

Rating The Packers vs Eagles

Problems start with coaches

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Green Bay - The Green Bay Packers had the players to be extremely competitive against the Philadelphia Eagles Sunday, just as they were in two hard-fought losses last season. They just didn't have the coaching.

Coach Mike Sherman has done well over the years with replay challenges but the Packers' decision not to challenge on Sheldon Brown's second-quarter interception was a major mistake.

So was Sherman's decision to give the ball to spindly-legged Donald Driver on a new reverse on third and 2 when he had Brett Favre, Ahman Green and Javon Walker standing idly by ready to make a play. Driver was stuffed for minus-1 late in the first quarter just when the game was getting out of hand.

Then there was the disgraceful pass defense as coordinated by Bob Slowik. Here is a rating of the Packers in the 47-17 loss, with their 1 to 5 football totals in parentheses:

Receivers (1)

Coordinator Jim Johnson played more zone than expected to take away the long ball to Javon Walker. Rolling coverage toward Walker's side neutralized him deep but created one-on-one opportunities for Robert Ferguson and Driver that they were unable to exploit. Third-year cornerbacks Sheldon Brown and Lito Sheppard, very fast and very physical, played much better than anyone in the Packers secondary. The wideouts caught 14 passes but gained a scant 20 yards after the catch. The entire Eagles' defense was much more physical than the Packers' offense. Driver dropped a touchdown pass and TE Ben Steele dropped a pass for the third game in a row. It was Steele's missed block on DE Derrick Burgess that ruined the reverse by Driver. Ferguson made three tough catches in traffic.

Offensive Line (1/2)

Tackles Chad Clifton and Mark Tauscher were adequate. Tauscher gave up a knockdown to Jevon Kearse on the third play but didn't have other protection problems, and Clifton held up well against Burgess, Hugh Douglas and Kearse, who spent about half the game over him. The problem was inside, where guards Mike Wahle and Marco Rivera and centers Grey Ruegamer and Scott Wells were whipped by Corey Simon, Darwin Walker, Sam Rayburn and Hollis Thomas. Ruegamer got beat by Simon for a sack in 2.8 seconds, gave up a hurry to Rayburn and missed a run block against Thomas before exiting late in the second quarter with an ankle injury. Wahle and Wells each were at least partly responsible for sacks and Rivera was involved in another. Rivera played well against Simon a year ago but struggled here. For never practicing with the No. 1 offense Wells could have been worse. He wasn't strong enough with his thrust and punch and therefore was unable to stay frontal, which created penetration. The run game went nowhere when the unit failed to sustain blocks.

Quarterbacks (1/2)

For Brett Favre, who wasn't knocked down once by St. Louis, having Kearsse smash him down hard on the first third down might have shaken him up. He made a bad decision on his very next pass and was intercepted by Brian Dawkins on a long ball to a well-covered Bubba Franks that either should have been thrown elsewhere or not at all. After another punt, Favre bootlegged left and had Franks wide open 30 yards downfield for a possible 46-yard touchdown. Favre doesn't miss many reads like that but did here and then threw incomplete to Walker against double coverage. Following his second interception, Favre didn't know what to do with the ball on an aborted screen and ended up falling down for a sack on third and 8. Johnson's blitzing (36.7% on passes) and aggressive scheme almost seemed to befuddle Favre. He kept bailing out on throws and hit just 48.3%. It's a mistake to judge any quarterback in garbage time but at least Craig Nall produced two touchdowns. He made a wrong protection call leading to one sack but other than that did an exemplary job.

Running Backs (1)

Ahman Green was fitted with a flak jacket for rib damage and played 48% of the snaps. Early, Green looked rusty after having had just five carries in the last two games. He didn't exhibit much patience and didn't seem to be in attacking mode. His final few carries were more typical Green. His best play was a 17-yard screen pass; he fumbled on another screen pass but recovered himself. Tony Fisher (26 snaps) and Najeh Davenport (nine) filled in. In fact, Green sat out the last 1 1/2 quarters. Davenport should have had a touchdown from the 1 but missed the hole and failed to gain. Nick Luchey (nine) keeps trying to play with a dislocated shoulder but obviously doesn't have the same striking power as a blocker. His injury places more of a burden on William Henderson (22).

Defensive Line (1 1/2)

Aaron Kampman amassed a sack, 3 1/2 knockdowns, 1/2 hurry and 5 solo tackles. He beat RT Jon Runyan, a hard man to beat, around the corner three times, trashed TE L.J. Smith for a knockdown and even got a pressure against LT Tra Thomas, who basically owned Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila. "KGB" was double-teamed on just 32% of dropbacks but didn't get near the passer. Thomas kept punching "KGB" at the line and breaking him down. Grady Jackson (3 1/2 pressures) and Cletidus Hunt (2 1/2) took advantage of low-grade guards Steve Sciullo and Alonzo Ephraim but needed to be even more disruptive to save the overmatched secondary. Cullen Jenkins whipped Ephraim for a sack and two hurries. R-Kal Truluck (21 snaps), Kenny Peterson (19) and James Lee (17) were next to invisible.

Linebackers (1)

With the game over by halftime, Nick Barnett excelled in garbage time. He had four tackles for loss in the second half alone compared to only 4 1/2 in the first 28 games of his career. One time, Barnett actually stepped up in the hole and stopped a ball carrier on the other side of the line of scrimmage. That always has been the major deficiency in his game. However, Barnett was all but useless as a blitzer. The Eagles raised havoc walking dime linebacker Ike Reese to the line and rushing him in coordination with four linemen. Not only don't the Packers have a blitzer like Reese but also don't have blitzes as well-coordinated as the Eagles.' Na'il Diggs went flying through the air three times on missed tackles, enabling ball carriers to gain an extra 33 yards. Paris Lenon replaced Diggs and looked lost in coverage and in his run fits.

Secondary (1½)

No one played worth a darn but Mark Roman was the worst of the worst. He couldn't cover, giving up a shocking 3 ½ plays of 20 yards or more and TD passes of six and 12 yards. He couldn't tackle, missing Terrell Owens twice. One was an embarrassingly feeble try. Even Marques Anderson was seldom this terrible. Sometimes, however, Roman was given an impossible assignment. In the third quarter, a double-cornerback blitz left Roman trying to cover Owens on a 22-yard completion. That call made no sense. Al Harris is the Packers' best defensive back but that's damning with faint praise. At least he wasn't intimidated by Owens like some of his teammates. Owens destroyed Michael Hawthorne out of the slot for 45 and an out-of-position Bhawoh Jue on an over route for 41. Bad knee and all, Darren Sharper still got matched up against Brian Westbrook and watched him burst across his face for 50. Ahmad Carroll is competitive as all get out but isn't always interested in playing the defense as called and keeps taking shortcuts by grabbing receivers downfield. He had three penalties. The whole group is a dysfunctional mess.

Kickers (3½)

Bryan Barker probably had his best outing with averages of 45.1 yards (gross), 36.5 (net) and 4.35 seconds (hang time) on eight punts. Ryan Longwell hit from 40 but his kickoffs were short.

Special Teams (2½)

Despite 4.5 hang time by Barker, Dexter Wynn returned a punt 40 yards when the coverage was late arriving and then several players, including LS Rob Davis, missed the tackle. Davenport caught two kickoffs almost over his head and then had no forward momentum to start his runback. The return game was OK.

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