

## Players to watch:

### #1 QB Carlton Aiken Jr.

Carlton Aiken Jr., born on July 6, 1998, in Paulsboro, New Jersey, is a quarterback known for his versatility on the field. In 2023, the 25-year-old Gibbstown native showcased his skills for the Barcelona Dragons in the ELF, completing 25 of 60 passes for 354 yards and two touchdowns, while also rushing for 149 yards and a touchdown in two games. During the same year, Aiken Jr. played for the Silesia Rebels in the PFL, where he threw for 1,100 yards and 17 touchdowns without any interceptions. He also rushed for over 700 yards and 11 touchdowns, leading the Rebels to the Polish Bowl. Collegiately, Aiken Jr. had stints at Central Connecticut State, Gardner-Webb University, and Pace University, where he accumulated impressive statistics. In total, he recorded 5,887 passing yards and 55 touchdowns, along with 1,964 rushing yards and 23 touchdowns during his college career. Named the NE10 MVP in 2022, Aiken Jr. has proven himself as a dynamic player both at the collegiate and professional levels. He continues his football journey with the Helvetic Mercenaries starting in 2024, aiming to further showcase his talent on the field.

**Last season's stats:** 25 Completions, 354 passing yards, 2 TDs, 2 INT, 41,67% Completion Percentage

### #11 WR Anthony Brown:

Anthony Brown, born on November 29th in Belton, Texas, emerged as a standout wide receiver with a dynamic skill set. His football journey began at Belton High School before he showcased his talents at Saint Anselm College, where he played from 2019 to 2023. In 2024, he joined the Helvetic Mercenaries to continue his football career. Throughout his collegiate career, Brown amassed numerous accolades, including multiple selections to the NE10 All-Conference teams and Special Teams Player of the Week honors. In 2021, he led the NE10 in receiving yards, showcasing his prowess as a top-tier receiver.

Brown's stats highlight his versatility and impact on the field, with impressive receiving yards and touchdown contributions each season. His ability to make plays as a receiver, rusher, and returner makes him a dynamic threat on offense and special teams.

### #3 WR Gregorio Calonego:

Gregorio Calonego, born on April 29, 2001, in Legnano, Italy, is a talented wide receiver known for his versatility on the football field. Standing at 183 cm and weighing 86 kg, Calonego began his football journey after moving to Switzerland at the age of 12. Before football, he was an alpine skier in Italy.

Calonego started his professional career with the Calanda Broncos, playing from 2014 to 2022. During his time with the Broncos, he contributed to their Swiss Bowl victories in 2018 and 2021. In 2019, he was part of the U19 Europe Warriors and made his debut in the NLA in 2018. In 2023, he played for the Helvetic Guards before joining the Helvetic Mercenaries in 2024. Known for his versatility, Calonego has also played as a safety, kicker, and long snapper.

### #77 OL Stefán Númi Stefánsson:

Stefán Númi Stefánsson, born on August 1, 1995, in Egilsstaðir, Iceland, is a versatile

offensive lineman playing as both tackle and guard. Known for his impressive size and strength, Stefánsson stands at 196 cm and weighs 147 kg. Stefánsson's football career has seen him play for various teams across Europe. In 2018, he started with the Horsens Stallions and Reykjavik Einherjar. He then played for the Aarhus Tigers in 2019 and returned to them in 2020 after a stint with the Mallorca Voltors. In 2021, he joined the Swarco Raiders, where he won the Austrian Bowl. He then moved to the Potsdam Royals for the 2022-2023 seasons, where he helped secure the GFL North Division title in 2022. Since 2024, he has been a valuable player for the Helvetic Mercenaries.

In addition to his football career, Stefánsson has a diverse athletic background. He played in the first Icelandic basketball league and, as a child, he also played soccer, golf, and handball. His multifaceted sports experience contributes to his agility and coordination on the football field.

### **#96 DT Tim Hänni:**

Tim Hänni, born on October 13, 1996, in Köniz, Switzerland, is a formidable defensive tackle renowned for his dominance on the gridiron. His football journey began at the age of 14 with the Bern Grizzlies U19 team, where he quickly emerged as a standout player. Hänni's talent and dedication earned him a spot on the Swiss youth national team, showcasing his potential at an early age. From 2015 to 2021, Hänni made significant contributions to the Bern Grizzlies men's team, solidifying his reputation as a force to be reckoned with on the defensive line. In 2016, he was named the Grizzlies Rookie of the Year, highlighting his impact on the field. Hänni's skills and achievements caught the attention of football scouts, leading to his signing with the Hamburg Sea Devils for the 2022 ELF season. In his debut season with the Sea Devils, he made an immediate impact, earning recognition as a First-Team All-Star for his outstanding performance.

In 2023, Hänni continued to impress, earning a spot on the ELF All-Star Second Team, further cementing his status as one of Europe's top defensive tackles. His relentless drive and exceptional abilities make him a vital asset to any team he represents.

**Last season's stats:** 47 tackles, 2.5 sacks, 13.5 TFL, 1 forced fumble, 1 fumble recovery

### **#53 DE Dominik Liechtl:**

Dominik Liechtl, born on April 27, 1994, in Langnau im Emmental, Switzerland, is a formidable defensive end recognized for his prowess on the football field. His journey to prominence began with the Bern Grizzlies, where he showcased his talent and helped secure two Swiss Bowl victories in 2016 and 2022. In 2022, Liechtl made a pivotal move to the Schwäbisch Hall Unicorns, where he continued to excel, contributing significantly to their success in the German Football League. His exceptional performance played a crucial role in the team's German Bowl victory, further solidifying his reputation as a top-tier player. Liechtl's remarkable skills and leadership qualities caught the attention of the Helvetic Guards, who eagerly secured him as their first player for the 2023 season in the European League of Football (ELF). With his wealth of experience and undeniable talent, Liechtl is expected to be a cornerstone player for the new ELF team, bringing invaluable leadership and expertise to the field.

Throughout his career, Liechtl has garnered numerous accolades, including being named to the IFAF World Development Team in 2014 and earning recognition as the PFS NLA Defense Player of the Year and Grizzlies Defense MVP in 2022. His impressive statistics

speak to his impact on the game, with standout performances such as recording 14 sacks, eight TFLs, and seven blocked kicks/punts in the Swiss NLA in 2022, as well as contributing 51 tackles, nine TFLs, three sacks, and a forced fumble in eleven ELF games in 2023.

**Last season's stats:** 51 tackles, 3 sacks, 9 TFL, 1 fumble recovery

#### **#47 LB Johnathan Falk:**

John Falk, born on October 20, 1990, in Switzerland, is a seasoned linebacker renowned for his tenacity and skill on the football field. His football journey began with the Lausanne Owls, where he honed his talents and contributed to their success from 2013 to 2015. In 2015, Falk ventured to the United States to join the Baldwin Wallace University Yellow Jackets, showcasing his abilities at the collegiate level. Upon his return to Europe, he continued to make an impact, notably winning the EFL-Bowl Championship with the Black Panthers de Thonon in 2017 and the German Bowl Championship with the New Yorker Lions in 2019. Falk's impressive achievements include winning the Nationalliga B Championship and securing promotion to the Nationalliga A in 2015. He has also been recognized for his outstanding contributions on the field, earning accolades such as the NLB Defense MVP in 2015 and the Black Panthers Defense MVP in 2017.

With a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success, Falk joined the Helvetic Guards in 2023 before becoming a vital part of the Helvetic Mercenaries' lineup in 2024. His leadership, defensive prowess, and championship pedigree make him a formidable presence on the field, and his contributions are sure to elevate the Mercenaries' defense in the European League of Football (ELF).

**Last season's stats:** 102 tackles, 1.5 sacks, 6 TFL, 1 INT, 1 forced fumble, 1 fumble recovery

#### **#2 CB Ken Hike Jr.:**

Ken Hike Jr., born on September 9, 1995, in Decatur, Georgia, is a standout cornerback known for his versatility and prowess on the football field. His journey in football began at Columbia High School, where he showcased his skills before continuing his athletic career at Tuskegee University. During his time at Tuskegee University, Hike Jr. demonstrated his talent and dedication to the sport. After completing his collegiate career, he ventured into professional football, playing for the Spring League Conquerors in the USA in 2021. His standout performance caught the attention of the Dresden Monarchs in the German Football League (GFL), where he further solidified his reputation as one of the league's top players. In 2023, Hike Jr. joined the Helvetic Guards, marking his debut as the first American defensive import player for the Swiss team. His addition brought flexibility and experience to the team's defense, with his ability to play multiple positions beyond cornerback. Described by Coach Don Clemons as a player with excellent size and coverage skills, Hike Jr. can excel both on the outside and in the slot, providing the Helvetic Guards with options to deploy him strategically across the defensive lineup.

**Last season's stats:** 52 tackles, 3.5 TFL, 1 INT, 1 forced fumble, 3 fumble recoveries

#### **S Kevin Fortes:**

Kevin Fortes, born on May 27, 1998, in Nogent-Sur-Marne, France, is a standout safety known for his athleticism and playmaking ability. His football journey reflects his dedication and skill on the field, spanning across teams in Europe.

Fortes began his career with the Molosses d'Asnières from 2007 to 2019, where he honed his skills and established himself as a force to be reckoned with. He then ventured to teams like the Saarland Hurricanes, Potsdam Royals, and Hamburg Sea Devils, showcasing his versatility and impact on different squads. Notable achievements include being named to the ELF All-Star First Team in 2022 and receiving an invite to the NFL International Combine the same year. Fortes has tasted success with various teams, winning titles such as the French U19 Championship in 2016 and the French Second Division Championship in 2017.

As a French national team player, Fortes has represented his country with distinction, bringing his talent to the international stage. In 2021, he recorded impressive stats with 25 tackles, one sack, and an interception in ten GFL games. His performance continued to shine in 2022, contributing 19 tackles, a fumble return touchdown, and three interceptions in eight ELF games.

**Last season's stats:** 48 tackles, 3.5 TFL, 2 INT, 2 Forced Fumble

#### **#4 DB Nazir Streater:**

Nazir Streater, will be utilized as a do-it-all athlete. Streater will be coming in from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Named to the IUP All-Decade team, Nazir was a force in college. Racking up 185 tackles, 14 interceptions, 6 tackles for loss, 30 pass breakups, and 3 fumble recoveries. Nazir was looked at in the NFL Draft and ultimately went to the USFL (Gamblers) and IFL (Gladiators). Due to an ACL injury, he was overlooked by the NFL.

Nazir offers elite ball skills, with the ability to track and grab at the point of attack, he is a pure balhawk. As a former basketball player, Streater has the explosive mobility most defensive backs dream of.

## **Notable Performances:**

### **Stadium:**

The Helvetic Mercenaries will play in two different stadiums this season: The Stadion Brühl for their home opener and Sportzentrum Kleinfeld for the following games.

**Brühl Stadium:** Capacity: 12,500. Originally opened as "Brühl Arena" in 1950, the stadium underwent several renovations and expansions over the years. In 1978, it was renamed "Brühl Stadium" and has since been a prominent sports venue in the region. The most recent renovation took place from 2014 to 2016, costing approximately €20 million. Brühl Stadium serves as the home ground for Brühl City FC, a local football club, and also hosts various other sporting events and concerts throughout the year.

**Kleinfeld Sports Center:** Located in the heart of the city, Kleinfeld Sports Center boasts a capacity of 5,000. Originally established in 1982, the sports center has undergone multiple upgrades and expansions to accommodate the growing demand for recreational and

competitive sports activities in the community. The facility hosts a wide range of sporting events, including soccer matches, basketball tournaments, and track and field competitions. Additionally, Kleinfeld Sports Center provides state-of-the-art training facilities for local sports clubs and athletes.

## **Coaching Staff:**

### **HC - Val Gunn:**

Val Gunn, born in Santa Fe, USA, has had a remarkable journey in both playing and coaching football. He began his football career as a player at Texas A&M, where he honed his skills and passion for the game. Transitioning to coaching, Gunn embarked on a diverse coaching career that took him across various countries and teams. He started with the Oslo Vikings in 1997, where he had multiple stints from 1997 to 1998 and again from 2006 to 2008, even coaching the Norwegian National Team in 2007. Gunn's coaching expertise then took him to teams like the Aix-en-Provence Argonautes, Paderborn Dolphins, Devils Wrocław, and Aquile Ferrara, where he made significant contributions to each team's development and success. In 2016, Gunn joined the Munich Rangers, where he spent three years leading the team to notable achievements. His coaching journey continued with the Wrocław Panthers in 2019, followed by a stint with the Istanbul Rams from 2021 to 2022.

In 2024, Gunn assumed the head coaching position for the Helvetic Mercenaries, adding another chapter to his illustrious coaching career. With a track record that includes championships in Norway and Poland, Gunn brings a wealth of experience and leadership to the Mercenaries, aiming to guide them to further success in the European football landscape.

### **Defensive Coordinator - Bryan Billy:**

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

### **What are your “keys to the game”?**

Pretty much a broken record when it comes to this, on offense we need to protect and produce. That is, limit any self-inflicted mistakes and turnovers - while getting into the end zone. We need to help the defense out by scoring. The defense needs to limit the big plays and put our opponent in difficult situations. Of course, we need to set the standard with our special teams.

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

To be successful. We don't measure that in wins and losses, but how we progress through the season and overcome adversity—which every franchise at some point will face.

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

It's going to come off as cliché, but the strength of this team is our family bond. This is a close knit group that believes in one another. That is going to help us this season.

