

Grading The Green Bay Packers Offense:

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Quarterbacks

Aaron Rodgers

A near-flawless regular season in which he set franchise records for passing yards (4,643) and touchdown passes (45) — despite sitting out the finale — while throwing just six interceptions almost certainly will earn him his first NFL most valuable player award, to be announced on Feb. 4. Set an NFL record for passer rating (122.5). Became the NFL's first 4,000-yard passer to throw six or fewer interceptions in the same season. Led the league in yards per pass attempt (9.25), ranked second in touchdowns, completion percentage (68.3, a team record) and interception percentage (1.2). Ranked fourth in yards per game while leading the league's top-scoring offense. Was the victim of 32 dropped passes, the sixth-highest total in the league. Shockingly didn't perform up to MVP standards in last Sunday's NFC divisional playoff loss to the New York Giants, although six more dropped passes didn't help. Wasn't accurate or decisive in throwing for 264 yards, two touchdowns and one interception while posting his lowest rating (78.5) of the season. **Grade: A-**

Matt Flynn

A year after playing well but failing to win in his only start against New England, he did both while starting in place of Rodgers in the regular-season finale against Detroit. Set single-game franchise records for passing yards (480) and touchdown passes (six) while completing 31-of-44 passes with one interception in what essentially was a final audition before free agency. Showed even better decision-making and command of the offense despite only average to slightly above-average arm strength. Almost certainly will have a chance to start for another team next season. Tagging and trading him seems unlikely, leaving only a compensatory pick in return for the former seventh-rounder. **Grade: B**

Graham Harrell

Promoted from the practice squad late in the season (Dec. 7) for the second straight year, this time after Buffalo offered him a spot on its 53-man roster. Has a good foundation in the offense but still hasn't had a full offseason in the program. Needs to show more to convince the Packers he can be an adequate replacement for Flynn.

Grade: Incomplete

Running Backs

Ryan Grant

Started terribly slow after coming back from his 2010 leg injury. Didn't have a gain longer than 14 yards in the first 11 games, and missed one week in that stretch because of a bruised kidney. Gained 276 of his 592 rushing yards in the final five games, including playoffs. Averaged 4.9 yards per carry during that stretch to boost season average to 4.2. Had two touchdowns rushing and two receiving. Dropped two passes. Yards after contact was a pedestrian 2.2 average and was responsible for two sacks. At age 29 and without a contract for next season, he may have played his last football for the Packers. **Grade: C-**

James Starks

Battled ankle and knee injuries and missed three of the final four regular-season games but managed a better average (4.3 yards per carry) than last season (3.8). Season totals of 133 carries, 578 yards and one touchdown almost identical to Grant's, but he was more elusive and powerful than Grant, although their yards after contact average was the same. Dropped three passes. Better in blitz pick-up than Grant but still allowed 1¼ sacks in the regular season and another in the playoff loss. Needs to show he can stay healthy for an entire season.

Grade: C-

Brandon Saine

Undrafted rookie, signed to the active roster on Oct. 31 after fellow rookie Alex Green's season-ending knee injury. In limited opportunities (18 carries, 69 yards), ran with power (team-best 2.7 yards after contact) and caught almost everything thrown at him (12 targets, 10 receptions, no drops). **Grade: D+**

John Kuhn

Veteran fullback made his first Pro Bowl and matched his career high with four rushing touchdowns. Shared third-down responsibilities with Grant and Starks and didn't allow a sack. Played extensively on special teams, where he had one of the nine special teams penalties (an illegal block in the back). **Grade: C+**

Alex Green

Rookie third-round draft pick was inactive for three of the six games he was healthy, then blew out his knee blocking on the first kickoff return against Minnesota (Oct. 23). Saw almost no playing time on offense (three carries for 11 yards, one catch for 6 yards). Unclear whether the elusiveness he showed in college in Hawaii's wide-open system will translate to the NFL. **Grade: Incomplete**

Receivers

Greg Jennings

Ranked fourth in the NFL among receivers in receptions and seventh among receivers in yards before he sustained a knee injury against Oakland (Dec. 11). Sprained MCL kept him out of last three regular-season games and he missed his fourth straight 1,000-yard season by 51 yards. Still finished second on the team in catches (67) and touchdowns (nine) and made the Pro Bowl. Great chemistry with the quarterback, who could count on his precision and sure hands. Was targeted a team-high 99 times. Had three drops but lowered his drop percentage for the third straight year, dropping just 3.0 percent of the balls thrown his way. Couldn't make what would've been a tough catch for a touchdown in the third quarter of the playoff game. **Grade: A-**

Jordy Nelson

One of the most improved players on the team. Dominated one-on-one matchups, often the result of defenses rolling coverage to Jennings and tight end Jermichael Finley. Great body control made him nearly unstoppable on back-shoulder and sideline throws. Led the team in receptions (67), yards (1,263) and touchdowns (15). Average of 18.6 yards per catch was the second-highest among the NFL's top 30 in receptions, behind only the Giants' Victor Cruz (18.7). Targeted 95 times, cut his regular-season drops (two) in half and lowered his drop percentage to 2.1 after posting marks of 6.3 last season and 9.7 in 2009. Made the \$13.3 million contract extension that runs through 2014 look like a bargain for the Packers. **Grade: B+**

Donald Driver

Three-catch, 45-yard performance against the Giants may have been his farewell. About to turn 37 and slated to make \$5 million, that's too old and too much money for a guy who was fifth on the team in catches (37), yards (445) and touchdowns (six). Also had his second-lowest average (12.0 yards per catch) since he was a rookie in 1999. Dropped four passes or 7.3 percent of his targets. Will go down as one of the all-time Packers greats, but his time may be up. He's due a \$2.2 million roster bonus in March, so the end could come soon. **Grade: C-**

James Jones

Re-signed to a three-year, \$9.6 million deal after drawing little interest in free agency but basically was the No. 4 receiver. Had the same number of targets (55) as Driver and one more catch (38, after a career-high 50 in 2010) but had the second-highest average (16.7 yards per catch) on the team and scored seven touchdowns. Dropped four passes for a 7.3 percent rate, up from 6.9 percent in 2010. Will face competition from Randall Cobb for playing time next season. **Grade: C-**

Randall Cobb

Rookie second-round pick looks like a budding star. Resembles Jennings in build and style. Instinctive, smart and studious. Probably should've taken some of Driver's snaps. Caught 25 passes for 375 yards and one touchdown mostly out of the slot position. Average of 15.0 yards per catch was third on the team. Turned around a struggling return game with touchdowns on a kickoff and a punt return. Finished second in the NFL in kickoff return average (27.7), a mark that ranked third in team history among those with at least 25 returns in a season. Ranked seventh in the league in punt return average (11.3). Ball security will have to improve, lost three fumbles. Former college quarterback, ran one Wildcat play, a 4-yard rush at Kansas City (Dec. 18). **Grade: B-**

Shaky Smithson

Undrafted rookie with kick return potential spent all season on injured reserve because of a shoulder injury. Could compete with practice squad receivers Diondre Borel and Tori Gurley for a spot next season. Gurley has the edge right now. **Grade: Incomplete**

Tight Ends

Jermichael Finley

Played in every game for the first time in his four-year career but didn't dominate like he did in late 2009/early 2010 before his knee injury. A vexing talent. Dropped 11 passes, the third-highest total by any player in the league, and wasn't always in sync with the quarterback, as evidenced by the third-down misconnection in the playoff game. Targeted 92 times, finished third on the team with 55 catches and 767 yards and eight touchdowns, three of which came at Chicago (Sept. 25). Still young, won't turn 25 until March 26, and should be back one way or another, either via the franchise tag or a long-term deal. **Grade: C+**

Andrew Quarless

Started to become the kind of "Y" (in-line) tight end that position coach Ben McAdoo hoped because of his blocking ability. Has a long way to go at the other positions. Was only targeted four times and caught three balls for 36 yards before blowing out a knee 10 games into the season while covering a kickoff. Might not be ready for the start of 2012 but remains a promising prospect if he can heal and mature. **Grade: C-**

Tom Crabtree

Took over at the "Y" spot after Quarless' injury. Capable blocker and solid core special teamer who caught six passes for 38 yards and one touchdown in the regular season. Didn't drop a pass until a critical third-down play in Giants' territory last Sunday. **Grade: C-**

Ryan Taylor

Rookie seventh-round pick played sparingly on offense. Only target was a 4-yard touchdown catch against Oakland (Dec. 11). Core special teams player who was fifth with 10 tackles but also was one of the best blockers. **Grade: D+**

D.J. Williams

Athleticism that was apparent in college and early in training camp never materialized for the rookie fifth-round pick, who caught two passes for 13 yards in 13 games. Was a healthy inactive for three straight games in late November/early December. **Grade: D**

Offensive Line

Marshall Newhouse

Second-year pro started 13 games (three at right tackle, 10 at left tackle) and played more than half of the playoff game after a redshirt rookie season. Outstanding quickness and smarts. Rarely made the same mistake twice. Had moments when he struggled — vs. Kansas City's Tamba Hali and the Giants' Jason Pierre-Paul — and allowed a team high 11½ sacks in the regular season and another in the playoff game. Committed five penalties (all false starts). Dealt with the death of his grandmother, who helped raise him, midway through the year. Has the edge over rookie first-round pick Derek Sherrod to be the starting left tackle next season and possibly beyond. **Grade: C**

T.J. Lang

Started strong after winning the left guard job in camp but went through a rough stretch at midseason. Led the offense in penalties with six (all false starts) but didn't have any after Nov. 6 and went on a tear after that even while dealing with his father's unexpected illness and death. Played with the nastiness the Packers had hoped. Allowed just 2½ sacks. Looked at home at left guard although can play right tackle, where he started one game. **Grade: C+**

Scott Wells

Finally made the Pro Bowl in his eighth season although his play at center has been at that level the last three seasons. Has great communication with the quarterback making adjustments at the line of scrimmage. Allowed two sacks and had two penalties (one false start, one hold). Scheduled to be an unrestricted free agent but is practically a must to re-sign even at age 31. **Grade: A-**

Josh Sitton

Wasn't as dominating as last year but was bothered by a patellar tendon injury that caused him to miss two starts. No surgery was required but will need time in the offseason to heal. Like Lang, played right guard with toughness. Allowed two sacks after pitching a shutout in 2010 and had five penalties (three false starts, two holds). Wisely was re-signed in September to a six-year, \$35 million contract extension. **Grade: B-**

Bryan Bulaga

Rivaled Nelson for most improved player on the team. After allowing a team-high 11 sacks while starting the final 12 regular-season games in 2010 as a rookie, yielded merely one sack in the same number of starts in 2011. Committed four penalties (two holds, one false start, one illegal hands to the face) after getting flagged 10 times the previous regular season. Battled two knee injuries that cost him four starts. Found a home at right tackle after being drafted as a left tackle. Almost certainly will not be moved. **Grade: B**

Chad Clifton

Old warhorse could answer the bell for only six regular-season starts because of a torn hamstring and subsequent back injury. Started the playoff game but was pulled after allowing a sack on the opening drive of the second half. Allowed 2½ sacks in his regular-season action and committed just two penalties (one false start, one hold). Due to make \$5.75 million salary and bonuses next season. The sack he allowed in the playoff game might have been his final play for the Packers. **Grade: C-**

Evan Dietrich-Smith

Beat out Nick McDonald for a backup job in training camp. Played half of the Thanksgiving game at Detroit after Sitton got hurt, then started three games — two at right guard and one at left. Gave up four sacks, second most on the team, and committed two penalties (one false start, one chop block). **Grade: D+**

Derek Sherrod

First-round pick couldn't beat out Lang for the left guard spot in camp, then opened the season as the fourth tackle. Played extensively in three games — at Atlanta (Oct. 9), against Oakland (Dec. 11) and at Kansas City (Dec. 18). Allowed two sacks and had two false starts in those part-time appearances. Started out poorly but made significant improvement before he broke both bones in his lower right leg. Faces a long rehabilitation after surgery to implant a rod in his leg. **Grade: Incomplete**

Ray Dominguez

Undrafted rookie struggled at tackle early in camp before moving to guard. Didn't make the team initially but was promoted from the practice squad on Oct. 12. Was active for six games but never played. Some concerns/questions about his strength. **Grade: Incomplete**

Herb Taylor

Backup tackle signed off the street on Dec. 20, three years after his last appearance in a game. Was active for two games but did not play. **Grade: Incomplete**