

Rating the Packers vs. Redskins

Packers 5-1, despite lack of running attack

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Green Bay - The Green Bay Packers enter their bye week with a 5-1 record and, after their 17-14 victory over Washington on Sunday at Lambeau Field, many observers still are wondering exactly how they've done it.

"We're better than that team," owner Daniel Snyder told the Washington Post after the game, and maybe his Redskins are.

Certainly, they were no worse, with advantages in most statistical categories.

Both teams had eight punts, which was just the eighth time this decade that the Packers have punted eight times or more. Their last victory with eight or more punts was November 2003 at Tampa Bay, 20-13.

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

RECEIVERS (3)

There was just one gain by either team for more than 28 yards. It was the 60-yard seam pass to Donald Lee, who cleverly came off faking a run block at LB Rocky McIntosh, made the catch 13 yards downfield and then kept running for 40 more after a missed tackle from the side by CB Carlos Rogers. "That was a Mike Holmgren-West Coast play," Redskins defensive coach Gregg Williams said. "I haven't seen that one in several years." It takes Lee awhile to get started but once he does, his speed isn't bad. Donald Driver had his quietest game of the season but Williams didn't do anything special. He did drop eight into coverage and rushed with only three on 14 passes, a total exceeded by just two of Green Bay's opponents this decade (Cleveland 2005, New England 2006). Staying away from CB Shawn Springs, the Packers went after Rogers. Jennings beat him deep twice but the passes were off. Of the 11 balls thrown to Jennings, just three were caught. James Jones was shut out, didn't run precise routes and had the only drop. Bubba Franks deserved more than an incomplete pass and a sprained knee for his strong-handed catch in the corner, which easily could have been ruled a touchdown.

OFFENSIVE LINE (2½)

A week ago, Detroit's offensive line was overrun by the Redskins' four-man pressures. Although the Redskins on Sunday were without rush LB Marcus Washington (hamstring), it was impressive the way Chad Clifton held DE Andre Carter without a pressure. The other dangerous rusher, DT Cornelius Griffin, trashed Tony Moll for a first-quarter knockdown but otherwise was held in check. Moll played for Junius Coston (ankle). He was aggressive in-line but had a few problems at the linebacker level. Jason Spitz performed admirably in his first start at center for Scott Wells (eye). Spitz was beat back-door by NT Anthony Montgomery on a run for minus-2 but otherwise created some movement at the point and limited his mistakes. Daryn Colledge maybe was slightly better than in recent weeks. Sometimes he just doesn't seem strong enough to sustain run blocks. Mark Tauscher did a respectable job against DE Phillip Daniels. The Packers' final run from scrimmage went nowhere when Clifton missed Carter on a cut-off block.

QUARTERBACKS (2)

Williams didn't blitz once until the fourth quarter, and his overall blitz rate was just 7.7%. Handcuffed by a dismal run game and without threat of play-action, Mike McCarthy and Brett Favre exhibited no rhythm in their wing-and-a-prayer passing attack. Favre had receivers open deep four times and kept underthrowing. The Packers had second down and good field position on Favre's two interceptions, both of which were made by FS Sean Taylor on long balls that came up short. Taylor dropped two potential interceptions, including a sideline pass that could have been a 62-yard TD return, and misplayed another. McCarthy went shotgun for long stretches, then five-step drops in the second half. No matter what the combination, the quarterback and his coach had no answer for the deep two-safety looks.

RUNNING BACKS (2)

DeShawn Wynn (33 snaps) did some good things. He usually does. He showed subtle moves in traffic, cut back smartly on a few runs and didn't go down without a fight. He even carried twice in succession for 11 yards and a first down when the Packers were trying to kill the clock. After the second carry, however, he jogged off with a hand injury, only to return on the next series. When it's 4-minute offense time, you should have to carry off a real running back. After a three-game return from a knee injury, Vernand Morency (25) still isn't showing his quickness from last year. At this point, he's just a guy. Ryan Grant never got on the field; Brandon Jackson was inactive. Korey Hall (24), who didn't play a snap in the third quarter, came in too high on an early "bad" run and was stuffed by LB Randall Godfrey. Otherwise, he was competitive.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4½)

Aaron Kampman (67 snaps) is coming on after an ordinary first month. Matched against rookie RT Stephon Heyer after Todd Wade (groin) left in the second quarter, he beat Heyer twice for sacks with bull rushes, set up Cullen Jenkins' first sack with a bull rush against Wade, had five other pressures and nine tackles. He pinched inside against the run, reacted alertly to screens and misdirection and dominated play. LT Chris Samuels had Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila's number until the fourth quarter, when "KGB" (33) sliced through inside for a knockdown. Johnny Jolly (37) and Corey Williams (41) had big games, too. On several occasions, Jolly overpowered a fine veteran guard, Pete Kendall. On one 8-yard run, Jolly stood up and Kendall blew him out. Jolly's level of energy is infectious; his next step is to become more consistent. Williams got knocked out of his lane on Jason Campbell's 6-yard TD run but came back to make an incredible play on the reverse to win the game. In a seven-man rotation, unsuspecting Justin Harrell (6) learned a lesson the hard way on a crushing trap block by RG Jason Fabini.

LINEBACKERS (3½)

Nick Barnett played one of the best games of his career. Barnett always had good speed, but he's in total sync now with the scheme and is playing even faster. The Redskins kept trying to run wide but Barnett was gone in a flash and almost couldn't be blocked. Physical and nasty, he exudes confidence. Given the jump, he'll run right through a guard. He did that to beastly blocking FB Ron Sellers more than once. A.J. Hawk is playing OK but there's just no comparison between the two at this point. Brady Poppinga really brings it on interior blitzes with Barnett but was exposed in man-to-man coverage three times for 53 yards by TE Chris Cooley and dropped an interception.

SECONDARY (3½)

Charles Woodson wrestled an interception away from Antwaan Randle El with his powerful hands, demonstrated his play-making knack on the winning TD return and was extremely physical. He took on the pulling Samuels and guards a few times, mashing the interference. The 14-yard TD pass to Cooley was Woodson's responsibility. Al Harris didn't get hurt in coverage but he kept playing on the periphery. Granted, Harris' cap salary is \$5.2 million because he can cover, and maybe he was trying to reach the bye without damaging his back further. Still, he's got to show a lot more interest in tackling, especially the next time a QB dives into the end zone. Harris, Bush and Atari Bigby all escaped unscathed when open receivers behind them deep failed to make catches. Some plays that were big gains with Mark Roman and Marquand Manuel at SS now are moderate gains thanks to Bigby's secure tackling.

KICKERS (1½)

Mason Crosby's first exposure to a wet Lambeau Field didn't go well. He missed two of three field goals and slipped on a kickoff. His four kickoffs averaged 63.8 yards and 3.96 seconds of hang time. Jon Ryan had a tremendous day, posting averages of 42.1 (gross), 39.1 (net) and 4.42 (hang time). Four of his eight punts resulted in fair catches.

SPECIAL TEAMS (2)

Either Jarrett Bush wasn't alerted by the universal "Peter!" call or paid no heed on the bouncing punt that hit him before being alertly recovered by Woodson. Shaun Bodiford took down three wedge blockers on the second-half kickoff in an extraordinary display of recklessness and courage. The timing between Tramon Williams and the kickoff return wedge was awful. It was bad that Hall got beat in punt protection but it was good that he took a holding penalty or else Ryan's fourth punt would have been blocked.

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