

Rating The Packers vs Rams

Packers completely dominate clueless Rams

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Green Bay - Lambeau Field was turned into a laboratory Monday night for those interested in the differences between a well-coached team and a poorly coached one.

The St. Louis Rams barely tried to run the ball, had a poorly conceived game plan on defense that seemed almost ignorant of their opponent's strengths and made another egregious mistake on special teams. Their coach, Mike Martz, looked out of it all night.

Meanwhile, the Green Bay Packers won their sixth straight game under coach Mike Sherman, 45-17, with a crisp, physical and turnover-free performance.

Here is a rating of the Packers, with their 1 to 5 football totals in parentheses:

Recievers (4)

The Rams were petrified about getting beat deep so they kept bailing their cornerbacks at the snap. That opened up throws in front of them to Donald Driver, who caught six of the team-high total of nine passes thrown to him, dropped one and probably should have had another. Driver ran past FS Aeneas Williams on a 16-yard touchdown, made a spectacular one-handed catch on a slant behind him for 15 and hauled down two other fastballs at point-blank range. Javon Walker had been Brett Favre's favorite target in the last four games but this time settled for four balls and two receptions. The Rams forgot to cover Bubba Franks on his 7-yard touchdown even though he has been catching that base goal-line play for five years. When the Packers forced Antuan Edwards to cover either Ben Steele or Franks on deep routes, he did neither and Franks was open for 29 yards. Steele mistimed his jump on what should have been a 24-yard touchdown. The blocking was fine except for a first-quarter run by Najeh Davenport that went nowhere after Franks inexplicably fell down.

Offensive Line (5)

This was personal. Using the same personnel except DE Grant Wistrom and DT Bryan Young, the Rams' defense that whipped Green Bay in the last two meetings found itself badly beaten this time. The Packers finished blocks like never before this season. Bodies were strewn all over the field. The fact that the Rams kept stunting inside when the Packers were running outside helped, but it cannot detract from Mike Wahle's awesome display of open-field run blocking. He combo-blocked out to linebackers beautifully. When Wahle pulled, he blocked two defenders more than once. Mark Tauscher held the great Leonard Little without a pressure in one of the finest games of his career. Little kept trying to bull-rush to no avail after Tauscher took away the inside and stayed patient. Kevin Barry was the key player on Davenport's 40-yard touchdown run, dominating Little on a down block. The Rams didn't register a sack or a knockdown. Chad Clifton is much more consistent these days on all types of run plays.

Quarterbacks (4½)

Rams coordinator Larry Marmie came out using five-man rushes early and Favre, the center of attention all week because of his 200th start, gunned some wild throws and was shaky on a decision or two. From the second quarter on, Favre settled in and was in total control. When Marmie tried to blitz (he rushed five or more on 25% of passes), Favre effectively changed protections at the line and found the vulnerabilities in the Rams' coverages. The Rams' lack of pass rush was reflected by the Packers' need to use a seven-step drop and the shotgun formation each just once. The only seven-step drop was Favre's touchdown to Driver. DT Tyoka Jackson knocked Marco Rivera out of the way with a head slap in the fourth quarter and would have sacked most other quarterbacks. Favre bolted instantly and turned it into a 6-yard gain. He didn't come close to an interception.

Running Backs (4½)

Five of Davenport's 19 carries (for 178 yards) were for 0, 1, 1, minus-1 and 1. Because his linebackers are undersized, Marmie had them submarining William Henderson. That created a pile of bodies, and Davenport struggled stepping over the trash. However, it must be noted that he played for the injured Ahman Green (rib cartilage) with a pair of tight hamstrings. The holes were so gaping that Davenport didn't have to do much to spring into the secondary. What was impressive was how he broke the tackles of LB Pisa Tinoisamoa and SS Adam Archuleta about 10 yards downfield on a 37-yard counter and the tackle of FS Rich Coady 10 yards into a 40-yard touchdown. The Rams' intensity faded in the second half, and trying to cope with someone as punishing as Davenport undoubtedly was a reason. Nick Luchey played 11 snaps despite suffering from a dislocated shoulder.

Defensive Line (3½)

The pressure outside was more than adequate, but with a right tackle as awful as Grant Williams that was more than expected. The cumbersome Williams gave up sacks to R-Kal Truluck and Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila and two hurries each to Aaron Kampman (45 snaps) and Truluck (season-high 33). Thirty-five of KGB's 66 snaps came on the right side against LT Orlando Pace. He had been stifled by Pace in two previous games but probably earned a decision Sunday. Cletidus Hunt (50) beat another weak link, LG Tom Nutten, for his first sack of the season as well as a hurry and also had a knockdown against RG Adam Timmerman, who is playing with a bad back. Given the pressure off the edge, it would have become a feeding frenzy if Grady Jackson (55) and Cullen Jenkins (28) had collapsed the pocket better from inside. Why Martz even tried to run anywhere near Jackson considering how weak his guards are is anyone's guess. "KGB" had two offsides penalties after having had just one in the first 10 games. Ponderous James Lee wasn't a factor in eight snaps.

Linebackers (2½)

Nutten, Timmerman and C Andy McCollum were extremely slowing trying to block at the linebacker level and Na'il Diggs took full advantage with his second straight impressive game. When a sweep was starting to form up Diggs shot a gap and drilled Marshall Faulk for minus-2. He also barreled through untouched to crunch Faulk for minus-1 and read a screen pass to smear Faulk for minus-5. Diggs didn't have any glaring miscues in coverage and forced a fumble on a play that was called back. Other than a well-timed knockdown of Marc Bulger on the pass that was intercepted by Ahmad Carroll, Nick Barnett had a long day. He missed four tackles, didn't do a great job fitting his gaps, wasn't a force physically and had some difficulties in coverage. Week after week Hannibal Navies does a workmanlike job despite a bad shoulder.

Secondary (3)

Al Harris matched up against Torry Holt and held him to a long gain of 18 yards on five receptions. The best part of Harris' game was his quick close and sure, hard tackling. It's a chore to get much on Harris after the catch when he's playing press-man coverage. The 56-yard completion to Isaac Bruce against an eight-man blitz and man-off coverage by Harris illustrated the circumstances in which he will struggle. He is ultra-competitive and is strong with his hands, but without the chance to bump he's like a fish out of water. Carroll played hard, was around the ball and made two big plays. If Carroll learns from some of Bruce's routes and doesn't start going overboard with the showmanship, he will keep improving. Joey Thomas and Michael Hawthorne were overmatched at times by Shaun McDonald and Kevin Curtis but each made a big play. Mark Roman missed two tackles and was late lining up on Faulk's 8-yard touchdown. It's getting to the point where the Packers might be better served with Bhawoh Jue instead of Roman at strong safety.

Kickers (3)

Ryan Longwell averaged 59.4 yards and 3.6 seconds of hang time on eight kickoffs and hit from 27. Bryan Barker had averages of 40.3 (gross), 32.3 (net) and 4.0 (hang time) on three punts.

Special Teams (3½)

Injuries and two late roster moves left this group in a state of flux all week. Fortunately, the Rams' special teams under Martz almost always are a mess. Martz tried to relieve the heat that has been directed toward his units with a fake field goal but the Packers had the right call on and Harris demolished an end-run by Jeff Wilkins. Kick coverage, led by Steele and Vonta Leach, was good. The return game was OK. Robert Ferguson almost got Antonio Chatman laid out on a kickoff by missing a block on the head-hunting Tinoisamoa.

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