

Rating the Packers vs. Lions

Lions handily collared

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Green Bay - Having thousands of fans at Ford Field leave early in a close, crucial rivalry game was one bad sign. Another was the cancerous body language of wide receiver Roy Williams, the selfish wide receiver.

But the clincher about the current state of the Detroit Lions came Friday when Rob Parker, a columnist for the Detroit News, cited a source for why a whopping 15 passes were thrown in Calvin Johnson's direction during the 37-26 loss to the Green Bay Packers on Thanksgiving Day.

According to Parker's source, owner William Clay Ford told the coaching staff earlier in the week to start getting the rookie wide receiver more heavily involved.

Is it any wonder that the Lions have won merely one playoff game since Ford purchased the club in 1964?

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

RECEIVERS (4½)

Donald Driver, somewhat forgotten with a high of seven targeted passes in the last six games, saw 12 Thursday and caught 10 for 147 yards (74 after the catch). He broke nine tackles, including three by Ernie Sims. Many wideouts wouldn't even get near the ferocious linebacker, let alone take him on. Driver made an amazing grab of a red-zone floater for 19, broke off a go route when Brett Favre started to scramble and flattened across the field for 38 and caught a handful of "lookies" when the defense wasn't paying much attention, but Favre and Driver were. His only minus was failing to break off a route against a blitz, enabling Sims to crush Favre from behind. This five-man corps is becoming the talk of the team. Greg Jennings is a very shrewd, strong-for-his-size second-year man. Maturing with each passing week, James Jones ran a 20-yard curl route at perfect depth and came back to deny CB Fernando Bryant an interception on an overthrow. Koren Robinson embarrassed CB Stanley Wilson for 43 on a go route but did drop another slant. And Ruvell Martin made the play on an end-zone fade when Favre just threw it up to him.

OFFENSIVE LINE (4)

The prized DT duo of Shaun Rogers and Cory Redding were limited to one knockdown and one hurry. Daryn Colledge had Rogers on 28 of the big man's 43 snaps and never once got destroyed. Scott Wells applied firm double-team help on almost every pass. Favre fumbled pulling out on the first play when Colledge lined up inches too deep and tripped him. Coordinator Joe Barry blitzed five or more on 45.2% of passes, a season high against Green Bay, and zone-blitzed 10 times (the Packers had seen just 15 all season). The unit had more problems with line stunts than with the blitzing. Machine-like Chad Clifton had another no-sack, no-pressure performance. In the run game, his mental miscue led to a carry for no gain. Later, if Clifton had just shown more effort on the back side, DE Dewayne White wouldn't have been able to slam down a possible 8-yard run by Ryan Grant for just 2. Mark Tauscher gutted it out for three quarters on a bad ankle, gave up four pressures and turned it over to Tony Moll. In a forgettable final series, Moll got beaten inside by DE Jared DeVries for a holding penalty and then missed Redding on two successive runs, killing the drive.

QUARTERBACKS (5)

With few exceptions, Favre executed the plays as called by Mike McCarthy and did a masterful job. Barry blitzed and bluffed, stunted and moved. He played more Cover-2 than man-to-man, but tried a good share of that, too. No matter what the 37-year-old Barry tried, he was no match for the 38-year-old Favre. His weak secondary wasn't, either. Favre moved effectively in the pocket. He threw some gorgeous touch passes in the perfect location against Cover-2, balls that if they had come up short would have been easy interceptions. His management of the game and play clock were razor-sharp. Twice after long gainers in the third quarter, Favre had the presence of mind to hustle the offense to the line, each time inducing a timeout from the discombobulated Lions. He had one bad pass out of 41 and hit a record 20 in a row.

RUNNING BACKS (4½)

After messing around with Brandon Jackson and Vernand Morency as third-down backs for four weeks, the Packers kept Grant on the field regardless of the situation. He played a season-high 45 snaps compared with two each for his pedestrian backups. Apparently, the coaches now are convinced Grant can pick up the blitz. Grant did have his first drop of the season and didn't look real adept in the screen game. However, Grant ripped off runs of 31 and 27 yards, surging through the line and making instinctive cuts without having to slow down. He's a hard knockdown. Korey Hall was an effective lead blocker.

DEFENSIVE LINE (3½)

Lions offensive coordinator Mike Martz spent most of the first three quarters trying to single-block Aaron Kampman with backup RTs Jonathan Scott and Blaine Saipaia four days after unsuccessfully doing the same with George Foster and Saipaia against the Giants' Michael Strahan. Kampman ate Martz's lunch. The toll was two sacks, two hurries and three knockdowns, and five came against the luckless Saipaia. LT Jeff Backus played well one-on-one against Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila before being beaten for a sack in 2.7 seconds on a rip move by his longtime adversary. When "KGB" exited after 17 snaps (ankle), active and angular Michael Montgomery showed well in 34 snaps and Jason Hunter had one knockdown in 23. Cullen Jenkins (54) was up and down against the run early but had four pressures. Corey Williams (51) wasn't consistent in his gap control but trashed LG Edwin Mulitalo for a late sack. When Ryan Pickett had to sit out five first-quarter snaps with an ankle injury, Lions pile-driver T.J. Duckett showed just how valuable Pickett is. Colin Cole (36) fractured his left arm when it was caught under him on Kevin Jones' 1-yard TD run.

LINEBACKERS (3½)

Nick Barnett brings a physical presence each week. He's hard-nosed, more than a little nasty and 100% business. He doesn't waste time with celebrating or showboating anymore. He huddles them up, then goes hunting for more. Barnett made a costly mistake, assuming Aveion Cason was running a screen and then watching him blow by inside for a 20-yard reception. A.J. Hawk played too high several times and kept getting the worst of it against the Lions' power plays and counters. On a screen pass, he hesitated to attack Jones, got tied up inside and the gain was 13.

SECONDARY (4½)

Aaron Rouse made his second superlative interception in two weeks. He appears to have more nerve and instincts than Nick Collins, and his hands look better, too. Johnson's route wasn't flat enough but he would have gotten away with it against a lesser safety. Earlier, Rouse lost outside leverage and then was no match in speed for Jones on a 23-yard run. Rouse was more physical this week, as was Al Harris. He shadowed Roy Williams most of the game, got inside his head once again and gave up just one completion of consequence (a 19-yard pivot route). Harris' dead sprint off the field after the final defensive snap was bizarre, to say the least. Using the dime defense for 36 snaps, the Packers might have found qualified spares in Tramon Williams and Frank Walker. Williams wouldn't back down against Johnson and made plays. Jon Kitna picked on Jarrett Bush, especially after Charles Woodson (toe) exited after one quarter, but Bush gave as good as he got.

KICKERS (4)

Mason Crosby's seven kickoffs had averages of 68.3 (yards) and 3.90 (seconds of hang time), and he made three short FGs. Jon Ryan punted four times, averaging 43.5 (gross), 38.5 (net) and 4.15 (hang time).

SPECIAL TEAMS (3)

Tramon Williams took a starring turn for the second time in five days, running down Cason from 5 yards behind to prevent a 74-yard KO return from being a 98-yard TD. Williams and Woodson made the team's only good plays in the first quarter, Williams breaking three tackles on a 33-yard KO return and Woodson making three tackles miss on a 34-yard punt return. If Bush had blocked LB Alex Lewis, Woodson would have had his first return TD in the NFL. Woodson was hurt on Lewis' tackle, but coach Mike McCarthy insisted exposing him on returns was well worth the risk.

OVERALL (4 ½)

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