

# 2006 Green Bay Packers: Player grades

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## Defense

### DEFENSIVE LINE (10)

**Kenderick Allen:** This four-year veteran turned heads in the off-season but disappeared after the pads went on. Played 47 snaps (no tackles) in the first three games before suffering a season-ending Lisfranc foot sprain. Looks good getting off the bus but it might end there. Will be an unrestricted free agent. **Grade: D-**

**Colin Cole:** Ranked sixth on the unit in playing time at 38.5%. Tied for second on the team in tackles for loss (3 ½ ) and was second in tackles per play (one every 7.6 snaps). Those numbers reflect his ability to make one or two impressive stops each week but don't account for his inconsistencies at the point of attack. Wasn't as stout this year last year. Strictly a power pass rusher. **Grade: C-**

**Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila:** Lost his starting job early in Week 13 to Cullen Jenkins. Played 77.6% of the downs in the first 12 games, 48.8% after that. Ranked fourth on D-line in "pressures" per play (one every 20.8 snaps) and sixth in tackles per play (one every 11.9 snaps). Double-teamed on 30.7% of passes, most since '02. Plays with decent leverage and often claws his way into ball carrier's legs, but at 250 pounds will get driven far off the ball, too. With his days as a full-time player perhaps over in Green Bay, he'll probably have to take a reduction from his \$5 million base salary for '07 or be waived. **Grade: C+**

**Jason Hunter:** Played in 14 games as a backup end (34 snaps) and on special teams. Rookie free agent from Appalachian State has the speed to rush the passer. At this point, he doesn't know how to use his speed and plays too out of control. **Grade: D**

**Cullen Jenkins:** Started to come of age down the stretch after a chronic ankle injury sidelined him for 2 ½ games and limited him in several others. Was a revelation in the final month at right end. On one of the premier pass-rushing teams in the NFL, he had the most "pressures" per play (one every 15.5 snaps) and was third in tackles per snap (one every 8.4 plays). Minimum-wage earner who plays hungry, with a wife and two young children to feed. Will be a restricted free agent in March. The Packers had better place at least the middle tender on him or he'll be gone in a heartbeat. **Grade: B**

**Johnny Jolly:** Sixth-round draft choice from Texas A&M. Rookie nose tackle with an attitude, in a good sort of way. Even in limited exposure (75 snaps, six games), Jolly let people know he isn't somebody to mess with. **Grade: D**

**Aaron Kampman:** Described by one scout late in the season as "kind of a modern Michael Strahan." Kampman dropped about 20 pounds in two years, similar to what Strahan did during his magnificent career, and blossomed into a marvelous pass rusher. Still plays with amazing leverage against the run. One of the rare players that is better in the NFL than he was in college. Played 93.2% of the snaps, including 97.6% in the last eight games when the coaches determined they absolutely couldn't do without him. His 55 "pressures" were 12 ½ more than "KGB" ever registered and put to shame Kampman's best of 31 ½ in '05, when he had a very good year. Broke Ezra Johnson's club record for most tackles by a D-lineman (since 1975) with 113. Could write a how-to instructional book on how to be a pro and play strong-side defensive end. **Grade: A**

**Mike Montgomery:** Ended on a lackluster note, playing a horrible game against the run in Seattle and then suffering season-ending knee ligament damage (no surgery) the following week. A high-motor player with long arms and legs but only average strength. Played 207 snaps, 50 more than as a rookie. Ranked third on D-line in "pressures" per play (one every 19.7 snaps) and fifth in tackles per play (one every 9.9 snaps). **Grade: D+**

**Ryan Pickett:** Found a home in Green Bay after five underappreciated seasons in St. Louis. A worthy successor to Grady Jackson. Played 645 snaps in 16 games compared to Jackson's 557 in 16 games last year. Had five batted passes, three more than anyone on the club, led the D-line in tackles per play (one every 7.0) and tied for second in tackles for loss (3 ½ ). Dominated most single blocks, had a knack for stacking and then shedding double-team blocks, and really hustled in pursuit for a 335-pounder. **Grade: B**

**Corey Williams:** Rated as the No. 4 tackle for the first three weeks but improved so much that he started 11 of the last 13 games. A power pass rusher whose three-sack explosion in 18 snaps Nov. 5 at Buffalo changed the course of his season. He played 62.9% of the snaps in Weeks 9-16 after playing 46.6% in Weeks 1-8. Ranked fifth in "pressures" per play (one every 28.5 snaps) but knows how to finish, ranking second in sacks with seven. He still gets lazy at times and is shoved down a gap or two, but generally seems more professional in his work habits. **Grade: C+**

## **LINEBACKERS (7)**

**Nick Barnett:** Led the team in tackles for loss (5 ½ ) and might have led the team in tackles for the fourth straight season if he hadn't missed the Seattle game with a broken hand. Cut his missed tackles from 20 to 13, chased sideline to sideline and played almost every snap over 15 games. Guilty of too many coverage mistakes. Tied for team lead in plays of 20 yards or more allowed with eight, most by a LB in Green Bay since the statistic first was kept in '94. He had 6 ½ in the second half, including 4 ½ while playing with a cast on his hand. Also yielded 4 ½ TD passes, most by a Green Bay LB in a decade. **Grade: B-**

**Kurt Campbell:** Suffered shoulder injury in third exhibition game, underwent reconstructive surgery in mid-September and probably won't return. **Grade: Incomplete**

**A.J. Hawk:** Finished third in voting for AP Defensive Rookie of the Year behind DeMeco Ryans and Mark Anderson. Started on weak side from first day of minicamp. All football all the time. Gained more and more respect from teammates as season went on. Led team in tackles (155) and tied for second both in turnover plays (5) and tackles for loss (3 ½ ). Not a particularly punishing tackler but very accurate with only seven misses despite playing about 95% of the snaps. Had major deficiencies in coverage, allowing 7 ½ plays of 20 yards or more. If not for Barnett, his total would have been the highest by a LB since '94. However, he allowed only one-half TD pass. **Grade: B-**

**Abdul Hodge:** Made a string of concussive hits in camp but wasn't shifted from the middle and almost never played behind Barnett. He got his chance in Seattle and the results were disappointing. Missed four tackles, was exposed twice in end-zone coverage by TE Jerramy Stevens and was slow both shedding blocks and getting to the perimeter. Probably isn't speedy enough to play anywhere except the middle and has a logjam in front of him. **Grade: D-**

**Brady Poppinga:** Season-long starter made spirited recovery from reconstructive knee surgery Dec. 26, 2005. Should be moving appreciably better eight months from now. Poppinga, a collegiate DE, was exposed in coverage early but worked hard to improve and did down the stretch. Smart, rangy, tough, athletic and fundamentally sound. Tied for third in missed tackles (nine) and allowed five plays of 20 yards or more but no TDs. Will be 28 in September. Looks like the long-term answer. **Grade: C**

**Ben Taylor:** Lost job in mid-August when Poppinga was declared ready go and then almost never played again. An active, committed participant on special teams. Will be an unrestricted free agent and might not be back. **Grade: D**

**Tracy White:** If the Packers value special teams, they'll re-sign White before he reaches unrestricted free agency. Widely regarded as Green Bay's top core player. Broke up a lot of wedges and attracted a lot of double teams. Runs very well. Not a factor from scrimmage. **Grade: C-**

## **DEFENSIVE BACKS (11)**

**Atari Bigby:** Has the size (5-11, 211), hitting ability and sufficient speed to push for roster berth in '07. Broke his hand a week into camp and didn't come off the practice squad until Week 10. Made presence known on special teams. **Grade: D**

**Will Blackmon:** Two major injuries ruined this rookie cornerback's season. First, he suffered a broken foot in minicamp and couldn't practice until September. Then, in his fourth game playing special teams, he suffered a fractured rib and went on injured reserve. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Jarrett Bush:** Free-agent rookie. Played just a handful of snaps at cornerback. A fixture on special teams, he hit and hustled as gunner on the punt team. He's a fine athlete with good size and adequate speed. **Grade: D**

**Nick Collins:** Played his finest game in two seasons last Sunday night in Chicago. Made two exceptional interceptions, dropped what would have been a third and was seen to gallivant all over the field making tackles. He had been playing a much more hesitant game. He tied for second in turnover plays (five). In coverage, he allowed five plays of 20 yards or more and four TD passes, third most on the team. **Grade: C+**

**Tyrone Culver:** Served as the No. 3 safety all season and played sparingly from scrimmage. A resourceful rookie with average tools. **Grade: D**

**Patrick Dendy:** Assumed the job as nickel back in Week 5 after Ahmad Carroll was cut and held it for the rest of the season. Allowed five plays of 20 yards or more and 2 ½ TD passes. Also, he had three interceptions, four missed tackles and just one penalty. Modest and unassuming, Dendy basically was sound on assignments but at times came up short in terms of raw speed and athletic ability. **Grade: D+**

**Al Harris:** One of the better bump-and-run cornerbacks in the NFL but often gets exposed in off-man or zone coverage. A top-notch professional who trains and competes hard. Lacks the hands, ball skills and instincts to be a true playmaker. Intercepted three passes and dropped two others, including one at the St. Louis 5 that might have turned that game around. Allowed four plays of 20 yards or more in the first six games and then merely 1 ½ in the last 10 games for a total of 5 ½, his lowest total in Green Bay. Also gave up just 1 ½ TD passes. Missed four tackles in Week 6, then didn't miss another all season. Drew six penalties, most by any player on defense. Dissatisfied with a contract that runs through 2009 and might withhold services to extract more money. **Grade: B**

**Marquand Manuel:** Talked a better game than he played. Billed as a great communicator in Seattle, he turned off some teammates with a know-it-all attitude even though he might have meant well. Very limited athlete. Slow to react, slow to adjust and slow afoot. Only turnover play came in Detroit on interception off deflection by Carroll. Allowed five plays of 20 yards or more and 5 ½ TD passes, most by a Green Bay safety from 1994-2005. Also led the team in missed tackles with 15, the same number that Mark Roman averaged from 2004-'05. **Grade: D-**

**Charlie Peprah:** Claimed on waivers from the Giants on eve of regular season. Played sparingly on special teams and almost never from scrimmage. He was the glue of the Alabama secondary. His pedestrian speed will be tested in training camp.

**Grade: Incomplete**

**Marviel Underwood:** Has made a strong recovery from reconstructive knee surgery Aug. 31 and should be ready by June. Looked to be much improved in his second year and would have been an appealing alternative to a struggling Manuel by midseason.

**Grade: Incomplete**

**Charles Woodson:** The Raiders didn't think Woodson could cover, and during August and the first six weeks of the regular season it appeared as if they were right. For example, Detroit's Mike Furrey repeatedly burned him from the slot in Week 3. But after allowing 6 ½ plays of 20 yards or more in the first eight games, Woodson yielded only 1 ½ in the last eight. Furthermore, he made six of his NFC-leading eight interceptions in the final six games, and four of them required extraordinary instincts and athleticism. Woodson finished with 12 turnover plays, most by a Green Bay DB since LeRoy Butler also had 12 in '93. With those numbers, and the fact he played with a bum shoulder, the Packers didn't regret having paid Woodson about \$10.5 million in '06. Plus, he was a nifty, effective punt returner. **Grade: B+**

- Bob McGinn

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