

# **Rating the Packers: Week 12 vs. Panthers**

## **Mistakes make difference**

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**Green Bay** - For 58 minutes Sunday, Daryn Colledge was the Green Bay Packers' best offensive lineman, Charles Woodson was their best defensive back and Aaron Rodgers played one of his better games.

Then Colledge got buckled in his tracks, leaving John Kuhn no chance on a third-and-goal dive play. Woodson, of all people, got embarrassed deep by Steve Smith. And Rodgers compounded a questionable decision with a poor throw, enabling the Carolina Panthers to bus out of Lambeau Field with a 35-31 victory.

Three plays in a 150-play game. Three abject failures. Recipe for defeat.

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

### **RECEIVERS (4)**

Carolina's top-notch cornerbacks - Chris Gamble, Ken Lucas and Richard Marshall - seemed almost intimidated by the opposition. Known at times for being aggressive at the line, the Panthers played off Greg Jennings and Donald Driver in soft zones. Jennings gets open because he almost never rounds routes off, accelerates out of his breaks and isn't afraid to work inside. He is so fluid. Driver hadn't caught a long go route since Week 5 until he ran past Gamble and stretched out to make a diving, finger-tip reception for 46 yards. For the third time in four weeks, Driver drew a holding penalty. It was obvious, too, when he grabbed SS Chris Harris after getting beat inside. It's better to just let him go make the tackle for no gain than take what's almost an automatic 10-yard penalty. Jordy Nelson and James Jones, who split snaps as the No. 3 WR, ran some precise routes. Tory Humphrey's missed block against DE Tyler Brayton on second and goal was as egregious as Colledge's a down later. Donald Lee played very well. Jennings, Driver and Lee all had drops.

### **OFFENSIVE LINE (3)**

Colledge didn't have a miscue in protection all day. Several times, he came off the Panthers' pedestrian DTs to provide double-team support for Chad Clifton against Julius Peppers. He makes few mistakes and is playing with good awareness. Then, with Kuhn needing 1 yard for a touchdown, Colledge was stuffed by over-the-hill DT Darwin Walker in his moment of truth. Clifton actually run-blocked considerably better than he pass-blocked. Peppers took Clifton up the field, then beat him back inside for two hurries and a sack. Clifton gave up another hurry on a bull rush. Mark Tauscher was late on two LB blitzes and gave up two hurries to DE Charles Johnson, but that almost was to be expected given his bad hamstring. Lacking strength and balance, Tauscher played on guile and guts and somehow made it through. When Scott Wells exited with a concussion late in the first half, Jason Spitz made the seamless switch to center and didn't have an obvious bad play.

## **QUARTERBACKS (4)**

Playing on a raw, windy day, Rodgers controlled the flow of the second half with his arm strength. He threw a great deep ball to Driver, he threw some pinpoint touch passes and he drove the ball to the sidelines. Mike McCarthy called more deep-drop passes off play-action than he has in a month and Rodgers faked nicely and aired out his arm. He started slowly against basic rushes, then got into high gear when defensive coordinator Mike Trgovac started running traditional five-man zone blitzes. For the most part, Rodgers read them well and got the ball out to the open man. Two more delay penalties gives him four in the last four games. At the goal line, McCarthy didn't entrust Rodgers with the ball, opting to run up the gut. Then, on his fateful interception, Rodgers didn't seem to recognize immediately that it was "Tampa-2" coverage, bought time to his right, didn't take the check-down even though it was second and 10 and he had two timeouts left, and then tried a long throw that he really didn't need to make. The ball was underthrown and picked by MLB Jon Beason. Ball game.

## **RUNNING BACKS (3½)**

Ryan Grant was OK in 21 snaps before a sprained thumb somewhat surprisingly knocked him out of the rest of the game. He bobbled a pitchout that was slightly behind him. He also made two cuts too many on a second-quarter run. His replacement, Brandon Jackson, played a career-high 47 snaps and was impressive. He demonstrated quick-cutting ability, burst, weave and a straight-arm on a 24-yard run, then made a decisive cut when Peppers was too far inside for 32 behind Korey Hall's good blocking adjustment. Grant has more power but Jackson has more stop-and-start elusiveness and is the better receiver.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (2)**

In the last four games, Aaron Kampman has been double-teamed on passes 17%, 21%, 14% and 25%. Carolina coordinator Jeff Davidson increased that to 44%, in effect asking LG Travelle Wharton and C Ryan Kalil to handle the DTs one-on-one so RG Keydrick Vincent could concentrate on helping rookie RT Jeff Otah on Kampman. It worked, too. On a straight rush, no defensive lineman other than Kampman registered a single pressure. Kampman had just two pressures but for a change both were sacks in rare one-on-one situations against Otah. Kampman, who played every snap (48), said Jordan Gross was the best RT that he faced in 2007. Now a LT, Gross owned Mike Montgomery (38) in pass. Rookie Jeremy Thompson didn't last long, exiting after three snaps with another injury. Ryan Pickett (35) was stout at the point. Justin Harrell got nicked early and was limited to 11 snaps.

## **LINEBACKERS (1)**

A.J. Hawk probably was less effective against the run than in his previous two starts in the middle. He's playing high and getting stuck on blocks. Hawk can be physical but at this point isn't using his hands to disengage so he ends up catching blocks. He ended up on the ground on the Panthers' two break-out runs, once under the weight of FB Brad Hoover. DeAngelo Williams scored on four 1-yard runs partly because Hawk wasn't guarding his turf. Brady Poppinga batted .500 on a couple of run-throughs; that isn't good enough. He did physically whip Hoover a time or two. He showed enough in four rushes from RE to warrant another look. Coordinator Bob Sanders blitzed on just one of 20 dropbacks. The blitz worked, too, when Brandon Chillar and Hawk crossed inside and Chillar powered past Stewart for a hurry. In coverage, Chillar runs well but he gets fooled a lot.

## **SECONDARY (1½)**

You've got to give Woodson credit for making the move to strong safety. You've got to marvel at a 32-year-old former Heisman Trophy winner who is that quick to support and won't shy away from any rough stuff. He recovered a fumble and forced another with his patented strip. At times, Woodson was way out of position and took bad angles. That was to be expected. What wasn't expected was the inability of Woodson to defend the decisive bomb to Smith even though he was in perfect position. Playing with an assortment of nicks, Nick Collins wasn't his physical or alert self. Tramon Williams also got it handed to him deep by Smith on another killer post route and had several other disappointing plays. It might have been his worst game of the season. Atari Bigby played just a handful of snaps before leaving with a shoulder injury.

## **KICKERS (2)**

Mason Crosby mis-hit one of seven kickoffs but still averaged 67.6 yards and 3.66 seconds of hang time. He also hit FGs from 32, 44 and 19 yards. Derrick Frost's four-punt swan song went for averages of 43.8 (gross), 32.3 (net) and 3.68 seconds (hang time).

## **SPECIAL TEAMS (½)**

The coverage by the kickoff team was about as bad as it can get. Injuries have thinned the ranks, but that's no excuse. At this point, there isn't a ringleader, a player like Tracy White had been for 2½ seasons before his release Oct. 7. His replacement on the roster, rookie LB Danny Lananah, was a healthy inactive for the third time in five weeks. Mediocre Mark Jones set up TDs with returns of 42, 51 and 45 yards. The 45-yard runback that fueled the Panthers' decisive drive would have been about 22 if Jarrett Bush hadn't whiffed on the tackle. Meanwhile, the timing between Will Blackmon and his blockers was way off for a second week.

## **OVERALL (3)**

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