

All-NFC North team

*By Bob McGinn- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Posted Jan 1, 2011*

Last week, executives in personnel from each of the four NFC North Division 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) and Calvin Johnson (Det), 8 points. Others: Percy Harvin (Minn) and Johnny Knox (Chi), 4.

Comments: Two exceptional talents, Jennings and Johnson, tied for No. 1 just as they did in 2008. Jennings had the edge in '09, 8-7. "That's a tough one," one scout said. "Calvin Johnson is fantastic. Eventually, I think Johnson will be the guy, but I'm going to give him one more year to wait." Each has 12 TDs, three behind NFL leader Dwayne Bowe of Kansas City. "Jennings is a top player in this league," another scout said. "Fast, physical, run after the catch." Harvin battled migraine headaches all season. Knox came on. "Knox has so much speed," a third scout said. "He flashes at you and then he disappears some."

LEFT TACKLE

Jeff Backus* (Det), 9. Others: Chad Clifton (GB), 7; Bryant McKinnie (Minn), 5; Frank Omiyale (Chi), 3.

Comments: Backus, who tied with Clifton and McKinnie in '09, won his first outright title since '02, when Clifton was injured. "Backus played pretty good this year," one scout said. "It surprised me." Clifton has had six firsts plus seconds in two of the past three years. "He's the same to me," another scout said. "Just a steady player. Kind of like Backus. The thing that everyone forgets, this NFC North this year played the NFC East and the AFC East. Every week it was a good pass rusher. For our (tackles) to hold up is a credit to them." McKinnie slipped to third after firsts in '08 and '09. "Too many bad games early," a third scout said.

LEFT GUARD

Rob Sims* (Det), 9. Others: Steve Hutchinson (Minn), 6; Daryn Colledge (GB), 5; Chris Williams (Chi), 4.

Comments: When Seattle foolishly traded away Sims for a fifth-round draft choice in April, the Lions plugged a chronic hole. "Seattle could use him," one scout said. "He's the Lions' best lineman." Hutchinson, 33, isn't what he was. In his four previous years in Minnesota, he was first-team four times. "He's on his way out," a second scout said. "He hit a wall." Colledge was third for a second time after seconds from 2007-'09. Williams made the transition from tackle to guard in Week 6 and might have found a home. "He's got short arms, which killed him at left tackle," a third scout said. "People could get to his body. He's athletic and quick, can get to the second level and pull."

CENTER

Olin Kreutz (Chi) and Scott Wells (GB), 7. Others: Dominic Raiola (Det), 6; John Sullivan (Minn), 4.

Comments: Kreutz, 33, has been first 10 years in a row. "He's really a guy they should be replacing," one scout said. "He's going to win from the neck up. He's a battler. But he really isn't as strong as you like." As a center, Wells was fourth in '06, tied for third in '07, third in '08 and tied for third in '09 before breaking through this year. "He's steady," another scout said. "Very smart. Good leverage. He doesn't break down a whole lot. He gets overpowered some just because of bigger bodies." Raiola, a starter since '02, has never surpassed Kreutz. "They're all about the same," a third scout said. "I've never been a big fan of Raiola but he's playing OK this year."

RIGHT GUARD

Josh Sitton* (GB), 9. Others: Roberto Garza (Chi) and Anthony Herrera (Minn), 6; Stephen Peterman (Det), 3.

Comments: Sitton also was first in '09. "I saw a pretty powerful guy," one scout said. "Like him. He will get better." Said another scout: "He's big, he's strong, he's a better athlete than you think. I thought he was their best linemen." Garza returned from arthroscopic knee surgery in Week 8 and solidified the unit. "He's a good, solid player," a third scout said. "He's stout. You wish he was a little quicker. You wish his arms were a little longer. You can wish him to death. Most of the time, all he does is block his guy." Herrera and Peterman have started for several years and probably should be replaced.

RIGHT TACKLE

Gosder Cherilus (Det), 8. Others: Bryan Bulaga (GB) and Phil Loadholt (Minn), 6; J'Marcus Webb (Chi), 4.

Comments: Cherilus follows Chicago's Fred Miller ('06), Green Bay's Mark Tauscher ('07), Chicago's John Tait ('08) and Loadholt ('09) as the fifth RT choice in five years. He was fourth a year ago. "He's just a banger," one scout said. "Not a great group." Bulaga replaced an injured Tauscher in Week 5 and held his own. "I've seen a few breakdowns lately but I think he's pretty good," another scout said. "I don't think he's great. Just a good, solid player." Loadholt, said a third scout, "is a backup, stopgap guy. What saves him is he's so big and so long." Webb, a rookie like Bulaga, showed promise after becoming a starter in Week 5. "He's actually better than Phil Loadholt now," a fourth scout said. "Very similar. Long. Big body."

TIGHT END

Visanthe Shiancoe (Minn), 8. Others: Brandon Pettigrew (Det), 7; Greg Olsen (Chi), 6; Andrew Quarless (GB), 3.

Comments: "I can't vote for (Jermichael) Finley, huh?" one scout said. "He'd be better than all of them." Olsen was first in '08, but Shiancoe has taken the top spot two straight years. "Shiancoe had a hell of a year," another scout said. "Coming from the Giants, I didn't think he'd ever get to this level. I think having Brett (Favre) helped him. Brett needed that guy as a safety valve and he did a lot of good things. Is he a great one? No. I think Finley will pass him." Pettigrew (68) ranks third in TE receptions behind Dallas' Jason Witten (90) and Washington's Chris Cooley (72). "He had too many drops but he made a lot of plays," a third scout said. "He's the best blocker of the group. He's not a mismatch receiver but he's got size and athletic ability." In effect, Quarless replaced Finley after he blew out his knee in Week 5. "I liked him in the pass game," a fourth scout said. "Run game was not very good. He's not as good as Finley, obviously."

NO. 2 WIDE RECEIVER

Donald Driver (GB) and Devin Hester (Chi), 8. Others: Nate Burleson (Det), 5; Bernard Berrian (Minn), 3.

Comments: Driver has finished first six times in his distinguished career, including the last three as the No. 2 WR. "He's a better route runner than Hester," one scout said. "Injuries set him back a little bit. Not as productive. Had some drops. I think he's declining." Hester had 39 catches, seven fewer than Driver. "You can draw some plays up for him," another scout said. "But he's not the dynamic go-to receiver." Burleson came from Seattle in March but didn't play up to his big contract. "Average guy," a third scout said. "He's not a legit No. 2 receiver." Berrian, said a fourth scout, "did nothing."

QUARTERBACK

Aaron Rodgers* (GB), 9. Others: Jay Cutler (Chi), 7; Shaun Hill (Det), 5; Brett Favre (Minn), 3.

Comments: After sharing the top spot with Favre in '09, Rodgers was a unanimous pick for the second time in three years. "He's fantastic," one scout said. "He plays the position as good as you can play it." Cutler delivered a division title in his second season. "I figured he would improve," another scout said. "He's a risk-taker, but I like him. Talented." With Matthew Stafford (shoulder) limited to three starts, Hill (80.6 passer rating) made nine starts and got the nod over Favre (69.9). "Shaun Hill vs. Brett is a good one," a third scout said. "Did Shaun Hill play better than Brett Favre this year? I think he did. He's tough as nails." The 49ers traded Hill to Detroit in March for a seventh-round pick. "I don't know why they did," another scout said. "They would have won that division (NFC West) with him." As for Favre, one scout said, "He's just old. He still did some good things. He just can't get out of the way all the time." Favre made first-team 13 times and was second twice.

RUNNING BACK

Adrian Peterson* (Minn), 9. Others: Matt Forte (Chi), 7; Jahvid Best (Det) and Brandon Jackson (GB), 4.

Comments: Peterson cut back on his fumbling (he had one) and was unanimous for the fourth year in a row. "He's still going strong," one scout said. Forte bounced back from an off year to lead the Bears' offense. "He was fat last year," another scout said. "He never got in shape. He's playing great." Best got off to a terrific start before toe damage affected him the last three months. "He can't be an every-down guy," a third scout said. "He showed that. As a third-down guy averaging about 10 carries a game, I think he's pretty good. I don't see him as a bell-cow." As for Jackson, one scout said, "I think he's a backup. He played decent, but they really lost their running game when (Ryan) Grant went down."

FULLBACK

Jerome Felton (Det), 8. Others: Quinn Johnson (GB) and Naufahu Tahi (Minn), 6; Brandon Manumaleuna (Chi), 4.

Comments: Felton, said one scout, "is easily the best athlete of the group. He improved as a blocker and he's not bad with the ball." Johnson played more snaps at FB than oft-injured Korey Hall and John Kuhn, who doubled as a RB. "He's got a chance as a hammer," another scout said. "He's kind of straight-line. We like his power in-line." As for Manumaleuna, a third scout said: "He's completely overweight right now. He looks sloppy and terrible."

NO. 3 WIDE RECEIVER

James Jones* (GB), 9. Others: Earl Bennett (Chi), 7; Bryant Johnson (Det) and Greg Lewis (Minn), 4.

Comments: Jones tied for first in '07 and was unanimous this year. "I think he's a playmaker," one scout said. "He's got speed, size. He's pretty good. He's still undisciplined at times. He probably has some mental lapses." Bennett emerged as a dependable possession receiver. Johnson and Lewis offered next to nothing.

NO. 4 WIDE RECEIVER

Jordy Nelson* (GB), 9. Others: Devin Aromashodu (Chi), 7; Greg Camarillo (Minn) and Derrick Williams (Det), 4.

Comments: Nelson was unanimous for the second straight year. "His run after is really good, and he's big," one scout said. "His speed scares us." Added another scout: "He's big, physical. Not a speed guy but he's deceptive. He's a strong runner after the catch. Has some drops." The others weren't factors.

NO. 2 TIGHT END

Kellen Davis (Chi) and Tony Scheffler (Det), 8. Others: Jim Kleinsasser (Minn), 5; Tom Crabtree (GB), 3.

Comments: Davis (one catch) has yet to play to his ability. "He's a tease," one scout said. "He just doesn't get it done all the time." Scheffler had 39 receptions. "He's a receiver only," another scout said. "He can find open windows underneath. Slippery. Good hands. I don't think he's a tough guy." Kleinsasser (15) played extensively as a blocker in his 12th season. "I know he's kind of their guy," a third scout said. "But he shouldn't have even made the team."

UTILITY OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

Corey Hilliard (Det) and Kevin Shaffer (Chi), 7. Others: Ryan Cook (Minn) and T.J. Lang (GB), 5.

Comments: On Sunday, Hilliard will make his fourth straight start at RT for an injured Cherilus. "He's not a powerful guy but he covers you with his size," one scout said. "Just kind of long in pass pro. He's just sloppy. Kind of catches. Big body and is hard to get around." Lang had to play a lot more as a rookie. "He's a developmental guy with some athletic ability," another scout said. "I was expecting more from him this year. I expected him to be more in the mix."

NO. 2 QUARTERBACK

Drew Stanton* (Det), 9. Others: Matt Flynn (GB) and Joe Webb (Minn), 6; Todd Collins (Chi), 3.

Comments: Stanton (78.4) went 2-1 as a starter, beating winning teams Green Bay and Tampa Bay and losing to Chicago, 24-20. "He's limited as a pocket passer," one scout said. "He has limited arm talent. But he's athletic and accurate enough underneath." Flynn (82.4) played a half against Detroit and almost beat New England on the road as a starter. "He had a pretty good preseason," another scout said. "Then he played down against the Lions and back up against the Patriots." Webb played poorly off the bench against Chicago, then helped upset the Eagles. "That was pretty impressive, don't you think?" a third scout said. "Against the Bears he looked like he was supposed to look." Two scouts said Webb was worth developing. "He's got some talent," said one. "He's one of those guys who could really benefit by having a good veteran with him for at least a year."

NO. 2 RUNNING BACK

Chester Taylor (Chi), 8. Others: Toby Gerhart (Minn) and Maurice Morris (Det), 6; John Kuhn (GB), 4.

Comments: Taylor, the former Viking, averaged merely 2.3 yards per carry. "I don't know if that's what they wanted," one scout said. "Very good in blitz pickup but just hasn't been productive." Gerhart finally came on in December. "About as anticipated," another scout said. "Just a big, ol' move the chains kind of guy. He can lean on you and get 2, 3 or 4 (yards). Four-minute type runner. That has a value." Morris, 31, produced late after Best was hobbled and Kevin Smith went down. "I never thought he was that tough in Seattle but he's running hard downhill," a third scout said. As for Kuhn, one scout said: "That guy ran it down our throat. He's got better run skills than you expected him to have."

DEFENSE

LEFT END

Cliff Avril (Det), 8. Others: Ray Edwards (Minn), 6; Israel Idonije (Chi) and Ryan Pickett (GB), 5.

Comments: Avril had his best season. "He's a pass rusher and a pretty solid edge run defender," one scout said. "But he gets in trouble when he has to go body up, meat-on-meat on guys. He has to be allowed to just play the edge." Edwards slipped from first to second this year. "He's been the beneficiary of good players around him," another scout said. "He's a talented, athletic kid that does have some pass rush." Idonije had eight sacks, a career high. "He's just so big," a third scout said. "Little stiff. Plays hard. Kind of outworks his opponent. Doesn't have a signature move. Tries to power through an edge. Great reach." Pickett played much of the year on a bad ankle. "I've never been a great fan of Ryan Pickett," a fourth scout said. "But they are pretty stout up front."

NOSE TACKLE

B.J. Raji* (GB), 9. Others: Corey Williams (Det), 6; Anthony Adams (Chi), 5; Pat Williams (Minn), 4.

Comments: A unanimous pick five years in a row, Pat Williams crashed to last. "It's over for Pat," one scout said. Now 38, he has given conflicting messages about retirement. When injuries struck, Raji played a ton of snaps and flourished. "He was kind of the thing that makes it go in their front," another scout said. Traded by Cleveland to Detroit in March for a sixth-round pick, former Packer Corey Williams probably played better than he ever has. "Played well," a third scout said. "Strong. Deceptive pass rush. Can push the pocket. He's undisciplined at times. Lot of penalties." Adams, 30, probably had his best year, too.

THREE-TECHNIQUE TACKLE

Ndamukong Suh* (Det), 9. Others: Cullen Jenkins (GB) and Kevin Williams (Minn), 6; Matt Toeaina (Chi), 3.

Comments: Kevin Williams, a first-teamer six of the last seven years and a unanimous choice the last three, was overhauled by the rampaging rookie from Detroit. "Suh is just so big and strong and athletic," one scout said. "Nine sacks for an interior player is pretty impressive. He's undisciplined at times. Gets out of his gap on occasion. But he's hard to single-block." Williams had one sack. "You could run on them this year," another scout said, referring to the Vikings. "When did that ever happen?" Jenkins will miss his fifth game Sunday with a calf injury. "We were scared to death we weren't going to be able to block that guy," a third scout said.

RIGHT END

Julius Peppers* (Chi), 9. Others: Jared Allen (Minn) and Kyle Vanden Bosch (Det), 6; Frank Zombo (GB), 3.

Comments: Peppers led the Bears in sacks (8) and QB pressures (23) and broke up seven passes. "He has the ability to turn it up to a level no one else has," one scout said. "If he takes a play off everyone is on his (expletive). The reality is you do not want to play that guy. He's going to demand chips and attention." Allen was a unanimous pick the past two years. "He had a four-game streak where he looked a little bit like the old Allen," another scout said. "But he started off poorly and toward the end he faded. He didn't have his typical year." Vanden Bosch was an inspirational, productive force before having his season end after 11 games with a cervical injury. "His relentless style rubbed off on their whole defense," a third scout said. "The way he played, you wondered if he'd hold up. And he didn't." A third-stringer, Zombo started eight games. "He's a tough kid," a fourth scout said. "Tough, physical, leverage. He just doesn't have any pass rush."

STRONG-SIDE LINEBACKER

Clay Matthews* (GB), 9. Others: Ben Leber (Minn), 7; Pisa Tinoisamoa (Chi), 5; Julian Peterson (Det), 3.

Comments: Categorized as a RE in '09, Matthews was second to Allen. "That guy has a tremendous motor," one scout said. "He's athletic as hell and he's got a great motor. He was a dominant player." Added another scout: "He's faded. I think injuries have caught up to him. He can be a great player. He has ability to go with his passion." Leber was his reliable self. Tinoisamoa was OK. Peterson, 32, has seen better days. "He's a declining vet," one scout said. "He's not the most physical guy. Little bit of a floater. But he still can run. Not used much as a pass rusher. Just OK."

MIDDLE LINEBACKER

Brian Urlacher (Chi), 8. Others: A.J. Hawk (GB), 6; E.J. Henderson (Minn) and DeAndre Levy (Det), 5.

Comments: Urlacher has been a first-teamer every year except 2007 (third) and '09 (injured). "I haven't seen a lot of decline," one scout said. "He can run. He's very good in coverage. He's hard to throw over in that Cover 2 concept. Good blitz. He's not a physical point-of-attack guy but he gets in the gaps." Third on the weak side from 2006-'08, Hawk has been second in the middle the last two years. "Steady Eddie," another scout said. "Doesn't make any explosive plays. Gets stuck on blocks. He's instinctive and smart. Usually in the right spots." Henderson came back to start every game after a devastating knee injury 13 months ago. "I don't know if he's all the way back but he was a physical presence," a third scout said. Levy, a Milwaukee Vincent graduate, blossomed in his second season. "I think he has it all," a fourth scout said. "He's got range. He can play in coverage. He's instinctive."

WEAK-SIDE LINEBACKER

Lance Briggs (Chi), 8. Others: Chad Greenway (Minn), 7; Desmond Bishop (GB), 6; Landon Johnson (Det), 3.

Comments: Briggs has been first-team eight years in a row, including unanimous selections three times. "He's more explosive than Greenway," one scout said. "Maybe not as athletic. He plays fast. Gets his hands on a lot of balls. Not a great take-on guy but he can beat blockers to the punch with his quickness." Greenway led the Vikings in tackles (102). "He can play run and pass," another scout said. "He's got range. You wish he was a little bit stronger and more physical but he makes plays." Bishop has started 11 games for an injured Nick Barnett. "Bishop played really well," a third scout said. "His real game is his physical and instincts. Instincts made up for lack of long speed."

LEFT CORNERBACK

Charles Woodson* (GB), 9. Others: Antoine Winfield (Minn), 7; Chris Houston (Det) and Tim Jennings (Chi), 4.

Comments: Woodson, 34, shared the top spot with Winfield in 2006 before moving up as a unanimous pick the last four years. "I think he's slipping a little," one scout said. "I think he looks like he's been injured. He's better in zones at this stage. In man, if he doesn't get his hands on you at the line, he can get run by. Physical." Winfield, 33, has three first and four seconds since arriving from Buffalo in 2004. "Maybe we're seeing the beginning of a decline," another scout said. "Good player still, though." Houston was Detroit's only competitive CB. "He played OK," a third scout said. "He's got good speed and quickness. Plays a little soft at times and jumps double moves." Jennings was feisty and fairly effective.

RIGHT CORNERBACK

Tramon Williams* (GB), 9. Others: Charles Tillman (Chi), 7; Asher Allen (Minn), 5; Alphonso Smith (Det), 3.

Comments: A full-fledged starter for the first time, Williams had a breakout season. "He's their best corner," one scout said. "He's the best corner in the division. Good cover guy. Not real physical but he's playing more physical this year." Tillman, 29, was well-suited in the "Tampa 2" scheme. "You wish he was quicker, faster and all that," another scout said. "He understands that defense and how to play that zone. He strips the ball. He can still make plays." Allen played surprisingly well for injured Cedric Griffin.

STRONG SAFETY

Danieal Manning* (Chi), 9. Others: Charlie Peprah (GB), 7; Husain Abdullah (Minn) and Amari Spivey (Det), 4.

Comments: Manning, a first-team FS in 2006, was solid at SS. "He still blows stuff, but he can run and he will hit," one scout said. "I still think he has some limitations deep. He's a little slow to process but he covers up some holes with his speed." Peprah started 10 games for injured Morgan Burnett and Atari Bigby. "Played the best I've seen him play," another scout said. "I still think he's limited. Instinctive. Tough. Lacks size and ideal range. Take away the Redskin game and I think he was functional." Abdullah should be a backup. Spivey, a rookie with eight starts, wasn't bad. "I'm OK with him," a third scout said. "He will try to hit you but he plays out of control. He's terrible in space."

FREE SAFETY

Nick Collins (GB) and Louis Delmas (Det), 8. Others: Chris Harris (Chi) and Madiou Williams (Minn), 4.

Comments: Collins continued to dominate the position, where he was second in 2005 and first the last five years. "He's very talented," one scout said. "He's got range. He will bust some coverages at times. Little overaggressive at times. Little inconsistent as a tackler. But he's a playmaker." Delmas has been the Lions' top DB for two years. "He has his coverage limitations but he's instinctive, tough, physical," another scout said. "I like the way he plays." Harris, said a third scout, "is slow. People try to isolate him but he is instinctive and has good ball skills. Physical. He is a downhill player. Box guy." Williams was a capable starter until '10, when he was awful.

NO. 3 DEFENSIVE END

Brian Robison (Minn), 8. Others: Lawrence Jackson (Det), 7; Corey Wootton (Chi), 5; Howard Green (GB), 4.

Comments: Robison has been first-team three years in a row. "He's not very big but he's got a knack for rushing the passer," one scout said. Jackson played better than the sixth-round pick the Lions traded to Seattle in mid-August to obtain him. "That guy's playing well," another scout said. "He's a man. He's playing his (expletive) off." Green took up space as an eight-game, in-season pickup. "I mean, he's a big slug," a third scout said. "He can't move."

NO. 3 DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Tommie Harris (Chi), 8. Others: Sammie Hill (Det), 7; Jimmy Kennedy (Minn), 5; C.J. Wilson (GB), 4.

Comments: A first-team choice in 2005 and '06, Harris' career hit the skids because of knee problems. "He will make an occasional play," one scout said. "But he'll get lost and get covered up." Hill continued to impress in his second season off the bench. "He's this big, athletic kid who is starting to get it," another scout said. Wilson had to play when injuries hit. "He played hard," one scout said. "Plays with leverage. Just gets covered up some and I didn't see a whole lot of pass rush."

UTILITY DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Letroy Guion (Minn) and Turk McBride (Det), 7. Others: Henry Melton (Chi) and Jarius Wynn (GB), 5.

Comments: Guion, a fifth-round pick in '08, outplayed teammates Fred Evans and Kennedy. "He's strong at the point," one scout said. "He should be able to step in and take over Pat Williams' spot next year." McBride started seven games and had five sacks. "He took over for Vanden Bosch," another scout said. "I mean, he's humming off the edge." Melton has interior pass-rush ability and top speed. "Those top three guys, I like them all," a third scout said. "But Melton is not a run defender."

NO. 4 LINEBACKER

Nick Roach* (Chi), 9. Others: Erik Walden (GB), 6; Jasper Brinkley (Minn), 5; Ashlee Palmer (Det), 4.

Comments: Roach, a Milwaukee Lutheran graduate, started five games for an injured Tinoisamoa. "He just keeps it steady and you're out of the game without incident," one scout said. "He tries to be physical. He has pretty decent instincts. He's not bad." Signed Oct. 27, Walden has had to play extensively. "He flashed," another scout said. "That's not a great group."

NO. 3 CORNERBACK

D.J. Moore (Chi) and Sam Shields (GB), 8. Others: Nathan Vasher (Det), 5; Lito Sheppard (Minn), 3.

Comments: Moore manned the slot in nickel. "He's not a bad inside player," one scout said. "I don't think you can ask him to be a starting corner. As a nickel covering those type of receivers inside, he competes his tail off." Shields beat out several veterans for the nickel job. "What a pickup," another scout said. "He did enough good things." Vasher was run out of Chicago but seemed to regain some confidence down the stretch.

NO. 3 SAFETY

Atari Bigby (GB) and Major Wright (Chi), 8. Others: C.C. Brown (Det) and Jamarca Sanford (Minn), 4.

Comments: Wright, a third-round pick, rotated in 10 games. "He's got a chance to be a starter for them," one scout said. "He's got some toughness and runs pretty good and has some space ability." Bigby's season was ruined by injury. Brown and Sanford are rejects.

SPECIAL TEAMS

KICKER

Robbie Gould* (Chi), 9. Others: Ryan Longwell (Minn), 7; Jason Hanson (Det), 5; Mason Crosby (GB), 3.

Comments: Due in part to excellent placement, Gould had 16 touchbacks, 13 more than anyone else in the division. "I'll take the guy with the touchbacks," one scout said. "Those are so important, especially in this division." Gould was first-team for the fourth year in a row. Longwell, 36, led the division in FG accuracy (93.8%) but had just 16 attempts. "He's what you want playing December ball and playoff ball," one scout said. "Good under pressure." Hanson, 40, missed the last seven games with a knee injury. "He's definitely good enough," another scout said. "If they don't think he'll get hurt next year, I'd keep him again." Crosby tied for third in '08 and was last his other three years.

PUNTER

Chris Kluwe (Minn), 8. Others: Tim Masthay (GB) and Brad Maynard (Chi), 6; Nick Harris (Det), 4.

Comments: Kluwe, a first-team pick in '05 and '07, had the best net average (38.8). "He's got a big leg," one scout said. "But he allowed more returns than in the past." Masthay had the next-best net at 37.8. "I didn't like him early," another scout said. "But I think he's got some ability." Added another scout: "As of late, I'd put him No. 2. Timmy is coming around." Maynard, 36, didn't have a good year. "He deals with field conditions and weather," a third scout said. "He gets the ball off lightning-fast. He can place the ball."

PUNT RETURNER

Devin Hester* (Chi), 9. Others: Stefan Logan (Det), 7; Greg Camarillo (Minn) and Tramon Williams (GB), 4.

Comments: Hester, a five-time first-teamer, was brilliant with three TDs and a 17.1 average. "He probably played less on offense and his returns came back," one scout said. "They reversed that a little bit with Mike Martz." Logan averaged 12.4.

KICKOFF RETURNER

Percy Harvin (Minn) and Stefan Logan (Det), 7. Others: Danieal Manning (Chi), 6; Sam Shields (GB), 4.

Comments: The top three are outstanding. "Harvin is dangerous," one scout said. "I don't think there's any question he's the best returner." However, Logan averaged 27.3 compared to 25.3 for Manning and 23.3 for Harvin. "Logan is a threat any time," another scout said. "He can take it to the house." Manning runs as hard as anyone in the NFL. "He will run right over you," a third scout said. "Good balance and explodes."

SPECIAL TEAMS ACE

Heath Farwell (Minn), 8. Others: Corey Graham (Chi) and John Wendling (Det), 5; Jarrett Bush (GB) and Rashied Davis (Chi), 2; Korey Hall (GB) and Ashlee Palmer (Det), 1.

Comments: Graham led the division with 24 tackles. Wendling was second with 22 and Farwell third with 18. Farwell was unanimous in '09. "Farwell isn't a ring-tailed terror but a good football player," one scout said. "If you don't block him, he's going to end up disrupting your returns."

From the Jan 1, 2011 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel