

Rating the Packers: Week 2 vs Bears

Capers' plans overwhelm Chicago again

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

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Green Bay - The Chicago Bears' offensive coordinators were Ron Turner in 2009, Mike Martz in 2010-'11 and Mike Tice this season.

It really has made no difference. Whoever has been designing the offense and calling the plays under coach Lovie Smith, Green Bay defensive coordinator Dom Capers has owned them all.

In eight games against Capers' defense, the Bears have averaged 14.3 points, 288.9 yards, 2.5 turnovers and 3.6 sacks.

Quarterback Jay Cutler has a passer rating of 32.4 in three starts at Lambeau Field and 72.7 in four starts at Soldier Field. Overall, his rating is 53.1.

The Packers' 23-10 victory over the Bears Thursday night improved their record to 7-1 with Capers directing the defense.

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

RECEIVERS (1)

The group got off to a poor start when Jordy Nelson dropped a power slant on third and 1 against little CB Tim Jennings that Aaron Rodgers threw right on the numbers. On the next series, Nelson wasn't able to catch a Classic Cover 2-beater that Rodgers zinged between the cornerback and safety 28 yards downfield at the Bears 25. Then Jermichael Finley stretched out nicely but was unable to hold a 25-yard seam route behind LB Lance Briggs at the Bears 18. Let's excuse James Jones by the slightest of margins for the end-zone laser that was just a bit overthrown. These are the plays that a unit as widely acclaimed as the Packers' must start making. Moreover, CB Charles Tillman might rank with Charles Woodson among the most dangerous strip artists in the NFL. That's still no excuse for Finley, who turned it over when Tillman jarred it from under his arm. Later, Jones hung Rodgers out to dry on an interception that coach Mike McCarthy said the quarterback expected him to work inside, not outside. Minus Bear beater Greg Jennings (groin), Nelson played all but two of the 68 snaps and Jones went 54 as the other starter. Randall Cobb was in for 17 snaps, and Donald Driver, who caught a 26-yard TD, had 12. Most of the difference was made up by Finley, who lined up as a WR on 26 of his 54 snaps compared with only seven against the 49ers. Finley's blocking was more than adequate except when he missed Tim Jennings on a quick pass and Jones got blasted by Jennings for minus-5. Tom Crabtree (27) missed DE Corey Wootton on a failed third-and-1 line buck by John Kuhn but otherwise was aggressive and generally covered up his man. Late in the game, the Packers assigned D.J. Williams (19) to make the key single block against the 280-pound Wootton on a sweep, and he got it done.

OFFENSIVE LINE (2)

The two best players were guards T.J. Lang and Josh Sitton. Most of the time, the best movement in the run game has been generated by Lang. He gets his hands inside, drops his hips and often moves a defender back a few yards. He has a strong lower half and plays with leverage. On the one pass play in which Lang had to block DE Julius Peppers one-on-one, he battled but eventually was walked back far enough where Rodgers was sacked. It was the only pressure allowed by Lang, and he didn't have a "bad" run. Sitton was partially at fault, along with Bryan Bulaga, when Melton ran a successful stunt on their side for a sack. Several times the Packers pulled Sitton over to the opposite A gap on a power play that looked pretty good. If Sitton ever could get his pad level down, his drive blocks would create more movement. Still, he usually covers up his man. Jeff Saturday continues making the adjustment to the heavy diet of reach blocks required in this run game. He had some good ones, but two of his 3½ "bad" runs came against explosive DT Stephen Paea. He was more consistent in pass protection. Bulaga was just OK. Peppers had 28 non-stunt rushes, and 21 came against Marshall Newhouse. Of the 21, Newhouse had help on just five. Peppers beat him for one sack off the edge, and on other occasions Newhouse lost his balance but the ball was out. His feet are more than adequate. To take the next step, Newhouse will have to improve his flexibility and stop bending at the waist so much.

QUARTERBACKS (3)

Coordinator Rod Marinelli blitzed a scant 7.9% (three five-man pressures in 38 dropbacks). He kept his safeties deep, was willing to give up the intermediate throws and had his players rallying to the ball. It requires patience and accuracy to defeat the scheme, and for two weeks Rodgers has been ordinary. Both the 49ers and Bears had excellent four-man rushes, far better than the Packers will see most of the year. With the Bears also stunting heavily, Rodgers wasn't able to vacate the pocket, which he often does even if the protection is good just seeking to make something happen. Other than three kneel-downs, he never carried at all. He was saved a second interception when zone-dropping LB Lance Briggs dropped a ball that was thrown right to him. The Bears know Rodgers so well, they didn't jump once on his hard count. Still, Rodgers made enough plays to outplay Jay Cutler by a wide margin. He spotted the Bears' 12th man still on the field, which led to a field goal. He looked off SS Major Wright so Driver could come free for the TD. One thing Rodgers cannot do is admonish a teammate immediately after an interception, which he did to Jones. Everyone knows the cameras follow the QB after a pick. Rodgers used to show up his teammates by pointing to their shortcomings in the years when he was a backup. It's beneath him now to do it.

RUNNING BACKS (4)

After using shotgun sets 92.6% against San Francisco, McCarthy cut that to 45.6% Thursday. Cedric Benson has run from conventional formations far more than shotgun, and getting him untracked was crucial. From 7½ yards deep, with or without a blocker in the backfield, Benson was impressive. He showed burst to the hole, the natural ability to sift around bodies and almost always fell forward. He kept his feet moving. He moved the pile. He caught the ball easily. One time, Crabtree was shoved back into Benson's lap by Wootton. Instead of panicking, Benson stepped aside, made Brian Urlacher miss and charged north-and-south for 11. On the next play, Saturday wasn't able to reach DT Amobi Okoye and it looked like minus-3. Instead, Benson calmly adjusted his track, cut back and picked up 4. Maybe his only glitch was getting hung up on an early screen pass that turned into a sack. Benson played 47 snaps, compared with 31 for John Kuhn and three each for Alex Green and Cobb. Green is just feeling his way. The talented Cobb made Briggs and FS Chris Conte miss tackles. On the third-and-1 that was successful, Kuhn had to take on an unblocked Urlacher in the hole and still got it.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4)

On Christmas night at Lambeau Field, this unit was absolutely pathetic as the Bears' backups RBs rushed 42 times for 199 yards. This time, the RBs encountered heavy resistance before settling for 82 in 22. Capers played to B.J. Raji's strengths by moving him frequently, and he was both stout and explosive. Ryan Pickett (29 snaps) and everyone else on the D-line took advantage of LG Chris Spencer's deficiencies in strength. Pickett beat him for a hurry, was hard to dislodge at the point and even made a tackle in pursuit near the sideline. Starting for injured C.J. Wilson (groin), Jerel Worthy played 33 snaps and did all right. He spun off a double-team and had a tackle for loss, and when Cutler ran toward him late he spun off LT J'Marcus Webb and recorded his first sack. Another rookie, Mike Daniels, had 2½ pressures in just 15 snaps, including his first sack when he trashed Spencer.

LINEBACKERS (4½)

Clay Matthews made some remarkable plays in exhibition games but played so little few noticed. Based on the way he has performed in the first two games, he'll push for the defensive player of the year award. Despite having the overmatched Webb in front of Matthews, Tice offered double-team help on just 38% of passes. Treat Matthews like Reggie White; he's becoming almost that dominant. He rushed only once from the left side and four times from over center. He buried Webb with power and speed, set up others by sacrificing himself inside on stunts and assaulted unlucky tight ends in the run game. Capers dropped him off in coverage just twice all night. After Matthews' 57 snaps, the OLB totals were 34 for Erik Walden, 19 for Nick Perry and 17 for Dezman Moses. In all, Matthews had 5½ pressures followed by Moses (two), Walden (1½) and Perry (one). Walden and the rookies kept turning the corner against RT Gabe Carimi, a so-so bender with suspect feet. Walden isn't as powerful at the point as Perry but plays faster. Moses was up and down. A.J. Hawk played better than last week. He made a phenomenal read on a screen, sold out and took down interference on a promising outside run and ran in late to harass Cutler when his RB was hung up. Hawk's job is made infinitely easier because D.J. Smith is being used to cover backs and tight ends. Trying to cover Matt Forte is a brutal assignment, but Smith must be more physical and keep him out of the middle. His lack of height and pedestrian speed have been evident on seam routes. He was burned badly by Kellen Davis on the 21-yard TD. On the other hand, Smith turned his six blitzes into 2½ pressures.

SECONDARY (5)

Tramon Williams made the mistake two years ago of trying to mix it up with Brandon Marshall in the bump zone. Trashing smaller cornerbacks is Marshall's game. This time, Williams used a bail technique in which he backed away from the big man after the snap and then turned him over to Morgan Burnett if he went deep. Williams can be a smart, resourceful player when he isn't taking many chances on big plays. On this night, he and Burnett owned Marshall. When Marshall did leave Williams in the dust, he dropped a 27-yard TD. Starter Sam Shields and nickel back Casey Hayward played well, too, and Jarrett Bush played only on special teams. Shields has been sticking his nose in there. Rookie Jerron McMillian had one pick and dropped another in his first start replacing M.D. Jennings, who didn't play from scrimmage, either. On two plays in the box, McMillian had the guts to take on Spencer and RG Lance Louis, bounced off and assisted on the tackle. Two interceptions by Williams and another by Woodson made a total of four. Burnett had the only missed tackle by the entire defense.

KICKERS (5)

Tim Masthay punted five times, averaging 47.6 yards (gross), 42 (net) and 4.54 seconds (hang time). Both of his Aussie punts were inside the 20, and so was another. He has been excellent since camp opened. Mason Crosby hit from 48, 35 and 54 yards. Although he mis-hit one kickoff, his five-boot averages still were 69.8 and 3.71.

SPECIAL TEAMS (5)

The 27-yard pitch from Masthay to Crabtree for a game-turning TD from field-goal formation almost was foiled by Peppers, who actually got a hand on Crabtree as he was catching the ball. The most difficult block was made by Evan Dietrich-Smith, who eliminated Conte, the lone safety. Cobb tried yelling and gesturing to Shields before a first-quarter punt bounced off him, but the crowd noise was too extreme. Fortunately for Shields, he made the recovery. John Kuhn missed a block on the opening kickoff, and Bears CB Sherrick McManis laid a heavy lick on Cobb. Later, Kuhn made amends with an open-field tackle of Devin Hester. When Hester slipped by Crosby on a kickoff, Bush tackled him after a 38-yard return.

OVERALL (4)

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