

Rating the Packers vs. Chiefs

McCarthy, team put together solid effort in Kansas City

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Green Bay - By winning again Sunday, this time in Kansas City, the Green Bay Packers under coach Mike McCarthy have won nine road games in a season and a half.

McCarthy owns a 9-3 record on the road, including six victories in a row. The only time his team has been favored as a visitor was at Minnesota on Sept. 30, when it won as a 1-point favorite.

To put McCarthy's accomplishments into perspective, Bart Starr won nine road games in his first six seasons. Forrest Gregg won 12 road games and Lindy Infante won 11, each in four seasons. And in their first three seasons, Mike Holmgren won eight road games and Mike Sherman won 12.

On Monday, one day after the Packers defeated the Chiefs, 33-22, Las Vegas Sports Consultants reduced the Packers' odds on winning the NFC to 2-1 (they opened at 25-1 in February) and on winning the Super Bowl to 13-2 (they opened at 75-1 in February).

Some sports books in Nevada already are dealing a line on the Super Bowl with the AFC team being favored by 14 to 15 points. In recent seasons, the AFC has been favored by 6 to 7 points. A spokesman for Las Vegas Sports Consultants said that, at this point, they would make the Cowboys a 6 1/2- to 7-point favorite over the Packers for their meeting Nov. 29 in Dallas.

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

RECEIVERS (4 1/2)

McCarthy can draw plays on napkins for the next 20 years and never get a matchup more made in heaven than Greg Jennings on LB Donnie Edwards. When Edwards didn't call time out, line up further off the line or take an interference penalty, Jennings burned him with his deceptive speed for a 60-yard TD. His 13-yard TD required even more talent. Jennings looked so natural on the play, juking defenders until the perfect moment to head for home. On the down side, Jennings had a bad drop in the red zone. Not to be outdone, Donald Driver beat double coverage with a one-handed grab for 44 yards and caught all five of the balls thrown to him for 99. However, Driver needs to do a much better job as a run blocker, as does Jennings. Also dropping passes were James Jones and Koren Robinson; for Robinson, it was a very ordinary debut. Donald Lee stretched out for one great catch, ran another nice route in the corner for what was almost a TD and turned a 12-yard pass into 48 when the Chiefs blew the coverage. Although representing a major upgrade from Bubba Franks, Lee doesn't play fast with the ball in his hands.

OFFENSIVE LINE (1 ½)

In order to function, the offense needed Chad Clifton to handle Jared Allen, a superb, relentless DE. Other than three or four turns inside, Allen spent the entire game over Clifton and had to settle for one pressure. Clifton, who had help in the form of RB chips on only a few third downs, didn't have any bad misses in the run game, either. Mark Tauscher wasn't as good against DE Tamba Hali (two pressures) or overall (four pressures), but the Packers could live with his steady performance. What they cannot live with is guard play as provided by Daryn Colledge and Tony Moll. Colledge looked overmatched against DT Alfonso Boone, both in terms of strength and athletic ability. He kept bending at the waist, did more leaning than punching and could lose his job if this continues. Colledge gave up two knockdowns and four other pressures to Boone, drew two penalties and had 1 ½ "bad" runs. Moll started at RG but was so poor in the second quarter that he was pulled, with Scott Wells returning at C and Jason Spitz moving back to guard. Allen's sack came on a looping stunt when Moll blew the pickup. Despite substantial weight loss due to a bout with pneumonia, Wells didn't embarrass himself.

QUARTERBACKS (4 ½)

Kansas city defensive coordinator Gunther Cunningham clung to his Cover-2 scheme and blitzed on just 24% of passes, hoping Brett Favre would lose patience. Favre did have two interceptions, but a miscommunication with Jennings caused one and errors by Colledge (pressure to Boone) and Robinson (shaky route) contributed to the other. Favre did take a few other chances, but nothing out of the ordinary. The two long passes that proved decisive were beautifully thrown. Without much help from his line, Favre waited until the moment was right to exploit a slow secondary.

RUNNING BACKS (1 ½)

Ryan Grant's first game as the featured back was spotty, to say the least. At times, he almost functioned as his own blocker and powered for 55 yards. But he also fumbled a handoff from Favre, stumbled without even being touched for minus-3 and made questionable reads on two zone plays off the left side. When Grant (38 snaps) left late with a concussion, it marked another game in which the starter failed to finish. Brandon Jackson (9) showed better than Vernand Morency (15). Jackson has more power than Morency and probably is as elusive. FBs Korey Hall (28) and John Kuhn (6) combined for 2 ½ "bad" runs. Hall missed LB Derrick Johnson on two carries totaling minus-3.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4 ½)

Corey Williams was playing his best game of the season before leaving after 25 snaps with a knee injury. He beat Pro Bowl G Brian Waters for one sack, worked inside off a stunt for another, made some athletic plays against the run and applied constant pressure. Wide-body Ryan Pickett played 27 of his 40 snaps in the second half and helped the group stuff Larry Johnson's inside runs (53 yards, 2.8 average). Johnny Jolly (39) was physical, as usual, and once body-slammed the 320-pound Waters. But Jolly needs to pay more attention to detail. Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila (34) took advantage of just 21% double-teaming for two sacks and two pressures against LT Damion McIntosh. Operating against a subpar RT in Chris Terry, Aaron Kampman (59) had just one sack and one pressure and got washed inside on some runs. Cullen Jenkins (57) had three pressures.

LINEBACKERS (4)

A.J. Hawk played his best game of the season, at least against the pass. He demonstrated textbook coverage running the seam with Tony Gonzalez and looking back for the ball on one breakup. Hawk also showed fine hands and big-play ability, making a tough interception in tight quarters against RB Priest Holmes. And he buried Damon Huard on a delayed blitz. Gonzalez had just one reception for 5 yards against Hawk. Ever-attacking Nick Barnett was up and down. He had a pressure and was his usual gritty self, but just as he gave up a TD pass on a screen pass against San Diego, he gave up another to Larry Johnson with a late read, compounded by a bad angle. Brady Poppinga was OK in some bracket assignments on Gonzalez.

SECONDARY (3)

Charles Woodson and Al Harris took a suspect corps of WRs out of the game with their press coverage. Even with that, the Packers still couldn't prevent Gonzalez from catching 10 for 109. Four of the catches (for 60 yards) came against Atari Bigby, including a 25-yard over route in which Gonzalez outran him and a 17-yard TD pass in which he hesitated reacting to a pick on an out-and-up route. Also, Bigby made the inexcusable mistake of biting on play-action with 25 seconds left in the first half and ending up being penalized 29 yards for interference. Before leaving with a knee injury, Nick Collins broke swiftly on two passes but failed to intercept either one. Three of Woodson's four penalties appeared warranted. But he also didn't give up much of anything and filled from the slot against the run like a strong safety.

KICKERS (4)

Mason Crosby was 4 of 5 on field goals and averaged 67.4 yards and 4.07 seconds (hang time) on seven kickoffs. After hitting from 60 in warm-ups, he swung too hard and missed from 52. Jon Ryan keeps hitting the ball well, averaging 57.5 (gross), 50.5 (net) and 4.53 (hang time) on two punts.

SPECIAL TEAMS (3 ½)

Woodson broke three or four tackles on a 27-yard punt return, his longest since Week 13 of '06. Robinson looked like the answer on one kickoff return and then ran backwards on the next. Mike Montgomery almost blocked two punts. Ryan did well to handle two low snaps from Rob Davis.

OVERALL (4)

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