

## 2009 All-NFC North Division team

*Posted: Jan. 2, 2010 Bob McGinn Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

Last week, executives in personnel from each of the four NFC North teams were asked by the Journal Sentinel's Bob McGinn to rank the top three players in the division at each position. They were not permitted to vote for their own players, and none of the comments that follow was made by a scout about a player on his own team. A first-place vote was worth three points, a second was worth two points and a third was worth one point. Asterisks denote unanimous selections.

### OFFENSE

**NO. 1 WIDE RECEIVER:** Greg Jennings (GB), 8 points. Others: Calvin Johnson (Det), 7; Sidney Rice (Minn), 6; Devin Hester (Chi), 3.

**Comments:** Jennings was first-team No. 2 WR in 2007 and shared the No. 1 job with Johnson last year. "Rice had a good year but I still like Jennings better," one scout said. "Dangerous as hell. He's physical after the catch. And he's fast." Rice had by far his best season, ranking sixth in receiving yards (1,200). "But it ain't like he came from nowhere," another scout said. "He's real. You saw more consistency. He also had more opportunity." Jennings ranks 15th (1,084) in receiving yards and Johnson, who missed two games with a knee injury, is 25th (898). "I like those three guys but the best player is Calvin Johnson," a third scout said. "If Calvin Johnson is on the Green Bay Packers he's in the Pro Bowl."

**LEFT TACKLE:** Jeff Backus (Det), Chad Clifton (GB) and Bryant McKinnie (Minn), 7. Others: Orlando Pace (Chi), 3.

**Comments:** McKinnie, the youngest of the bunch at 30, finished in a three-way tie after being a unanimous choice in '08. "I don't know how McKinnie made the Pro Bowl," one scout said. "That's a laugher. You know why he got voted in? Because there was nobody else to vote for. I think he's a slob." Another said McKinnie definitely slipped, especially in pass protection. This marked Backus' return to the first team. He also won in '02 when Clifton, who made the team for the sixth time, was injured. "Clifton slipped a little bit, too, but when he's in there they're a lot better, I know that," a third scout said. Pace, a Hall of Fame candidate based on his 12-year career in St. Louis, was terrible before taking a seat in December.

**LEFT GUARD:** Steve Hutchinson\* (Minn), 9. Others: Daryn Colledge (GB), 7; Frank Omiyale (Chi) and Manny Ramirez (Det), 4.

**Comments:** Hutchinson made it for the fourth straight year, including the last three as a unanimous pick. He is regarded as the best O-lineman in the division. "The NFC North is short of offensive linemen," one scout said. "The whole league is short of offensive linemen." Colledge has been a second-place finisher three years in a row. "He's solid," one scout said. "Once you just line him up in one position, he's a good athlete. You'd like him to be a little stronger." Omiyale and Ramirez weren't even good enough to hold their jobs all season.

**CENTER:** Olin Kreutz (Chi), 8. Others: John Sullivan (Minn), 6; Dominic Raiola (Det) and Scott Wells (GB), 5.

**Comments:** Kreutz, 32, became a lightning rod for criticism in Chicago but still made the team for the ninth straight year. "He has slipped a little bit," one scout said. "Still instinctive, tough, all that. I couldn't separate him and Wells. Kreutz runs better." Sullivan, who replaced 10-year starter Matt Birk, played better than the Vikings' tackles, according to one scout. "Not bad," another scout said. "More finesse. Birk is a descending player, but Sullivan's not Birk and isn't going to be Birk." Raiola and Wells are seasoned starters without great size. "Raiola is like a poor man's Olin Kreutz," another scout said. "Wells is a guy who plays with a lot of confidence. He doesn't have a lot of play strength. He's really the backup (behind Jason Spitz). They're really playing with a brain right now."

**RIGHT GUARD:** Roberto Garza (Chi) and Josh Sitton (GB), 8. Others: Anthony Herrera (Minn) and Stephen Peterman (Det), 4.

**Comments:** No one is close to being categorized as a great athlete. All four play with nastiness, especially Herrera. Garza also won in '07. Sitton was a first-year starter. "Sitton isn't a dynamic, great player but he should keep getting better," one scout said. "Big guy. He's not the most explosive. He can lock on and position. He's got decent feet for his size." Said another scout: "Sitton's strong as an ox. He's thick. But we're talking about average guys here."

**RIGHT TACKLE:** Phil Loadholt (Minn), 8. Others: Chris Williams (Chi), 7; Mark Tauscher (GB), 6; Gosder Cherilus (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Loadholt, a rookie, was much better early than late and won generally by default. "He's not ready to play," one scout said. "It's catching up to him." He was the fourth different winner in the last four years. Williams and Cherilus, first-round picks in '08, have been slow to develop, especially Cherilus. "I thought he took a step back," another scout said. "Just really inconsistent. Sloppy. Lots of mistakes and breakdowns and penalties. He plays out of control." Pace's demise enabled Williams to move from RT to LT in Week 12. "He blocks better on the left side," a third scout said. "Looks more natural there. He'll be better. You wish he played with more power." Tauscher came off the street to replace Allen Barbre. "Barbre looked OK in the preseason but then he started getting them beat," one scout said. "Tauscher is who he is."

**TIGHT END:** Visanthe Shiancoe (Minn), 7. Others: Jermichael Finley (GB) and Greg Olsen (Chi), 6; Brandon Pettigrew (Det), 5.

**Comments:** Possibly the best position in the division. Shiancoe, who finished behind Olsen and Donald Lee (GB) in 2008, had his best year. Finley missed almost four full games with a knee injury but came on late. "He's turning into one of the front-line receiving tight ends in the league," one scout said. "He's hard to handle because of his size, speed, athletic ability." Olsen also is a terrific receiver but gets dinged for either his unwillingness or inability to block. "But if Olsen had Brett (Favre) or Aaron Rodgers he'd be all-world," another scout said. Pettigrew, who blew out a knee in Week 11, is the best blocker. "He had a lot of drops but he's a talented kid," one scout said.

**NO. 2 WIDE RECEIVER:** Donald Driver\* (GB), 9. Others: Earl Bennett (Chi) and Bernard Berrian (Minn), 6; Bryant Johnson (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Driver, a month shy of his 35th birthday, was a unanimous pick for the fourth year in a row, including the last two as the No. 2 WR and 2006 and '07 as the No. 1 WR. "It's amazing that we're even mentioning Driver as a No. 2," one scout said. "That old man is still playing some good football." Bennett proved to be an adequate possession receiver as a first-year starter. Berrian was too inconsistent. "Nothing there," another scout said when asked about Johnson, who has merely 31 catches in 15 starts.

**QUARTERBACK:** Brett Favre (Minn) and Aaron Rodgers (GB), 8. Others: Jay Cutler (Chi), 5; Matthew Stafford (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Favre, 40, enters the final game third in passer rating at 104.3; Rodgers is fourth at 102.4. "He was hot the first 10 games," one scout said. "I didn't see a situation where I said, 'He's playing like an old man, he can't play anymore.' I didn't see that at all." Favre finished second to Jeff George in 1993 and second to Daunte Culpepper in '04. This was his 13th first-team selection. Rodgers was a unanimous pick in '08 when Favre was playing for the Jets. "Rodgers is really good," one scout said. "The only weakness you could say is the sacks he takes by holding onto the ball. But he's a top-five quarterback." The April 2 trade for Cutler (73.6) cost the Bears QB Kyle Orton, two firsts and a third. Stafford, the first pick in the '09 draft, started 10 games and posted a rating of 61.0. "Stafford will be a good player," another scout said. "He's just really inconsistent. Cutler is, too. The 26 interceptions. . . it's hard to put him ahead of Stafford."

**RUNNING BACK:** Anthony Peterson\* (Minn), 9. Others: Ryan Grant (GB), 7; Matt Forte (Chi) and Kevin Smith (Det), 4.

**Comments:** Peterson has been unanimous all three of his seasons. After averaging 5.2 yards from 2007-'08, he is averaging 4.4 now. Plus, he has lost six of seven fumbles. "He always puts the ball on the ground because he never gives up on a run," one scout said. "That's just Adrian. I'll take him any day over those other guys." Grant's outright second-place finish was his best in three seasons. "He's OK with good things around him," another scout said. "Their passing game is so formidable it opens up some lanes for him. He runs hard."

**FULLBACK:** Jason McKie (Chi), 8. Others: Jerome Felton (Det) and Naufahu Tahia (Minn), 6; John Kuhn (GB), 4.

**Comments:** None of the teams makes much use of their fullback. McKie won for the third year in a row, but the consensus was that Felton has the most talent and potential. "Felton has a chance to be the best but he's a little bit of a tweener," one scout said. "McKie is steady, not great."

**NO. 3 WIDE RECEIVER:** Percy Harvin (Minn), 8. Others: Johnny Knox (Chi), 7; James Jones (GB), 6; Dennis Northcutt (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Harvin won a close battle over two other capable players. "Harvin runs reverses, quick screens, quick hitches, slants," one scout said. "I didn't think he was the receiver Knox was. But both are playmakers. Knox is a big-time big-play guy down the field." Amid stiff competition for balls, Jones ranked second in Green Bay with five receiving TDs. "He can do more than Knox," another scout said. "Bigger. More physical. Good underneath and he can get on top of you."

**NO. 4 WIDE RECEIVER:** Jordy Nelson\* (GB), 9. Others: Devin Aromashodu (Chi) and Greg Lewis (Minn), 6; Derrick Williams (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Nelson missed three games at midseason with a knee injury. "He's really a big, strong possession guy but he's got deceptive playmaking ability and deceptive speed," one scout said. "You kind of forget about him and he makes a play." Aromashodu had just two catches until mid-December and then 17 in the last three games. "I thought they should have been playing him earlier," another scout said. "He's been on like four different teams and nobody let him play. He's not a speed guy but he's 4.5, which is fast enough."

**NO. 2 TIGHT END:** Donald Lee (GB), 8. Others: Desmond Clark (Chi) and Jim Kleinsasser (Minn), 6; Will Heller (Det), 4.

**Comments:** Lee, a unanimous pick as the No. 1 TE in '07, was passed by Finley. "He's still a good athlete," one scout said. "He's not a great blocker. He'll try. He'll have a drop every now and then because his hands aren't natural. Hardworking guy." Clark, who is fading, and Kleinsasser, the best blocker, once were productive starters as well.

**UTILITY OFFENSIVE LINEMAN:** Artis Hicks\* (Minn), 9. Others: T.J. Lang (GB), 7; Josh Beekman (Chi), 5; Daniel Loper (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Hicks made two starts at RG, one at RT and has started in the past at LT. He repeated as a unanimous choice. Lang, a rookie, made two starts at LT and another at RT. "Tough guy," one scout said, referring to Lang. "Strong. He's not a great athlete. Little short-armed. I think he might be better inside or at right tackle." Beekman, a starter in '08, lost his job to Omiyale.

**NO. 2 QUARTERBACK:** Matt Flynn (GB) and Tarvaris Jackson (Minn), 8. Others: Daunte Culpepper (Minn) and Caleb Hanie (Chi), 4.

**Comments:** Flynn, Jackson and Hanie combined to throw just 31 passes. Culpepper, 32, started four games in his second season for the Lions, posted a passer rating of 55.7 and pouted during pregame warm-ups on Thanksgiving Day when Stafford got the nod instead of him. "Culpepper's a cancer," one scout said. "You don't want that guy."

**NO. 2 RUNNING BACK:** Chester Taylor\* (Minn), 9. Others: Brandon Jackson (GB), 6; Maurice Morris (Det), 5; Kahlil Bell (Chi), 4.

**Comments:** Taylor, a 1,216-yard rusher in '06, has been a unanimous pick in this category three years running. "He's good at that spot," one scout said. "Somebody wants to sign him as a starter. . . that's not what you want to do." Jackson missed the first four games with an ankle injury before moving into his third-down role. "He's just OK," another scout said.

## DEFENSE

**LEFT END:** Ray Edwards (Minn), 8. Others: Adewale Ogunleye (Chi), 7; Johnny Jolly (GB), 6; Jason Hunter (Det), 3

**Comments:** At a position owned in the past by Reggie White, Robert Porcher and Aaron Kampman, there wasn't a great player in sight. "Edwards is solid, nothing flashy," one scout said. "Solid line-of-scrimmage run player. He's a press-the-pocket guy, not a sack guy." Ogunleye, 32, made it in 2004 and '05 but is fading. Jolly played better as a 3-4 end than as a 4-3 three-technique. "He's a little inconsistent," another scout said. "But he's a big, strong guy who is pretty good athlete. He's hard to move." Cut by the Packers on May 4, Hunter started nine of 13 games for Detroit and had four sacks. In fact, he might have been the best player on possibly the NFL's worst D-line. "They had to be pleased," a third scout said. "He wasn't a sack guy but he pushed the pocket and played strong against the run."

**NOSE TACKLE:** Pat Williams\* (Minn), 9. Others: Ryan Pickett (GB), 7; Marcus Harrison (Chi), 5; Grady Jackson (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Williams, 37, wasn't as good but still was a unanimous selection for the fifth straight year. "Not as active as he has been in the past," one scout said. "Doesn't chase as much. Still a pretty good player." Pickett was second for the third time in four years. "He is (good) for what he does," another scout said. "He's a space-eater, as is Jackson, but he can move better than Jackson."

**THREE-TECHNIQUE TACKLE:** Kevin Williams\* (Minn), 9. Others: Tommie Harris (Chi) and Cullen Jenkins (GB), 6; Sammie Hill (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Williams was the pick for the sixth time in seven years, including the last three as a unanimous choice. "I know they wish he was more dominant play after play," one scout said. "Sometimes he gets blocked by one guy and that should never be the case." Harris made it in 2005 and '06 but has been second since. "He definitely still can play," another scout said. "But he looked bothered (visibly) by his injuries. Only that organization knows what his situation is." Jenkins was an adequate fit in the 3-4. "He's a steady player," a third scout said. "He's had a decent season. Every time I watch him I grade him up a point or two. He just keeps getting better."

**RIGHT END:** Jared Allen\* (Minn), 9. Others: Clay Matthews (GB), 7; Alex Brown (Chi), 5; Cliff Avril (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Allen flew off the edge for 13½ sacks, including 7½ against Green Bay backup LTs Daryn Colledge and T.J. Lang. "He was good," one scout said. "You can't fault him for who he was playing against." Matthews didn't move ahead of Brady Poppinga at LOLB until Week 4. "He's really good," another scout said. "Instinctive. Athletic. Just makes plays and knows football."

**STRONG-SIDE LINEBACKER:** Aaron Kampman\* (GB), 9. Others: Ben Leber (Minn), 7; Julian Peterson (Det) and Nick Roach (Chi), 4.

**Comments:** Kampman, who blew out his knee in Week 10, had been a unanimous pick at LE the past three years. "I continued to grade him as an end and discounted some of the space stuff he had to do," one scout said. "He wasn't bad at it. Just not his deal." Leber had been the pick the past three years. Peterson, 31, a perennial Pro Bowl pick, lost his stinger. "He's on his way out," another scout said.

**MIDDLE LINEBACKER:** E.J. Henderson\* (Minn), 9. Others: Larry Foote (Det), A.J. Hawk (GB) and Hunter Hillenmeyer (Chi), 5.

**Comments:** The door was opened for Henderson when Chicago's Brian Urlacher suffered a broken wrist in Week 1 and Nick Barnett played the equivalent of WLB in the 3-4. Then Henderson went down in Week 12 with a season-ending leg injury. Foote showed wear and tear after seven years in Pittsburgh. "He wasn't an old man but he didn't play as well as Detroit had hoped," one scout said. Hawk tied for second, his best finish after three straight thirds. "He was really down early but he got a little better," another scout added. "Struggles in coverage. Not a great athlete. He looks slow and stiff." Added a third scout: "I'll take him if you don't want him. Strong. Got range. Can play downhill. Plays with his hands. Drops back in coverage."

**WEAK-SIDE LINEBACKER:** Lance Briggs\* (Chi), 9. Others: Nick Barnett (GB) and Chad Greenway (Minn), 6; Ernie Sims (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Urlacher's departure and the loss of SLB Pisa Tinoisamoa (knee) after only two starts put the burden on Briggs, who was the pick for the seventh year in a row. "He still is their best player," one scout said. "Inconsistent at times but he's still a pretty damn good player."

**LEFT CORNERBACK:** Charles Woodson\* (GB), 9. Others: Antoine Winfield (Minn), 7; Charles Tillman (Chi), 5; Will James (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Winfield got the nod in 2004 and '05 but Woodson now has made it four years in a row, including the last three unanimous. "He's had a phenomenal year," one scout said. "He just makes plays on the ball. People say he guesses. He studies the game so hard he knows and can jump things." Winfield started out well, sat out six games with a foot injury and hasn't been the same player since returning. Tillman, said another scout, "isn't in Woodson's category but he's solid. Physical."

**RIGHT CORNERBACK:** Cedric Griffin (Minn), 8. Others: Al Harris (GB), 7; Zackary Bowman (Chi), 6; Phillip Buchanon (Det), 3.

**Comments:** The season-ending knee injury suffered in Week 10 by Harris, the pick in 2004, '06, '07 and '08, opened the door for Griffin. "When you play Cover 2 Griffin is really good because he's physical and an aggressive tackler," one scout said. "But then when you get him isolated one on one that's when you can take advantage of him." As for Harris, another scout said: "I think he's declining. He struggled with the new scheme. He has lost a step and really struggles in off zone coverage. He picks and chooses in the run game." Bowman, a first-year starter, was impressive. "He made more plays on the ball than Harris," one scout said. "Just not very physical. Little leggy but he can run."

**STRONG SAFETY:** Atari Bigby\* (GB), 9. Others: Tyrell Johnson (Minn), 7; Al Afalava (Chi), 5; Marquand Manuel (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Bigby was the first unanimous pick at SS since LeRoy Butler in '95. "It was one of his better years," one scout said. Johnson and Afalava didn't fare well as first-year starters. Manuel was over the hill three years ago. "There's a league-wide problem at safety," a scout said.

**FREE SAFETY:** Nick Collins\* (GB), 9. Others: Louis Delmas (Det), 7; Madiou Williams (Minn), 5; Kevin Payne (Chi), 3.

**Comments:** Collins was the choice for the fourth year in a row, including the last three unanimous. "He's never been known as the brightest guy in the building," one scout said. "It's been a different scheme but I think over time he will really excel." Delmas, a second-round pick, has a chance to overtake Collins, according to one scout. "He has a lot to learn," he said. "He plays out of control. Still a little hesitant on the back end. He's a head-hunter. He wants to hit your (expletive). And he can run." Williams' second season in Minnesota was a downer. "It's not his fault they wanted to pay him that (six years, \$33 million)," a third scout said. "He just wasn't a Pro Bowl impact player (in Cincinnati)."

**NO. 3 DEFENSIVE END:** Brian Robison\* (Minn), 9. Others: Mark Anderson (Chi) and Brad Jones (GB), 6; Turk McBride (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Backing up both ends and playing DT in nickel, Robison was the Vikings' fourth best rusher. Jones, a seventh-round draft choice, took over for Kampman. "I think the Packers will be looking to upgrade the position," one scout said. "He's a role player. I just think he needs to get stronger. He really belongs on the other side (ROLB) but he's not a great athlete. He's really a tweener, and that's why he got picked where he did." Anderson, with 2 ½ sacks, had another disappointing season but still played ahead of Gaines Adams, who was acquired Oct. 17 for a second-round pick.

**NO. 3 DEFENSIVE TACKLE:** B.J. Raji (GB), 8. Others: Jimmy Kennedy (Minn), 7; Anthony Adams (Chi), 6; Andre Fluellen (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Raji wasn't a factor in his first five or six games playing on a high ankle sprain. "He's got quick hands and feet," one scout said. "Good athlete. Good balance. I don't think he's an impact type player but it's a solid pick." Said another scout: "He is so inconsistent. He doesn't use his hands. He doesn't play square." Kennedy was effective for the second straight year off the bench. The squatty Adams has lasted seven seasons because of his extreme effort.

**UTILITY DEFENSIVE LINEMAN:** Israel Idonije\* (Chi), 9. Others: Fred Evans (Minn), 6; Landon Cohen (Det) and Brady Poppinga (GB), 5.

**Comments:** Idonije, 29, has been the pick three straight years. "He was OK," one scout said. "He's probably best as a nickel inside rusher. He's so long, and he does have some strength and quickness. In the run game he's just so tall and erect. He's active. Didn't make a whole lot of plays this year." Cohen, a seventh-round pick in '08, probably should have played even more. "Love him," one scout said. "Gets off blocks, quick, can rush the passer. This guy is a good find."

**NO. 4 LINEBACKER:** Brandon Chillar\* (GB), 9. Others: DeAndre Levy (Det) and Jamar Williams (Chi), 6; Jasper Brinkley (Minn), 3.

**Comments:** The vote went to Chillar for the second year in a row. "He's pretty good," one scout said. "Just smart. Got some size. Runs OK. Pretty good in coverage. Good blitzer." Levy, a rookie from Wisconsin, started nine games at WLB, was fourth in tackles with 67 and had three turnover plays. "The arrow is going up," another scout said. "Long arms. Takes on blocks. Plays with range. Can make a tackle in open space."

**NO. 3 CORNERBACK:** Tramon Williams\* (GB), 9. Others: Danieal Manning (Chi), 6; Benny Sapp (Minn), 5; Anthony Henry (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Williams won for the second year in a row. "Looks like he's got a chance to be a starter," one scout said. Played 776 snaps in '08 and came back to start eight games in '09. "He's really talented," another scout said. "You wish he was a little more physical at times. He gives up some big plays at times. He's a really good third and could be a starter on some teams." Manning started 10 games at FS before moving inside, where he blitzes well and is physical against the run. One scout offered this description of Sapp: "Scrappy."

### **NO. 3 SAFETY**

Josh Bullocks (Chi) and Jarrett Bush (GB), 7. Others: Jamarca Sanford (Minn) and Marvin White (Det), 5.

**Comments:** None of the scouts had admiration for any of these players. "Are you kidding me?" said one.

## **SPECIAL TEAMS**

**KICKER:** Robbie Gould (Chi) and Ryan Longwell (Minn), 8. Others: Mason Crosby (GB) and Jason Hanson (Det), 4.

**Comments:** By sharing the top spot, Longwell won for the fourth time (2002, '04, '07, '09) and Gould for the third time (2006, '08, '09). Longwell, 35, made 23 of 25 field goals (92%). "We thought he should have been the Pro Bowl kicker," one scout said. Gould made 21 of 25 (84%). Hanson, 39, underwent arthroscopic knee surgery in August. It might have contributed to his off year (18 of 25, 72%). "No, he hasn't lost it," another scout said. Hanson has been the pick nine times. Crosby struggled at 74.3% (26 of 35). "He kicks in that weather there," a third scout said. "That (his statistics) doesn't bother me."

**PUNTER:** Brad Maynard (Chi), 8. Others: Chris Kluwe (Minn), 7; Nick Harris (Det), 6; Jeremy Kapinos (GB), 3.

**Comments:** Maynard, with a 37.7-yard net, has now won it four times (2001, '04, '08 and '09). He's the ultimate directional punter. Kluwe, the choice in 2005 and '07, had something of an off year. Harris, the '06 winner, had a 36.6 net. In his first full season, Kapinos was last in net at 33.8. "Kluwe stinks," one scout said. "So does Kapinos."

**PUNT RETURNER:** Tramon Williams\* (GB), 9. Others: Devin Hester (Chi) and Darius Reynaud (Minn), 6; Dennis Northcutt (Det), 3.

**Comments:** Williams was impressive (10.4) at midseason when Jordy Nelson was injured but hasn't returned any since replacing Al Harris in Week 11. "He is a threat," one scout said. "More than Hester." Hester, who fielded 27 punts and averaged merely 8.1, remarkably has gone from the ultimate game-breaker to the proverbial "just a guy." "Part of it was he used to be fresh and so damn fast," another scout said. "Playing wideout full-time and then going back there is a different deal."

**KICKOFF RETURNER:** Percy Harvin\* (Minn), 9. Others: Johnny Knox (Chi), 7; Jordy Nelson (GB), 5; Aaron Brown (Det), 3.

**Comments:** This was an excellent position. Manning, who alternated with Knox, was the pick of one scout. "Knox isn't as good as Manning," the scout said. "Knox puts it on the ground. Nelson does, too." Knox averaged 28.9, Harvin 27.5, Manning 26.6 and Nelson 24.8. "Nelson is big, physical and makes plays," another scout said.

**SPECIAL TEAMS ACE:** Heath Farwell\* (Minn), 9. Others: Desmond Bishop (GB) and Zack Follett (Det), 4; Spencer Havner (GB) and Darrell McClover (Chi), 2; Calvin Pearson (Det), Tim Shaw (Chi) and Jamar Williams (Chi), 1.

**Comments:** Farwell, a linebacker, bounced back from missing all of 2008 with a blown knee to join the Bears' Larry Whigham (2001) and the Bears' Brandon Ayanbadejo ('07) as the only unanimous picks in this category. "He knows how to maneuver his way to the ball," one scout said. "He's not really physically overpowering but he's got a knack."

## THE WINNERS

**COACH OF THE YEAR:** Mike McCarthy (GB), 3; Brad Childress (Minn). 1. McCarthy also won in 2007. Childress is the first division-winning coach not to win since Mike Sherman in '04.

**OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Joe Philbin (GB), 3; Darrell Bevell (Minn), 1. Philbin shared the award in 2007.

**DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR:** Dom Capers (GB), 3; Leslie Frazier (Minn), 1. Capers is the Packers' first D-coordinator to win the award outright since Ed Donatell in 2003. Bob Sanders got a piece in '07.

**SPECIAL TEAMS COACH:** Brian Murphy (Minn) and Dave Toub (Chi), 2. Toub either has won or shared the award for the last four years.

**POSITION COACH:** Tom Clements (quarterbacks, GB), Darryl Drake (wide receivers, Chi), Karl Dunbar (defensive line, Minn) and Kevin Greene (outside linebackers, GB), 1. Clements and Dunbar are previous winners.

**OFFENSIVE PLAYER:** Aaron Rodgers (GB), 2; Brett Favre (Minn) and Sidney Rice (Minn), 1. Rodgers is the first quarterback to win since Daunte Culpepper in 2004.

**DEFENSIVE PLAYER:** Charles Woodson (GB), 2; Jared Allen (Minn) and E.J. Henderson (Minn), 1. Woodson is the first defensive back to win the award outright since it was originated in 1996.

**OFFENSIVE ROOKIE:** Percy Harvin (Minn), 3; Johnny Knox (Chi), 1. The last Green Bay player to win was Mark Tauscher in 2000.

**DEFENSIVE ROOKIE:** Clay Matthews (GB), 2; Louis Delmas (Det) and DeAndre Levy (Det), 1. Green Bay's winners since 1996 were Vonnie Holliday in 1998, Mike McKenzie in '99, Nick Barnett in '03 and A.J. Hawk in '06.

**MOST VALUABLE PLAYER:** Brett Favre (Minn), 3; Aaron Rodgers (GB), 1. The award originated in 2000. Favre also won in 2001, '02, '03 and '07.

**EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR:** Rick Spielman (VP of player personnel, Minn) and Ted Thompson (general manager, GB), 2. Spielman won in '08 and Thompson won in '07.

#### **IMPACT DECISIONS**

- Three scouts cited the Vikings' decision to sign Brett Favre on Aug. 18. He had been released by the New York Jets on April 28.
- One scout cited the Packers' decision to change schemes on defense and hire Dom Capers as the new coordinator.