

## 2008 player grades: Offense

*By Bob McGinn of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*  
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### WIDE RECEIVERS (6)

**Shaun Bodiford:** Suffered a lumbar disc injury during off-season, underwent surgery July 18 and never got on the practice field. Probably won't return. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Donald Driver:** Will turn 34 next month and his cap salary increases to \$6.6 million in 2009, but there's absolutely no reason to say goodbye. Posted his fewest receptions (74) and yards (1,012) since 2003 but that was more a function of Aaron Rodgers needing time to understand how effective he still is. Still has no problem doing the dirty work from the slot but also ran some excellent deep routes from outside. Came on down the stretch to finish with 13 pass gains of 20 yards or more. Dropped seven of 113 targeted passes (6.2%), his poorest drop ratio since '02. His yards after catch (YAC) average also dipped from 5.33 in 2007 to 4.34. **Grade: B+**

**Greg Jennings:** Looked like one of the NFL's premier players in the first half but faded a bit in the second half. At midseason, he had 40 catches for a 19.1 average, with 6.6 after the catch. In the second half, his 40 catches were for a 13.2 mark, with just 2.1 after the catch. Finished with YAC average of 4.34, down from 5.51 in 2006 and 6.48 in '07. Also had nine drops for a ratio of 6.52%, which was better than last year (8.08%) but still too high. To be considered great, he must play a full season at a high level. A confident, fluid athlete who makes exceptional adjustments on deep balls, is elusive after the catch and isn't afraid to work inside despite his size. **Grade: A-**

**James Jones:** Suffered a torn posterior cruciate knee ligament Aug. 22 and was never quite the same. He re-injured the knee in four different games. Played 10 games and caught 20 of 29 targeted passes, dropping too many (four) for the second year in a row. Also dropped too many in training camp. Part of the problem is he tries to catch every pass away from his body, and not even the most sure-handed receiver can do that every time. His YAC average plunged as well, from 4.64 last year to 2.90. Built like a brick outhouse but doesn't play physical enough. **Grade: D**

**Ruvell Martin:** Towering tough guy. Always flitting around piles trying to act as an enforcer, a la Rob Davis. Too small for that role but does use his 220 pounds to jack around cornerbacks. Probably the team's best blocking WR. His YAC (2.87) average also was the lowest of his career. Very team-oriented. Useful role player. **Grade: D+**

**Jordy Nelson:** The most productive rookie on roster. Big, strong possession receiver. Blocked well. Caught just about everything (one drop, 53 targeted passes). Last among the WRs in YAC average (2.58). At this point, he's not difficult to cover. Does he have the speed and explosiveness to become a threat down the field? That will have to be determined. **Grade: C-**

## **TIGHT ENDS (4)**

**Jermichael Finley:** It's up to Finley. No doubt he'll be given every possible chance to win the starting job next season. He needs to set goals, get stronger, focus on his job and elevate his work ethic so it matches his talent. Finley looked like a complete project in August, blowing one or two run blocks each exhibition game and drawing too many penalties. But, in 14 regular-season games, he had just 1½ "bad" blocks and no penalties. Won't turn 22 until March. Showed surprising grit on special teams. Green as grass but has the physical traits to be a factor downfield. **Grade: D**

**Tory Humphrey:** Registered as many 20-or-longer gains (three) as Donald Lee, didn't drop any of his 15 targeted passes and led the top eight receivers in YAC average (7.2). Has come a long way as a blocker but still has a ways to go. First time in three seasons that he stayed healthy. Solid on special teams. OK toughness. **Grade: D**

**Donald Lee:** Fell from 11th among tight ends in receptions with 48 last year to 21st this year with 39. Saw 69 passes from Brett Favre in '07, just 49 from Aaron Rodgers in '08. Dropped three (4.35%) in '07, four (8.16%) this year. More of a self-made catcher. His lack of natural hands shows on deep seam routes. Glorified wide receiver. Worked hard and bulked up to become an adequate get-in-the-way type blocker. Gym rat. Team guy. **Grade: C-**

**Evan Moore:** Suffered a knee injury Aug. 16 that didn't require surgery but ended his season. A 233-pound wide receiver at Stanford in '07 now pushing 260. Showed the speed and feel to compete as a receiver. **Grade: Incomplete**

## **OFFENSIVE LINE (10)**

**Allen Barbre:** The two-year experiment at LG didn't yield much. Maybe it's time for him to go back to LT, his position at Missouri Southern State, and let his athletic gifts work for him. The game moves faster inside than outside and Barbre has never been the sharpest of studies. Needs to play one position per season. A rough-housing run blocker. Sometimes goes overboard trying to finish and often gets mixed up in extracurricular activity. Might be too short (6 feet 4 inches) for tackle but worth a shot before the Packers decide to move on. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Chad Clifton:** He said after the final game that injuries bothered him more than ever this season. Besides chronically sore knees, he also mentioned hamstring, shoulder and hand injuries. Gave up career-high totals in sacks (6½) and pressures (25). The rare athleticism that enabled him to mirror and control even the most gifted pass rushers has ebbed after nine seasons. Has a year left on his contract for a cap salary of \$8 million, and that might be about it. Prodded by Mike McCarthy to practice more, which he did from November on. Also prodded by position coach James Campen to become more of a finisher, which he generally did. Allowed just 8½ "bad" runs, his lowest total since 2004. **Grade: C+**

**Daryn Colledge:** Developed into a solid starter in his third season. Became thicker through the neck, chest and thighs. Still needs to get stronger in the upper body but don't bet against him. Started 14 times at LG, once at LT and once at RT, but also had to practice weeks at a time at LT for the unavailable Clifton. Ranked third in "bad" runs allowed (14½, up from 17 in '07) and in pressures (19, down from 17½ in '07). Didn't play physically early in the season but impressed scouts by showing more toughness down the stretch: **Grade: C+**

**Breno Giacomini:** Played one snap (a kneel-down) in the one game that he played. Looks the part at a shade over 6-7, about 305 pounds and with enough athletic ability to have played TE at Louisville until 2007. He's smart, having scored 24 on the Wonderlic intelligence test. The coaches say he will contend at RT in '09. He certainly wasn't ready to play based on his pass blocking in August. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Nevin McCaskill:** Signed off Philadelphia's practice squad Dec. 11 but never saw the field. Tutored by line coach Harry Galbreath at Hampton. Looks like more of a power player than an athlete. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Tony Moll:** Started the first three games at RG and Weeks 14-15 at RT, giving him 18 starts in three seasons. The verdict? He's probably not the answer. He regressed as a pass blocker, giving up 16 pressures compared to 5½ in '07, and was charged with 7½ "bad" runs. Not only that but he drew a team-leading eight penalties. A TE for all but one season at Nevada, Moll turned markedly more aggressive in '08. That was a plus. However, he's stiff, lacks balance and makes too many mistakes. He's probably better inside. **Grade: D-**

**Josh Sitton:** Started two games at RG, played more than a half in two others and the final series in a fifth. His playing time was 19%. Compared by the Packers to Mark Tauscher in terms of size, versatility, no-nonsense temperament and rather ill-defined body. Probably better blocking for run the pass. Gave up 5½ pressures and had problems picking up stunts. Can generate movement in the run game. Will have a chance to start at guard. **Grade: D+**

**Jason Spitz:** Hard-working, hard-playing grunt started for the third straight year. Remarkably versatile, he can switch among RG, C and LG without missing a beat. Probably plays with more strength than Colledge but clearly isn't as athletic. Attacks on the double-teams but sometimes is a step late to the second level and on screens. Slipped in protection, giving up 15 pressures compared to 12 in '07. Also was charged with 19½ "bad" runs, up from 12½ last year. Didn't play quite as well as last year but switching positions all the time certainly didn't help. Could start at center in '09. **Grade: C+**

**Mark Tauscher:** Gave up 29 pressures in '07 and 23 this year, well up from his average of 15.6 in his previous five full seasons. Responsible for 11 "bad" runs, his highest total since '03. The slippage occurred in subtle ways. He hasn't been quite as stout against bull rushes. His rare ability to recover against speed rushers has diminished. And his slippage in balance, quickness and flexibility has made him less able to adjust against movement. Now faces a second reconstructive surgery on his left knee that, at 31, could mean the end of his career. If healthy, he can start for someone. The injury ruined his chances for a contract commensurate with his proven effectiveness. **Grade: C**

**Scott Wells:** Has been the same reliable player for three years. Committed. Strong for his size. Quick to cut off linebackers. Readily recognizes fronts. Usually makes the proper call. Can be overpowered by good big men. Allowed 22½ pressures as a guard in '05, then 11 as a center in '06, eight in '07 and 6½ in '08. His "bad" runs dropped from 19½ last year to 12 this year. Has had just one errant shotgun in two years. If Spitz does beat out Wells, it probably would be next to impossible for him to accept a demotion. **Grade: C+**

## **QUARTERBACKS (3)**

**Brian Brohm:** Looked even worse than Aaron Rodgers did in his first training camp. Posted a 45.2 exhibition passer rating, losing the No. 2 job to Matt Flynn after the organization did everything in its power for him to succeed. Now that Rodgers is armed with a fat new contract, the only way Brohm sees the field is injury. The best scenario would be for Brohm to make a name for himself in camp and develop some trade value. It's hard to imagine any team would want him now. Brohm needs major improvement in every area, including leadership. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Matt Flynn:** Drafted in the seventh round five rounds after Brohm, Flynn aced the exhibition season with a 110.2 rating and maintained the second spot all year. Flynn has his share of limitations, including arm strength. But teammates tend to gravitate toward him, he has one of those thick bodies that bodes well for his durability and he has a knack for making something out of nothing. **Grade: Incomplete**

**Aaron Rodgers:** Succeeding Brett Favre, Rodgers put aside a distraction-filled training camp and exceeded just about every expectation. What he didn't do was win, going 0 for 7 in late game-on-the-line situations. Last year, Favre was 3-2 in those circumstances. Arm, accuracy, touch, release, setup, mobility, poise. It was all good. He also played through a sprained right shoulder, leaving the lineup just long enough for Flynn to play two series in Tampa. Rodgers did fumble 10 times, including seven in the first nine games. He also was more willing than Favre to take a sack, which probably was at the expense of throwing some interceptions as his predecessor was wont to do. He was charged with 9½ sacks, including six in the first nine games and then 3½ in the last three games. He passed for 4,038 yards and ran for 207 (4,245), a total exceeded by Favre only in 1995 (4,594) and 1998 (4,345). Now it must be seen if he has the intangible qualities to rally a team around him and win close games. **Grade: B**

## **RUNNING BACKS (6)**

**Ryan Grant:** One NFC North personnel man summed him up well Dec. 26, saying, "Straight-line, downhill, collision runner." Started slowly after missing the off-season waiting for the team to pay him and then most of training camp because of a hamstring pull. Averaged 25.5 snaps and 44 yards per game in the first month. In the last 12 games, those averages climbed to 40.8 and 85.6 as Grant finished with the seventh-highest rushing total (1,203) in club annals. He has size, toughness and a good brain. He lacks desired vision, balance, elusiveness and speed. Limited in the passing game. Somewhat unsure of himself on routes, even check-downs, and doesn't have soft hands. Charged with seven fumbles (six lost) in two seasons but two (one lost) that really belonged to Grant were charged to Favre. If Grant is on the roster in mid-March the team must pay him a \$2.5 million roster bonus. **Grade: C+**

**Korey Hall:** A small man at a bigger man's position. Missed 2½ games due to injury as a rookie, then 5½ more this year. Played 32.9% in 2007, just 18.3% in '08. Cut "bad" run total from 10 to 4½. Willing and able on special teams. **Grade: D+**

**Brandon Jackson:** The Packers expected Jackson to be a vastly improved player in his second season but he really wasn't. He replaced Grant on third downs but averaged a paltry 6.2 in 30 receptions, with a long of just 18 yards. Jackson does everything at least adequately. He's destined to be a change-of-pace back, and you'd certainly like more than that out of a second-round draft choice. **Grade: D+**

**John Kuhn:** A stronger, heavier and more durable fullback than Hall, he hasn't missed a game in two seasons. Hall is the better receiver, Kuhn is the better rusher and blocker, and Hall probably has the edge on special teams. The Packers need at least one better fullback in '09. **Grade: D+**

**Kregg Lumpkin:** Similar in size and speed to DeShawn Wynn, Lumpkin is more of a pounder. Injuries ruined his career at Georgia just as a hamstring injury cut short his rookie season after 10 snaps. But in 45 exhibition touches he showed the run instincts and toughness to warrant an extended look in '09. **Grade: Incomplete**

**DeShawn Wynn:** Humbled in his first two seasons, Wynn left a favorable final impression with a seven-carry, 106-yard day against Detroit. Wynn is able to avoid more readily than either Grant or Lumpkin. He has shake-and-bake moves, soft hands and awareness as a receiver. At times over 240 pounds, he left Green Bay in tip-top shape at 229. If he can stay healthy and gain the trust of the organization, which are big ifs, he will challenge in '09. **Grade: C-**