

Albany QB gunning to catch eye of NFL scouts

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Scott Brunner is urging NFL folks to keep an eye on Dan Di Lella. Well, to at least put an eye on Dan Di Lella.

“People I’m talking to now in the league, I’m just saying, ‘You’ve got to get him on your radar screen,’” Brunner said of the recently graduated Albany quarterback. “‘You’ve got to at least take a look at him to bring him in.’”

Di Lella’s name, however, isn’t greeted with much recognition.

“Most [NFL] people don’t know about him,” Brunner said.

Not that it’s remarkable that this is the case. Much like Jeremy Lin (Harvard), Victor Cruz (UMass) or John Skelton (Fordham), Di Lella is not a star at a major college program. That doesn’t mean he isn’t going to try to follow their lead, to Xerox their under-the-rock-to-over-the-moon success.

Jonathan Baskin

“You’ve just got to get that one team to see something,” Di Lella said.

Di Lella and Brunner are trying now to get a team to see. Di Lella is a 22-year-old who stands 6-foot-4 1/2, weighs 232 pounds and hails from Neshanic Station, N.J. Di Lella has been working with Brunner, the former Giants quarterback who now works for a company called TEST, which handles combine prep for quarterbacks. His past clients include the Ravens’ Joe Flacco and the Patriots’ Brian Hoyer.

You might be tempted to say Di Lella, who said he expects to go undrafted, is not in the same league as likely top pick Andrew Luck. But maybe Di Lella can play in the same league.



HEY, LOOK At ME! Recently graduated Albany Great Danes quarterback Dan Di Lella prepares for the NFL Combine under the watchful eye of TEST Football Academy coach Scott Brunner, a former Giants QB.

“[Di Lella’s] very raw. He’s definitely, compared to [Flacco and Hoyer], those guys were much more polished. ... Definitely they had a pedigree that Dan doesn’t have,” Brunner said. “But if you put him side by side and you watch them all throw, there wouldn’t be much difference between the way the ball comes out and how they throw.”

Right now Di Lella is training mainly for this Saturday's local combine at the Jets' practice facility, where he will try to catch somebody's attention. Because Di Lella doesn't figure to be selected in April's NFL Draft, his hope is to sign as an undrafted free agent and make a team in training camp.

How likely is it that an Albany player makes the NFL? Well, Albany is not exactly USC, but stranger things have happened. Eight Albany alums have made it to the big time, with two Great Danes getting drafted, the most recent being defensive back Rashad Barksdale, taken in the sixth round by the Eagles in 2007.

Di Lella delivered an impressive senior campaign, racking up 2,548 yards passing and 25 touchdowns, both school records. He earned first-team All-Northeast Conference honors and grabbed a spot on the FCS academic All-Star team.

"This past year, he was the guy that made the whole thing go," offensive coordinator Ryan McCarthy said.

Di Lella hardly was thinking about the NFL until shortly after the season, until an Arizona Cardinals scout emailed him asking for his basics — his 40-yard time, etc.

"I hadn't even really thought about that," Di Lella said. "It was pretty wild."

Di Lella began going after the NFL full bore. He has been training at TEST since Jan. 1, sweating six days a week, even traveling to work with Chad Pennington at TEST's complex in Florida. With Brunner, Di Lella has overhauled his footwork and his throwing motion. Brunner said the wider base allows Di Lella to get rid of the ball faster, and his lower ball position helps his mobility, balance and ball security.

"He has as good a velocity as anybody I've worked with," Brunner said. "He can make all the throws — the touch throw down the middle, the deep comeback down the sideline. He's great on the board. It's just a matter of putting him on the field and seeing how he responds to a defense, people flying around.

"I think he can fit into a pro-style offense pretty easily."

Saturday Di Lella will showcase what he has learned. And then we will see if he can pull off what Lin, Cruz and Skelton have done.

"It only takes one team to see him and be impressed with what they see," Brunner said. "We don't need all 32 teams to think he's the real deal. Only one."

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