

2010 Player Grades: Offense

*By Bob McGinn of the Journal Sentinel
Posted: Feb 12, 2011*

WIDE RECEIVERS (5)

Donald Driver: Given his popularity and pelts on the wall, Driver, 36, will want to manage the final stages of his career carefully. Of course, he wants to return, partially because he's just 42 yards from breaking James Lofton's club record for receiving yards (9,656). At some point in the not-too-distant future, the team will look to get younger. Driver was bothered by injuries more in 2010 than ever before. Counting playoffs, he finished fourth in receiving yards (734) even though his snap count (803) ranked second on the unit. He also averaged merely 3.06 yards after the catch, the lowest among the receivers and his lowest since '04. The YAC stat is a reflection of one's legs, and other than his magnificent catch-and-run against the 49ers, there wasn't much there. He also dropped seven passes, giving him 25 in the last three seasons. **Grade: C+.**

Greg Jennings: Once Jermichael Finley was lost for the season, the offense turned to Jennings and he delivered like never before. In 20 games, he had 97 receptions for 1,568 yards (16.2) and 14 TDs, led the WRs in lowest drop ratio (3.77%) and was OK after the catch (4.91). He had 30 gains of 20 yards or more, 10 more than either he or Driver ever had in a season. Smooth as silk but deceptively tough and competitive, too. Excelled from the inside spot on three-WR sides. **Grade: A.**

James Jones: Second in receiving TDs with seven, including a 20-yard fade in the corner against Atlanta's Brent Grimes in the playoffs that was a thing of beauty. A powerful man with a physique to die for. Able to snatch the ball as well as anyone on the roster. Prone to concentration lapses. Has dropped 17 passes in last two seasons, which makes no sense given his natural hands. Dropped what probably would have been long TD passes against Miami, the Jets, the Giants, the Eagles and the Steelers. Fumbled three times and failed to break up a sideline interception against Miami. Much improved after the catch, leading team with 5.16 average. **Grade: C.**

Jordy Nelson: Started the season as the No. 4 but finished with more snaps than Jones, 701-649. Improved after the catch (4.68, up from 3.78 in '09 and 2.58 in '08). Became more confident in his routes and his ability. Still dropped way too many (10 of 92), a departure from his first two seasons (four of 83). Played as well as he ever has in the playoffs. **Grade: C+.**

Brett Swain: Served as the No. 5 WR all season, logging 96 snaps and catching six of 11 passes with one drop. Tied for fourth in special-teams tackles with 14. Will be hard-pressed to survive another final cut. **Grade: D.**

TIGHT ENDS (5)

Tom Crabtree: Averaged about 20 snaps over the last 15 weeks. Caught six of the nine passes thrown to him and didn't drop any. Responsible for eight of the 15 "bad" runs by TEs. Blocking, attitude and minimum salary should merit a training-camp invitation in '11. **Grade: D.**

Jermichael Finley: Let's check the notes to remember just how good he was in the first four games when he played 81.9% of the snaps (37.3% as a split receiver) and had seven of the team's 12 receptions for 20 yards or more. The 22-yard over route against speedy Bills SS Donte Whitner... the 32-yard corner route against Bills SOLB Chris Kelsay... the 34-yard bootleg against Bills ILB Andra Davis ... a 20-yard seam route in the middle of the Bears' Cover-2 ... Driver's 48-yard TD against Detroit when FS Louis Delmas jumped Finley. He displayed the best hands on the squad (zero drops in 25 passes) and blocked adequately. An upright runner, he suffered a second major knee injury in two years and his hopes for a blockbuster extension went by the boards. He'll be back for the \$555,000 minimum in '11. Let the excitement begin. **Grade: B+.**

Spencer Havner: This TE-LB returned for a second tour of duty in November, lasted two games and was lost for the season with a hamstring injury. His contract expired. Don't count on him being back. **Grade: Incomplete.**

Donald Lee: Squeezed out another season by beating out Havner in August and got a ring, but his best days are behind him. Caught 11 of the 13 balls thrown to him without a drop (he dropped eight of 55 in '09). Played even less than Crabtree (15 snaps per game) in Finley's absence. Had three of the four penalties on TEs. Has a year remaining (\$2.2 million) on his five-year contract but probably won't be back. **Grade: D.**

Andrew Quarless: Forced into a role for which he wasn't prepared and generally made the most of it. As the year wore on, his blocking started to reach an acceptable level. His athleticism showed at times after the catch, where he averaged 4.89. And he didn't blow many assignments, although the looping sack by MLB Brian Urlacher in the NFC Championship Game was all on him. Dropped six of 42 balls; his drop rate of 14.3% was the worst on the club. By the end of the season he was down to 243 pounds, about 10 lighter than in training camp. He must get bigger and stronger. **Grade: D+.**

OFFENSIVE LINE (11)

Bryan Bulaga: Clearly ranked as the team's fourth best offensive lineman. Started final 16 games at RT, a position he had never played, and didn't once embarrass himself no matter whom he was blocking. Allowed more "pressures" (sacks, knockdowns, hurries) with 33½ than anyone else and ranked third in "bad" runs (rushes for a yard or less in non-short-yardage situations) with 14½. Had way too many penalties (10, second behind Charles Woodson). Steady as she goes kind of player with a keen competitive nature. At this point, he's better blocking for the pass than the run. Hard to say if he possesses the arm length and feet for LT. Even if he doesn't, the Packers have found their RT for years to come. **Grade: C.**

Chad Clifton: Despite his senior status, he played much better late than early. Pass blocked extremely well over the last six weeks against the murderer's row of Osi Umenyiora, Julius Peppers, Trent Cole, John Abraham, Peppers again and James Harrison. He allowed a career-high eight sacks, but Abraham on an inside charge was his only sack in the final six games. Also allowed a career-high 29 ½ "pressures" but gave up the second fewest "bad" runs (10) on the line and wasn't penalized as often (six times) as in most years. He'll turn 35 in June but will be back with a \$5.75 million base. **Grade: B.**

Daryn Colledge: Scouts say he lacks toughness, athleticism and strength. There's no question that he ranked fifth best on a five-man unit. Nevertheless, he lined up for every game and just about every practice, trimmed his sack total from seven to three and his "pressures" from an abominable 40½ to 23½. As a pass blocker, he reacts pretty well against speed, is less effective against power and struggles picking up stunts. Led the club in "bad" runs with 25, a career high. Unable to sustain run blocks against better players and is too often late to the second level. Had a career-high eight penalties. Every team wants better than Colledge, but until the Packers find that man they at least know they can survive with him. **Grade: C-.**

Evan Dietrich-Smith: Beaten out in training camp by Nick McDonald, spent a month in Seattle and returned Dec. 31 for five-week tour on the inactive list. Squatty center-guard might warrant another camp look. **Grade: Incomplete.**

T.J. Lang: Fourth-round draft choice in 2009 should get an opportunity to start at LG. First, he will have to get a whole lot bigger and stronger. A major wrist injury in April cost him the entire off-season program and led to a very ordinary camp. When he did play this season, he was far from impressive in two series at LT in Minnesota and the second half at LG in Detroit. Smart, aware and seems more than tough enough. **Grade: D-.**

Nick McDonald: Rookie free agent from Grand Valley State with a future at guard or center. Probably ranks on a par with Lang; with a good off-season it's possible he could be the LG in 2011. Great physique and size, not a bad athlete. Might be best suited for C because of short arms (31 ⅛ inches). Started at LT for Grand Valley in '09. Exudes professionalism. **Grade: Incomplete.**

Marshall Newhouse: Fifth-round draft choice never played a down. Finished the season on injured reserve after his back kept flaring up. Played extensively at LG early in camp before move back to LT, his position at Texas Christian. Left tackle seems to be his best and perhaps only spot. Probably not the long-term answer at LT, but with his feet and high intelligence he'll have every chance to prove that he is. **Grade: Incomplete.**

Josh Sitton: Played as well as any guard in the NFC but lost the Pro Bowl vote to Jahri Evans, Chris Snee and Carl Nicks primarily on reputation. Hitches up his pants, flips the long hair into his helmet and mauls people Sunday after Sunday. Rugged double-team blocker who can and does get movement. Moves well enough to reach targets on the second level. His "pressure" total of 17 included team-low total of two sacks. Also the most reliable drive blocker with nine "bad" runs. More athletic than he looks. **Grade: A-.**

Jason Spitz: Started 47 games at LG-C-RG in his first four seasons but almost never played in '10. His only significant action came in Detroit when Colledge hurt his knee on the second play. Spitz then was overpowered so badly by DT Corey Williams that he was benched for Lang at halftime. Hasn't been the same player since undergoing back surgery in November 2009. Recurring calf injury was a problem this year. An unrestricted free agent who probably will be on the market. **Grade: D-.**

Mark Tauscher: Probably played better in camp than he did in the first month before undergoing shoulder surgery after the fourth game. Gave up 13 "pressures," an astronomical number for someone of Tauscher's rock-solid history as a pass blocker. Didn't show his customary balance against the Eagles and then kept getting beat inside in Chicago. Counting playoffs, his career includes 140 starts. His base salary swells from \$1.4 to \$4.1 million in 2011. The Packers will await his decision. **Grade: D+.**

Scott Wells: Very bright (30 on the Wonderlic intelligence test), very consistent, very committed and very valuable. Yielded 16 "pressures," fewest on the line, and 18 "bad" runs. Drew just two penalties, giving him a mere 12 in the last five seasons. Didn't have a faulty shotgun snap all season. Provides a tremendous level of comfort for Aaron Rodgers because he's so sharp mentally and such a student of the game. Had his best season ever reach-blocking longtime rival Pat Williams of Minnesota. Assistant O-line coach Jerry Fontenot called Wells "one of the most explosive offensive linemen in the NFL." **Grade: B+.**

QUARTERBACKS (3)

Matt Flynn: More than one team might try trading for Flynn, but unless the compensation is a first-round pick the Packers probably should sit tight and enjoy another year's protection with possibly the NFL's finest backup. After a respectable debut at Ford Field for an injured Rodgers, he had all week to prepare for New England and posted a 100.2 passer rating against Bill Belichick's unpredictable defense. He made a mistake here and there, but for the most part his composure, accuracy, arm strength, pocket movement and decision-making were starter-quality. He's tough, he leads and he is constantly improving. **Grade: C+.**

Graham Harrell: Promoted from the practice squad when Rodgers went down and continued carrying a clipboard. More of a move-the-chains type than someone with a big arm or quick feet. Perhaps worth another look. **Grade: Incomplete.**

Aaron Rodgers: Posted passer ratings of 141.2 in the exhibition season, 101.2 in the regular season and 109.8 in the playoffs. Although he's just a third-year starter with room to grow, it's hard to play much better than that. Opponents tried blitzing on 30.6% of passes, but Rodgers is almost impossible to blitz. His razor-sharp mind and ability to process information so quickly makes him almost like a coach on the field. Compared to mediocre passing in his first few years, it's almost as if he had been given an arm transplant. His accuracy is outstanding. He commands the huddle. He has great feet. His practice habits are excellent. He's secure with the ball, losing two of six fumbles. His ball-faking and footwork get better all the time. He didn't hold the ball as long as he did in '09, although his sack total didn't drop that much (16½ to 13½). As long as he doesn't suffer additional concussions or major injury, Rodgers puts the Packers in grand shape for the future almost by himself. **Grade: A.**

RUNNING BACKS (7)

Ryan Grant: His season lasted only 18 snaps before an ankle-leg injury intervened. He was healthy by mid-December, but the decision had been made three months earlier to place him on injured reserve. Thus, the Packers will get back one of the NFL's most productive ball carriers with the freshest of legs. Grant, 28, has a year left on his contract with a base salary of \$3.5 million and a roster bonus of \$1.75 million. **Grade: Incomplete.**

Korey Hall: Hall missed five games this season with four different injuries after having missed 12 games in his first three seasons. Durability would be the only reason the Packers wouldn't re-sign him. Late in the year, coach Shawn Slocum called him one of the top two veterans on special teams. Despite playing just 14 games, he ranked second on special-teams tackles with 17. Played 372 snaps as a rookie in '07 but just 458 the last three years. **Grade: C-.**

Brandon Jackson: Played a career-high 622 snaps in relief of Grant before being overtaken by James Starks in the playoffs. Finished with 1,137 yards from scrimmage, including 731 rushing (3.7) and 406 receiving (8.5). Steady as a rock. Three fumbles (none lost) in four years. No penalties in four years. No sacks allowed in last two years. Responsible for just one "pressure" this year. Dropped pass rate of 5.2% more than acceptable. Plays small with the ball, not very creative and just OK vision. Not a lead dog, but the Packers will have to think long and hard about letting him walk as a free agent. **Grade: C+.**

Quinn Johnson: Snap count increased from 136 to 275 in his second season. Seemed to get more movement on his lead blocks down the stretch. Responsible for 6½ "bad" runs after not having had any in '09. Needs to react more decisively on the move when defenses shift and flow. Has never carried the ball. Must continue working on his hands. **Grade: D+.**

John Kuhn: Finished with 439 yards from scrimmage, including 289 rushing (3.2) and 150 receiving (7.1). Converted 10 of 13 third- and fourth-and-1 situations, some with extreme extra effort. Maximizes every ounce of his limited ability. All-time tough guy and crowd favorite. His 412 snaps included 278 at RB, 134 at FB. It was remarkable to see a team win four playoff games with John Kuhn playing extensively on third downs. **Grade: C+.**

Dimitri Nance: Looks like an NFL back with thick thighs, some shiftiness and adequate burst. After dancing one too many times in New England, Nance fell behind Starks and never carried in the playoffs. His average on 36 rushes was just 2.6. Maybe he's worth another look. He isn't special. **Grade: D.**

James Starks: He debuted in Week 12 but didn't play more than 24 snaps in a game until the playoffs, when he averaged 37.3. Having sat out the first 11 games with a pulled hamstring, Starks had fresh legs compared with everyone else. That should be a factor in evaluating his strong, 110-carry, 416-yard (3.8) rookie season. Remarkably, he didn't have a fumble, penalty or dropped pass. His blitz pickup wasn't bad, either. Despite rare height (6-2) for the position, he kept his pad level down and didn't take many vicious hits. He ran hard, usually was able to lunge forward and got north-south most of the time. It's possible Starks has more balance and wiggle than Grant, but Grant packs more punch.

Grade: B-