

# Rating the Packers: Week 15 vs. Bears

## Getting to core of the issue

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**Green Bay** - Talent hasn't been the issue with the Green Bay Packers during their longest losing streak since 1990. It's more that this team doesn't have much heart.

Week after week, the Packers are more than just competitive with the opponent until the fourth quarter. Then they just slowly fade away.

Look at the Chicago Bears, who beat the Packers on Monday night in overtime, 20-17. They don't even have a legitimate passing attack. Yet, with the game on the line, they had the will and the guts to focus and execute. On the other hand, the Packers kind of went limp and then flew back home.

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

### **RECEIVERS (3½)**

It was somewhat surprising that Donald Driver didn't go get the long pass in the first quarter in which he was behind Charles Tillman. He did make a phenomenal effort on the 43-yard bomb behind Corey Graham but lost it hitting the semi-frozen turf. And he had a costly 15-yard drop at the Chicago 13. Driver needs to get more than 63 yards out of 13 targeted passes. Greg Jennings didn't exactly dominate these ordinary CBs, either. Now we know why the Packers drafted Jermichael Finley in the third round. He looked like the prototypical receiving TE splitting wide right and beating FS Kevin Payne deep for 35. Until James Jones toughens up, he won't be anything more than a spot player. The reason that SS Mike Brown was able to splatter Ryan Grant in the second quarter was that Jones didn't get him blocked. Jones hesitated, almost as if he was timid, and Brown went right past him. Contrast that to Ruvell Martin and even Jordy Nelson, both of whom routinely seek out people to hit. And Jones looks stronger than either one of them.

### **OFFENSIVE LINE (2½)**

Centers facing the Bears don't have it easy with LBs Brian Urlacher and Lance Briggs either blitzing or bluffing in the A gaps. Scott Wells sorted most of it out, didn't have any problems in protection and competed at a winning level. He played high at times and didn't always sustain, but Wells has a remarkable ability to combo-block on DTs and know the exact moment to depart for the second level. Other than allowing one flush to Tommie Harris, Daryn Colledge kept on improving. Chad Clifton had two bad plays early against Alex Brown but was solid thereafter. The problem was the right side. Jason Spitz and Tony Moll couldn't cope with the stunt by Harris and Adewale Ogunleye that led to minus-5 on a QB draw. Spitz had some bad misses at the LB level, got beat inside by Harris on a run for minus-6 and was responsible for two of the total of five knockdowns charged to the line. The more Moll plays, the more his stiffness and balance deficiencies surface. His footwork sometimes prevents him from executing cut-off blocks, he's on the ground too much and he was penalized three times.

## **QUARTERBACKS (4)**

Coordinator Bob Babich blitzed on 40% of passes, most against the Packers this season and well above his 12% on Nov. 16. Aaron Rodgers was far from perfect but handled it well enough so Babich backed off in the second half. This was Rodgers' first start in brutal weather and the results had to buoy the front office. Rodgers threw so many strong, accurate passes that it's easy to forget the wind chill was minus-13. Four times he checked from runs to passes, generally with productivity. He looked off the defense before dumping the 17-yard screen pass for a TD to Grant. He maintained his poise. He didn't look to blame anybody for mistakes. He kept his hands warm. He didn't fumble. Those are all extremely positive signs for a California kid playing with a ball that's hard as a rock.

## **RUNNING BACKS (3)**

In 25 rushes, Grant's long run was 12 yards, his average was 2.4 and he had six for minus yardage. The only tackle that he broke in 28 touches was by backup SS Craig Steltz on the rookie's first play from scrimmage. Grant looked great scoring on that screen pass. The blocking for him, even by the WRs, TEs and FB John Kuhn, was spotty. But by Grant's standards he had a down day moving the pile. He made three or four good cuts and one or two bad reads. He hasn't fumbled since Week 7, a considerable improvement from 2007. Limited to 10 snaps all season, DeShawn Wynn played 16 mostly on third downs for injured Brandon Jackson and was surprisingly effective. On fourth and 1, Mike McCarthy gave it to Wynn, not Grant, and he probably should have scored. Wynn is worth a long look next year.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (3½)**

You'd be hard-pressed to find a pair of DEs who play harder than Aaron Kampman (56 snaps) and Michael Montgomery (44). The coaches put Kampman at RE six times in the first half and twice he bull-rushed LT John St. Clair almost off his feet. Strangely, he didn't get a turn there in the second half. In all, Kampman had 6½ pressures; two came on plays in which he flushed Kyle Orton setting up sacks for Jason Hunter (six) and Montgomery. The only chance Orton had was getting the ball out because Kampman just kept trashing his man. He embarrassed RT John Tait. Montgomery used a hump move twice against Tait for pressures and consistently found the ball carrier. He just isn't physical enough to set the edge like Cullen Jenkins. As usual, Ryan Pickett (37) was more stout than Johnny Jolly (42) at the point but Jolly provided more chase. DT Alfred Malone (11) can run but can't get on track as a nickel rusher.

## **LINEBACKERS (2½)**

The Bears' backs were to the wall when Matt Forte began a TD drive bouncing wide left for 28 yards. Brandon Chillar did his job and took on the lead block. Then it's A.J. Hawk's job to come over the top and make the tackle. For some reason he got caught up inside and it was over. Then, in overtime, Hawk was unable to survive a poorly conceived coverage on a 14-yard flat pass to Forte on third and 9. Hawk must either go underneath or over the top of the pick. As it was, he slipped and was unable to make the gain manageable. The point is, you can't slip there and win games. Hawk was rugged against the power stuff inside, but on the perimeter his lack of low-block shield was somewhat alarming. Brandon Chillar made good use of his athleticism and change of direction in coverage.

### **SECONDARY (3)**

It's hard to say what was up with Nick Collins. A few days after being named to the Pro Bowl, it looked as if he didn't want to hit anyone. That isn't Collins. Maybe he doesn't want to get hurt now before getting a big contract offer. In coverage, Collins intercepted one, dropped another and almost had a third. He also was out of position on the 3-yard TD pass to Greg Olsen in which Tramon Williams was playing outside leverage and expecting help. Still, Williams must be tighter on Olsen. The best thing that Aaron Rouse did was sell out at full speed blocking G Roberto Garza on Charles Woodson's interception return. But it just doesn't seem as though Rouse can man cover at all. Orton challenged Al Harris only once.

### **KICKERS (1/2)**

Mason Crosby blew the decisive kick from 38 by hitting it too low. On his hooked 46-yard try, he said his plant foot slipped. He averaged 58.8 yards and 4.06 seconds of hang time on four kickoffs. His squib went out of bounds. Jeremy Kapinos' four-punt averages were 37.8 (gross), 27.8 (net) and 3.91 (hang time).

### **SPECIAL TEAMS (1)**

This group was back to being outclassed by Chicago. It's hard really to fault Jarrett Bush for the inadvertent fumble on the punt return. That occasionally happens. Will Blackmon muffed one punt and was lucky to avoid another with a poor decision. Danieal Manning gained the final 25 of his 70-yard KO return after being sideswiped by Bush. Blackmon and Nelson let a KO fall between them for a touchback. Matt Flynn executed brilliantly on a successful fake punt. Hunter missed three tackles. Devin Hester's 24-yard PR was his longest since Week 1.

### **OVERALL (2 1/2)**

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