program in 2023. In 2021,



Bierbaumer had an outstanding season with 37 receptions for 740 yards and six touchdowns in nine AFL games. Despite suffering a significant injury in 2022, where he tore his ACL after just 2.5 games, he made a remarkable comeback in 2023. That year, he caught 36 passes for 556 yards and five touchdowns, earning him a spot on the ELF First-Team All-Star and an invitation to the NFL International Combine.

Florian Bierbaumer has solidified his reputation as one of the top tight ends in the ELF, with a promising future ahead.

#### **OL Aleksander Milanovic:**

Aleksandar Milanovic, born on November 13, 1991, in Vienna, Austria, has left an indelible mark on the football field, showcasing his prowess as an offensive lineman across various teams and championships. His journey began with the Vienna Vikings, where he first honed his skills before embarking on an impressive collegiate career in the United States. After a stint with the Sacramento State Hornets and the Adam State Grizzlies, Milanovic returned to his roots with the Vienna Vikings, where he continued to excel. His journey took him to international stages, including teams like the Helsinki Roosters and Banja Luka Rebels, before ultimately finding his way back to the Vienna Vikings in 2022. Milanovic's contributions to his teams have been nothing short of remarkable, earning him a plethora of accolades and team successes. From winning the Austrian Bowl and the Maple Bowl to clinching the ELF Championship, his achievements underscore his impact on the field. His accolades, including selections to All-Star Teams and MVP honors, attest to his exceptional skill and dedication to the game. Whether anchoring the offensive line as a right tackle or providing leadership in the trenches, Milanovic's presence has been instrumental in his team's success.

#### **OLB Jan-Phillip Bombek:**

Jan-Phillip Bombek, born on December 1, 1996, in Hamburg, has carved an impressive path in the world of American football, showcasing his talent and determination across various teams and championships. His journey began at the age of 16, defying initial reservations from his father, who had suffered injuries from the sport. Bombek's early years saw him shine as a linebacker and occasional quarterback for the Hamburg Swans and the Hamburg Young Huskies, earning recognition in the Austrian Junior National Team and clinching the Junior European Championship title in 2015. Undeterred by setbacks, Bombek pursued his dreams of playing at the collegiate level in the United States. Despite initial challenges in securing scholarships, he persisted, financing his education at Feather River Junior College in California. His perseverance paid off when he caught the attention of Division-I colleges, ultimately choosing to join the Colorado State Rams in 2017. As a Defensive End, Bombek made his mark on the field, notching several sacks and showcasing his prowess in collegiate football.

However, a knee injury towards the end of his college career and visa restrictions thwarted his aspirations of entering the NFL Draft in 2020. Undeterred, Bombek sought new opportunities, joining the Hamburg Sea Devils in the European League of Football (ELF) in 2021. There, he made an immediate impact, tallying impressive sack numbers and earning accolades such as an invitation to the NFL International Combine and a spot on the All-Europe Team by American Football International. Bombek's journey continued with stints at the Leipzig Kings and a triumphant return to the Hamburg Sea Devils in subsequent years. His stellar performances, characterized by relentless pursuit and disruptive playmaking, earned him recognition in the ELF Second All-Star Team and culminated in a European Championship title with the Austrian National Team in 2023.



**Last season's stats:** 18 tackles, 9.5 sacks, 10 TFL, 2 Forced Fumbles

**OLB Leon Balogh:**

Leon Balogh, born on June 2, 1996, in Mödling, Austria, has established himself as a dominant force in Austrian football, particularly with his longstanding tenure at the Vienna Vikings. His illustrious career is marked by numerous achievements and accolades, showcasing his exceptional talent and dedication to the game. Balogh's journey with the Vienna Vikings began in 2009, and since then, he has been an integral part of the team's success. His contributions played a pivotal role in the Vikings' Austrian Bowl victories in 2014, 2017, and 2020, cementing his legacy as a champion in Austrian football. Known for his defensive prowess, Balogh's impressive performance on the field has earned him recognition as the AFL Sack Leader in both 2018 and 2019. Balogh's impact extends beyond individual accolades, as he has been instrumental in the Vikings' defense, earning accolades such as the Vikings MVP in 2018 and the Vikings Defense MVP in 2019 and 2020. In addition to his success in the Austrian Football League (AFL), Balogh has also garnered attention on the international stage. His invitation to the NFL International Combine in 2019 and 2021 underscores his talent and potential as a professional athlete. Although he did not secure a spot in the NFL's International Player Pathway Program, his participation in the combine demonstrates his ability to compete at the highest level.

**Last season's stats:** 31 tackles, 5 sacks, 7 TFL, 1 Forced Fumble in 10 Games

**LB Alexander Watholowitch:**

Alexander Watholowitsch, born on September 5, 1998, in Austria. Watholowitsch's early achievements include clinching the title of Junior European Champion in 2015 and multiple Austrian National Championships with the Vienna Vikings in 2017 and 2020. Additionally, he played a pivotal role in Austria's U19 team, securing a commendable fifth-place finish at the U19 World Championship in 2016. Transitioning into his collegiate and professional career, Watholowitsch continued to excel both on and off the field. As an Informatik student, he balanced academic pursuits with his passion for football, demonstrating discipline and dedication in all aspects of his life. His commitment to excellence earned him recognition as the Vikings II Defense MVP in 2016, underscoring his impact within the team. In the European League of Football (ELF), Watholowitsch further solidified his reputation as a formidable linebacker, contributing significantly to the Vienna Vikings' championship victory in 2022. His defensive prowess was evident through his impressive stats, including tackles, sacks, forced fumbles, and pass break-ups, showcasing his versatility and effectiveness on the field.

**Last season's stats:** 53 tackles, 0.5 TFL in 8 Games

**DB Exavier Edwards:**

Exavier Edwards, born on November 23, 1991, in the USA, is a versatile football player known for his exceptional skills on both offense and defense. His football journey has taken him through various teams across different levels of competition, showcasing his adaptability and talent on the field. Starting his football career at Mission Viejo High School, Edwards quickly made a name for himself as a standout athlete. He continued his football journey at Saddleback College, where he honed his skills as a wide receiver before transitioning to play for Midland University as a defensive back. Throughout his career, Edwards has demonstrated his versatility by excelling in multiple positions. Despite being primarily utilized as a wide receiver for a significant portion of his career, he has also proven himself as a capable cornerback, safety, and kick returner. His ability to contribute across different positions highlights his athleticism and football IQ. In 2019, Edwards joined the ODTÜ



Falcons, where he earned recognition as the team's Defensive Player of the Year. His impactful performances caught the attention of international teams, leading him to play for the Black Panthers de Thonon in 2020 and the New Yorker Lions in 2021. Since 2022, Edwards has been a key member of the Vienna Vikings, where he has continued to make significant contributions on both offense and defense. In the ELF Regular Season of 2022, he showcased his versatility by recording impressive stats on both sides of the ball, including rushing yards and touchdowns, tackles, interceptions, and pass break-ups. Additionally, his proficiency as a kick returner has added another dimension to his game, providing the Vikings with valuable field position on special teams.

**Last season's stats:** 47 tackles, 2 TFL, 6 INT, 1 Forced Fumbles

#### **DB Luis Horvath:**

Luis Horvath, born on October 12, 1996, in Vienna, Austria, has established himself as a defensive back in the football world. Horvath's football journey began at a young age, starting with the Vikiddy Bears before joining the AFC Vienna Vikings in 2007. Throughout his tenure with the Vikings, he has consistently showcased his talent and dedication to the game, earning accolades such as the Vikings Defense Rookie of the Year in 2015 and the Vikings Defense MVP in 2018. His impressive performances on the field have been instrumental in the Vikings' success, contributing to numerous team achievements including Austrian U17 Championships in 2011, Junior European Championships in 2013 and 2015, Austrian National Championships in 2017 and 2020, and the ELF Championship in 2022. In addition to his team successes, Horvath's individual accomplishments highlight his skill and impact as a defensive back. In the 2022 season, he recorded impressive statistics with 69 tackles, 6.5 tackles for loss, two forced and recovered fumbles, two interceptions, and eight pass break-ups, earning him recognition as an ELF All-Star Second Team member.

**Last season's stats:** 60 tackles, 3 TFL, 4 Forced Fumbles, 1 Fumble Recovery in 10 Games

#### **DB Hunter Nicols:**

Hunter Nichols, a defensive standout and return specialist, is set to join the Vienna Vikings for the 2024 season, adding depth and talent to the team's roster. Nichols, who played as a Defensive Back for the University of San Diego, is renowned for his committed demeanor and exceptional performance on the field. During his collegiate career, Nichols amassed impressive statistics, showcasing his versatility and impact on both defense and special teams. In 47 games for the Toreros, he earned multiple accolades, including being named to the PFL co-Special Teams Player of the Year and the All-PFL First Team in 2020. Additionally, he was recognized as a First-Team DB and returner in 2022. Nichols' defensive prowess is evident in his career stats, which include 244 total tackles, 17 tackles for loss, eight interceptions, 28 defended passes, and two forced fumbles. As a return specialist, he demonstrated his agility and speed, accumulating 999 yards and one touchdown. In the 2021 season alone, Nichols recorded 59 tackles, seven pass breakups, and 224 yards on 11 kickoff returns, highlighting his impact on both defense and special teams. His consistent performance has earned him recognition, including a spot on the All-PFL Preseason Defensive Team and the All-PFL Honorable Mention list.

### **Notable Performances:**

#### **Stadium:**





The Vienna Vikings will play in two different stadiums this season: The Generali-Arena for their first two games and Wiener Neustadt Arena for the following games.

**Generali-Arena:** Capacity: 17.656. The stadium opened as "České-srdce-Platz" in 1925, before getting re-named to Franz Horr Stadion in 1974 and Generali-Arena in 2011. The arena has been renovated plenty of times over the last 40 years. The latest renovation from 2016-2018 cost 42 million €. It is the home venue of FK Austria Wien, an Austrian first division soccer club. The Vienna Vikings played all of their regular season games of the 2022 season at the Generali-Arena.

**Wiener Neustadt Arena:** Capacity: 15,000. The stadium, originally known as "Sportplatz Allerheiligen" when it opened in 1923, underwent multiple renovations over the years before being renamed Wiener Neustadt Arena. The latest renovation, completed in 2019, modernized the facilities and increased seating capacity to accommodate up to 15,000 spectators. The stadium serves as the home venue for SC Wiener Neustadt, a prominent football club in the Austrian second division. Additionally, it hosts various other sporting events and concerts throughout the year, making it a versatile and vibrant hub for entertainment in the region.

## Coaching Staff:

### Head Coach – Chris Calaycay:

Born on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1976, on Hawaii, Christopher Kekoa Calaycay played defensive back at Division III Willamette University from 1996-1999, before playing quarterback for the Vienna Vikings from 1999-2001. He won the Austrian Bowl in every year and led the team to an Eurobowl appearance in 2001. Calaycay was an assistant coach for Willamette during the AFL off-season in 2000 and 2001. He was an assistant coach at Cal from 2002-2003, where he helped recruiting future HOF QB Aaron Rodgers, before returning to Austria to be with his wife, who is from Vienna. The Hawaii native became the Vikings' defensive coordinator and assistant head coach in 2004.

Calaycay has been the defensive coordinator for the Austrian national team from 2006-2011, in 2014 and since 2019. He became the Vikings' head coach in 2007. He won a total of five Eurobowls and eight Austrian Bowls since 2004, including two Eurobowls and seven Austrian Bowls as the team's head coach. Calaycay won the European League of Football Championship Game and was a nominee for the Coach of the Year award in 2022.

### Offensive Coordinator - Max Sommer:

Max Sommer, the newly appointed offensive coordinator for the Vienna Vikings, brings a wealth of experience and a winning mentality to the team. Having recently led Team Austria to victory in the European Championship as head coach, Sommer's arrival signals a significant addition to the Vikings' coaching staff. With a long-standing friendship and professional relationship with Vikings head coach Chris Calaycay, Sommer's transition into the role of offensive coordinator feels like a natural fit for the team's philosophy and aspirations. Calaycay himself expressed immense satisfaction with Sommer's appointment, highlighting his respect for Sommer both as a person and as a coach. Sommer, in turn, is filled with ambition for the upcoming season, setting his sights on the ultimate goal of competing for a championship title in front of a massive crowd at the iconic Veltins-Arena.

### Defensive Coordinator – Daniel Auböck:

Born on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1989, Auböck started his playing and coaching career with the Vienna Vikings. He already had been the defensive coordinator for the Vikings in 2022,



when the team had the 2<sup>nd</sup> best defense in the league. Coach Calaycay had to say the following about him: "Daniel is one of the most overlooked coordinators in the European League of Football, period."

## **Game against the Raiders - Strategy, details and more**

### **What are your "keys to the game"?**

Play the game as it is supposed to be played. Play Hard and Play Smart. We play three units (Offense, Defense, and Special Teams) as one, and we all understand that we will have each other's back.

### **What are your goals for this season?**

1-0, simple approach. Each game is enough of a challenge and the focus needs to be to win every game that we enter. For a bigger view we want to win our conference and earn one of those top seeds for the bye week, and of course get to Schalke and win another Championship, but it starts week 1.

### **What is your biggest strength as a team?**

Culture and family. We have an environment here that is special and inclusive. Our veteran home grown players create a special atmosphere that allows new players to feel at home so they can perform and play for the Vikings next to them.