

# Rating the Packers vs. Bears

Packers fumble chance to prove their worth

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**Green Bay** - At least the Green Bay Packers don't have to worry about an onslaught of national media attention any time soon.

Given a chance to prove themselves worthy of being a legitimate Super Bowl contender, the Packers fell apart down the stretch Sunday night in their first nationally televised game of the season and lost to the Chicago Bears, 27-20, at Lambeau Field.

Most certainly, it's a game the Packers should have won. The Bears came with a laundry list of injuries, a still roaring Super Bowl hangover and little or no confidence. Despite five turnovers and 12 penalties, the Packers managed to be in position to win. But a slew of wretched plays by Nick Collins, James Jones, Brett Favre, Charles Woodson and Brady Poppinga were too much to overcome.

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

## **RECEIVERS (1½)**

How bad was it for Jones to fumble twice in one game (on strips by CB Charles Tillman)? Well, Donald Driver has fumbled four times in 8½ seasons, and the Packers didn't have a single fumble by their WRs and TEs in 2005. Jones uses his great hands to pluck everything out from his body, so it's even more important for him than a body catcher like Antonio Freeman to secure the ball instantly. Jones, who also had the only drop, doesn't show much suddenness in his breaks or overall body snap. Playing on a sore hamstring, Greg Jennings blew past Danieal Manning for a 41-yard TD and made a big-league catch for 28, extending right in front of safeties Adam Archuleta and Brandon McGowan. He also caught a slant pass down near his ankles. Even with CB Nathan Vasher and FS Mike Brown out injured, coach Mike McCarthy wasn't able to put Driver in position to dominate. Week after week, Ruvell Martin does good things. Leaking Donald Lee and Bubba Franks out of protections would make more sense if either one of them had any acceleration.

## **OFFENSIVE LINE (3½)**

Losing Scott Wells (orbital fracture) for the final four series was damaging. Wells had been the fulcrum of the first-half rushing outburst with his ability to control the nose tackle or get out on linebackers. Jason Spitz did well simply not to mess up any of his 14 shotgun snaps. The other strong performance was turned in by Mark Tauscher. His opponent, slippery DE Adewale Ogunleye, is having an excellent season but settled for one pressure against Tauscher. Chad Clifton (two knockdowns, one hurry) wasn't quite as good against DE Mark Anderson. Lesser tackles, however, are getting embarrassed by the speedy Anderson. Neither Junius Coston nor Daryn Colledge was good enough. A third-and-1 run went for minus-3 when Coston blew an assignment and failed to double-team DT Tommie Harris with Wells and the play broke down. Coston was responsible for two more "bad" runs and three pressures. LB Lance Briggs had a tremendous 16-tackle performance when Colledge, who gave up the only sack, and others just couldn't cut him off.

## **QUARTERBACKS (4)**

The Packers had a 10-point lead late in the third quarter when Favre threw his heinous interception. He dashed right, saw that his two play-side targets were covered and then, with Harris bearing down on him to lower the boom, flipped it back into the middle after 5.3 seconds to where Jones was supposed to be coming across from the back side. LB Brian Urlacher outsmarted Favre, running to the receiver instead of toward Favre. Can you imagine Joe Montana ever making a mistake like that? Favre was on fire in the first half, completing 16 of his first 17. Just five of the first 27 snaps came from shotgun. When the Bears brought the safety up, Favre sometimes checked to slants and made them pay. He delivered a perfect deep strike to Jennings, and his Hail Mary to Driver on the final play of the game was beautifully thrown. When the Bears went to 100% Cover 2 zone in the second half, Favre couldn't solve it. He was too lackadaisical on the final drive.

## **RUNNING BACKS (3)**

DeShawn Wynn came out snorting fire, breaking three tackles on a 44-yard run and vaulting across for a 2-yard TD. Then he had to exit for the entire half one play into the second possession because of cramping. Despite high heat and humidity, the former Florida Gator can't be in very good shape or isn't taking care of himself. When Wynn came back to play 15 second-half snaps, he wasn't effective. He chattered his feet on a stretch play and ran into Korey Hall's back on a draw. Hall (34 snaps) pancaked Urlacher on Wynn's opening 12-yard burst and perhaps blocked better than he has thus far. When the Packers had success, it was straight at Urlacher. Vernand Morency (34) showed nifty feet on a run or two and was OK in his first extended duty. DT Corey Williams played his first snap from scrimmage as a lead blocker, neutralizing Urlacher on Wynn's TD.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (2½)**

The DTs were better against the run than the DEs. Ryan Pickett (41), Williams (41) and Johnny Jolly (27) were the big reason Cedric Benson averaged merely 2.4 yards per carry. Williams was involved in two tackles for loss and had two pressures. Rookie Justin Harrell (9) was in uniform for the first time and looked pretty good. He kept his shoulders square and did his job. Aaron Kampman (55) set up a sack for Nick Barnett and had another pressure, but aging RT Fred Miller had his first really solid game of the season at Kampman's expense. Neither Kampman nor Cullen Jenkins (56) was very good against the run. Benson got outside Kampman in the fourth quarter. Jenkins' strength is affected by a rib injury. Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila (21) had two pressures and one-half sack in 11 rushes, but as far as the Bears were concerned that constituted dodging a bullet for backup LT John St. Clair.

## **LINEBACKERS (3)**

A.J. Hawk didn't make any eye-opening plays but he was a major factor in the stout run defense. Sometimes he slipped blocks; other times, he knifed in for jarring tackles. Although Hawk was fooled badly on a reverse, he made a smart veteran play covering FB Jason McKie in the flat with 2 minutes left. Nick Barnett got to Brian Griese twice, played the screen pass well and filled gaps with gusto. He also had two penalties. Although not blocked, Poppinga guessed on Benson's 10-yard TD and took himself completely out of the play. TE Desmond Clark got away from Poppinga's man-to-man coverage on receptions of 28 and 34 yards. Teams will really look to exploit him now.

## **SECONDARY (3)**

Al Harris, Charles Woodson and Jarrett Bush were fairly dominant in coverage, limiting five WRs to four catches for 52 yards. Bush covered well but missed two more tackles. A safety can't play much worse than Collins. Even though he wasn't needed to stop the run, Collins must have short-circuited to roar up and leave the middle wide open for Clark to score the decisive TD. That was bad enough, but Collins blew another coverage to give RB Adrian Peterson a 30-yard reception and was beat deep by TE Greg Olsen for 27. Olsen was behind him on another go route but the ball was underthrown, enabling Collins to tip it to Poppinga for an interception. Atari Bigby lost a jump ball to Olsen at the pylon for a 19-yard TD and didn't react well to help Poppinga on the 28-yarder to Clark. Olsen will present matchup problems for years to come.

## **KICKERS (4)**

Mason Crosby and Jon Ryan successfully minimized Devin Hester. Crosby squibbed once and hit four pooch kickoffs that averaged 39 yards and 3.25 seconds of hang time. Ryan's five punts averaged 48 yards (gross), 40 (net) and 4.24 (hang time). Crosby hit two FGs of 37 yards.

## **SPECIAL TEAMS (2½)**

Woodson fumbled away a punt after Tracy White didn't sustain his block on LB Brendon Ayanbadejo. Aaron Rouse was penalized twice for holding on kickoff returns (one block lasted 6.1 seconds) and didn't hustle on Woodson's fumble. It wasn't Lee's fault on the delay of game penalty; Corey Williams was supposed to be on the field but was getting re-taped and the coaches belatedly waved out Lee. Tramon Williams returned a kickoff 65 yards. The Packers hotly disputed Corey Williams' penalty for lining up illegally over the long snapper.

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