

# Rating the Packers: Week 2 vs Bills

## Packers win despite struggles

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**Green Bay** —The Buffalo Bills will pull an upset or two this season. They just will. That's how the National Football League is built.

It just didn't come close to happening at Lambeau Field.

As long as the Green Bay Packers play as aggressively and with as much emotion as they showed Sunday, they won't embarrass themselves against a bad team like the Bills. Green Bay will need to play much better starting real soon, but there's little to think the Packers won't based off their 2-0 start.

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

### **RECEIVERS (3½)**

Jermichael Finley is the featured receiver. He ran right by SS Donte Whitner on an over route for 22 yards, and Whitner ran the 40 in 4.40 seconds in 2006. When the Bills surprisingly played their 3-4 base defense against a four-wide set on third and 2, Finley laughed almost all the way to the house with a 32-yard reception behind 261-pound LOLB Chris Kelsay. He also got better depth this week on a 34-yard bootleg in which ILB Andra Davis appeared to be standing in quicksand. However, Finley carried his stick route too deep into the end zone and almost had Whitner return it 100 yards. Finley must be careful not to relax on clear-out routes. That helps his buddies at wide receiver. In all, Finley played 47 of 57 snaps compared to Donald Lee's 17 and Tom Crabtree's 16. The pecking order has been set at WR: the snap totals were 42 for Greg Jennings, 39 for Donald Driver, 28 for James Jones and 21 for Jordy Nelson. Although Jones made a fine play on the 30-yard TD, he left much on the table. He slipped on a third-down comeback route, wasn't able to power his way over tiny CB Terrence McGee and into the end zone on a screen and fumbled on a pass that seemed more like a drop than anything.

### **OFFENSIVE LINE (3½)**

Mark Tauscher is back on track after a poor outing in Philadelphia. Operating mostly against Kelsay, he didn't yield a pressure or "bad" run. The other veteran tackle, Chad Clifton, isn't. When some of Clifton's teammates told Mike McCarthy that his knee wasn't right and he couldn't really perform, it wasn't long before the move was made to Bryan Bulaga. DE Dwan Edwards is a solid power player, but when he beat Clifton for a pair of flushes the coaches knew something was wrong. After Clifton's soft 27-snap stint, Bulaga showed more range and strength and didn't have a bad play. Most of the time, the Bills were in their 4-2 defense, in effect inviting the Packers to run. Josh Sitton was better against DE Marcus Stroud than Daryn Colledge was against NT Kyle Williams, who is an underrated player. Hard to argue with much Scott Wells does these days, especially on those difficult reach blocks.

## **QUARTERBACKS (4)**

Rodgers needed a half to figure out how an offense without Ryan Grant should be directed. He also is sorting through where the ball should be going. At times, he seems to be overly conscious of Finley in the progression. Driver and Jones had one-on-one coverage on the outside when Rodgers went inside to Finley on the goal line against what in effect was double coverage. With five very good players on the perimeter and one ball, Rodgers might have to deal with hurt feelings. It's not going to be easy. Against the unorthodox Bills, Rodgers patiently called time out one time when he didn't like the look. For some reason, half a dozen of his typically tight spirals came out as waffleballs. But in the end, talent won out. He made a host of good throws against a very competitive secondary and that was that.

## **RUNNING BACKS (2)**

Maybe the Bills were showcasing Marshawn Lynch in case they decide to trade him to Green Bay by the Oct. 19 deadline. Based on what Lynch showed and Grant's replacements showed, it would behoove the Packers to keep renewing their interest. On this day at least, Brandon Jackson didn't look much different from the tentative rookie who had to start the first three games of 2007 only to gain 97 yards in 38 carries (2.6). There was no power, little decisiveness and, once or twice, a lack of vision. Jackson played 29 snaps compared with 19 at RB for John Kuhn. On one well-blocked outside zone to the right, Tauscher was unable to sustain his block quite long enough for Kuhn to get by. Thus, the gain was 4 when a faster back might have made 10 or 12. It's just hard to hold blocks for a back with 4.7 speed. Kuhn also had the only dropped pass and a fumble. FB Quinn Johnson, filling in for injured Korey Hall, played 20 snaps and blocked pretty well. The Bills blitzed on 24% of passes but weren't effective partially because the backs picked up so well. Dimitri Nance (three snaps, two carries) looked OK.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (3½)**

The Bills pulled people in their misdirection style of run game and gained 124 yards. They aren't a blow-you-off-the-ball unit. C Geoff Hangartner didn't have the power to bang with B.J. Raji (40 snaps), and other than one early 5-yard gain Raji generally stayed square and also had two pressures. Ryan Pickett (29) missed three tackles in the first half, an unheard-of number for a D-lineman. The Packers played just 14 snaps in the 3-4, and about half of those were in their reduced "Bear" look. Cullen Jenkins (35) was better in his second week playing with a broken hand. Jarius Wynn (11) got in before C.J. Wilson (eight), but Wilson played better, notching two pressures in the final series.

## **LINEBACKERS (4½)**

Clay Matthews has 12 pressures, including six sacks, in two games. The Bills double-teamed him on 42% of passes but low-grade RT Cornell Green still was walking on eggshells. He had to lean outside to handle Matthews' speed, but that made him susceptible to getting bull-rushed on his behind. Matthews is just so quick-twitch getting into his man and then deathly strong as he disengages. On Trent Edwards' bootleg, Matthews stood at the line, saw it and zoomed in so fast that Edwards couldn't even begin to think about throwing it away. The Bills did get Matthews on some misdirection plays, and his low-block shield against pullers needs work. But when Matthews saw LG Andy Levitre coming in the first quarter it was like ramming into a stone wall. Levitre was done for the day with a stinger. Lost amid the excitement over Matthews has been the physical work of Nick Barnett. He had just one pressure in seven blitzes but was one tough customer taking on and then shedding lead blockers. A.J. Hawk and Brandon Chillar split time next to Barnett in nickel. Hawk had more good plays than bad ones, and Chillar dropped like a safety and made a terrific interception. Brad Jones is gritty against the run but didn't have a pressure and wasn't moving fluidly in space.

## **SECONDARY (4)**

Morgan Burnett picked off a pass rotating down to the slot against the Colts Aug. 26 and had another Sunday. Stealing the ball from Roscoe Parrish made his first interception one to remember. Burnett is aggressive in coverage but isn't yet against the run. He missed two tackles, pausing instead of attacking and usually was late entering piles. Dom Capers changed things up, using Nick Collins as his box safety instead of 50-50 with Burnett. Collins tackled effectively. The only plays made by the Bills came against Charles Woodson. He was beat deep by Lee Evans and drew a 24-yard penalty, then tried to bait Trent Edwards into a pick and wasn't deep enough on a 21-yard corner route to Parrish. It also was Woodson's play to stop Fred Jackson's 3-yard TD run, but FB Corey McIntyre cut him down. Tramon Williams and Sam Shields split time against Evans and held him without a reception. Both players seemed more confident playing press coverage and were eager to mix it up.

## **KICKERS (3½)**

Mason Crosby hit two field goals (44, 24) from the right hash and averaged 67.3 yards and 4.07 seconds of hang time on seven kickoffs. Tim Masthay's two long punts had hang times of 4.26 and 3.86; his rugby punt hung 4.29 and should have been downed. The shorter the stride, the better for Masthay.

## **SPECIAL TEAMS (3½)**

The long-striding, improved Nelson had KO returns of 34 and 27 yards. Williams should have run up to field Brian Moorman's first punt. He made several catches in a crouch, which prevents sizable returns but seemingly increases his ability to bring the ball in. Working against an exceptional return tandem, the coverage was superb until C.J. Spiller broke KO returns of 36 and 41. Crabtree stood out, although Crabtree and Pat Lee drew penalties.

## **OVERALL (4)**

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