

Rating The Packers vs. Browns

Packers look lost in defeat

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Green Bay - At this point, the Green Bay Packers have to be about as desperate as a National Football League team can be.

They looked bad losing on opening day to the Detroit Lions, the NFL's losingest team from 2001-'04, and then might have performed even worse Sunday in falling to the Cleveland Browns, who owned the poorest record from 1999-2004.

They're short on personnel, execution, emotion, confidence and coaching. Even some of their more loyal fans have begun to turn on them.

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

Receivers (1½)

Donald Driver proved too fast and tough for LC Daylon McCutcheon and nickel back Ray Mickens. Driver caught six of eight thrown to him for 105 yards, and also was open on two others. Mickens and SS Chris Crocker had the angle on Driver coming across the field but Driver outran them for a 42-yard TD. He also made two courageous grabs with linebackers ready to ear-hole him. Starting for injured Javon Walker, Robert Ferguson failed to distinguish himself. He appeared to go less than top speed on some routes after the ball wasn't coming his way early. It was one reason why Brett Favre spent so much time checking down. Antonio Chatman burned rookie dime back Brodney Pool three times for 55 yards and also showed guts on a reverse. Terrence Murphy seemed off kilter in his debut. Bubba Franks was responsible for two of the team's four "bad" runs when he couldn't handle DE Orpheus Roye and SLB Kenard Lang at the point. Electing to gamble and use new TE Donald Lee, the Packers had to waste a timeout when he didn't get lined up right.

Offensive Line (2½)

The Browns have the slowest rush in the NFL. Coordinator Todd Grantham rushed five on 8.5% of Favre's 47 drop-backs and never sent six or more. In fact, he rushed just three a total of 19 times, six more than any defense has against the Packers in the previous seven seasons. Thus, the degree of difficulty in protection was minimal. Still, after being overrun by the Lions, this unit could feel a measure of satisfaction for allowing one sack, two knockdowns and no hurries. The bull-rush sack came against Will Whitticker and Mike Flanagan. One of the knockdowns also was registered by Roye against Whitticker, who also had two false-start penalties. Adrian Klemm's miss on LB Ben Taylor on the opening play precipitated Ahman Green's fumble, but he settled down and was adequate. Flanagan was partially responsible for two "bad" runs by Tony Fisher in the second half but overall more than held his own against aging NT Jason Fisk. Mark Tauscher silenced Lang, the Browns' only speed-rushing threat.

Quarterbacks (1½)

Forget the 342 yards and three touchdowns. Against that defense, there was little or no reason for Favre to have had as many bad plays as he did. The pocket was so firm that coach Mike Sherman called a whopping eight seven-step drops, and the Browns just sat back in Cover 2 and zones. Favre just threw some very poor passes. On the first interception, Franks tried to turn away from LB Andra Davis but Favre threw slightly into Davis and the ball was tipped. On the second, he lost his poise and threw up a hope into the end zone. Favre fumbled an exchange, made a lousy decision on a fourth-quarter bootleg pass behind Ferguson and missed an open Driver twice for big plays. Favre showed impressive stamina marshaling a second-half comeback that numbered 49 plays. He also showed some wheels on a 20-yard scramble, his longest since Week 16 in 1999.

Running Backs (1½)

Ahman Green's playing time increased from 59.4% last week to 70.1% Sunday just as Tony Fisher's decreased from 31.9% to 13%. Green excelled as a receiver but is struggling to finish runs. He also isn't breaking tackles as in the past. Najeh Davenport (13 snaps) tried hard on his eight carries but didn't look special in any way. Fisher found a way to get under Davis and Mickens on the 4-yard swing pass for a TD, which should relieve some of the pressure he has been under.

Defensive Line (1)

The Browns kept chipping Kaber Gbaja-Biamila with backs, double-teaming him on a whopping 62.5% of passes. "KGB" made two good tackles against the run but kept getting swallowed up by LT L.J. Shelton and didn't fight back as hard as usual. The other end, Aaron Kampman, played all but two of the 59 snaps but got nowhere against Shelton or RT Ryan Tucker. Grady Jackson hasn't been a factor. Besides being asked to stack blockers this season instead of penetrating, Jackson played merely 25 snaps. The only knockdown or hurry by a lineman in a non-bootleg situation went to dime DT Kenny Peterson on a stunt. The pass rush was just awful but the run defense was stout against tough guy Reuben Droughns.

Linebackers (½)

Nick Barnett was penalized three times for coverage miscues in the first half as the Browns exploited him with their pedestrian tight ends. He was beaten so badly by journeyman Billy Miller in the end zone that there wasn't even time to turn back for the ball. Paris Lenon wasn't anywhere near his man, TE Steve Heiden, on a 22-yard bootleg pass. Also, Lenon didn't react to the verbal check issued by safeties Mark Roman and Nick Collins on the 62-yard TD pass to Heiden that decided the game. The check required Lenon to walk out against Heiden after the tight end moved to the slot. If Lenon had been across from Heiden before the snap, maybe Dilfer wouldn't have been so quick to throw it to him right away. Either way, Lenon still would have been blitzing. Robert Thomas dropped coverage on the 1-yard TD pass to Heiden but filled hard against several runs. The only missed tackle was by Barnett.

Secondary (1/2)

Regardless of what Lenon didn't do, there is no excuse for Roman not to tackle Heiden even if he does weigh 267 pounds. Roman was too deep to begin with. Not only didn't Roman's feeble dive at Heiden's ankles knock him down, it didn't even slow him down. Thus, the Packers suffered the utter embarrassment of watching a tight end lumber all that way. Roman did force a fumble but the officials made a bad call saying Droughns was down. Joey Thomas didn't look good at all in his first start. In fact, Thomas against Braylon Edwards in the slot was a mismatch. The 80-yard TD pass to Edwards would have been about 12 if Collins had reacted properly to multiple motion and not been out of position. At least we know Collins is a lot faster than Thomas. During their futile 65-yard chase, Collins beat Thomas by 6 yards. A well-deserved hand-to-the-face penalty on Al Harris negated his terrific interception.

Kickers (4 1/2)

B.J. Sander took feared returner Dennis Northcutt out of the game with three-punt hang times of 4.31, 4.76 and 5.03 seconds. The first two were fair catches at the 16. Ryan Longwell made a field goal from 34, had two kickoffs with poor hang times and two with exceptional hang times.

Special Teams (3 1/2)

Jenkins broke through the middle and blocked an extra point. Chatman saw another sizable punt return ruined by penalty, this time against Mike Montgomery. Ahmad Carroll and Mike Hawkins hustled as punt-team fliers.

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