

# Rating the Packers: Week 12 at Giants

## Matthews' presence wouldn't have saved Packers

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

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**Green Bay** - Clay Matthews single-handedly provides a pass rush. Ask the Houston Texans what Clay Matthews can do against the run.

With Matthews on the field Sunday night in East Rutherford, N.J., Eli Manning not only would have felt threatened, he would have been threatened. It's entirely possible that the New York Giants would have scored at least 14 fewer points.

Still, a healthy Matthews wouldn't have saved the Green Bay Packers because their offense was every bit as deficient as their defense. Together, it was a malfunction of the highest order.

Here is a rating of the Packers in their 38-10 loss to the Giants, with their 1 to 5 football totals in parentheses:

### RECEIVERS (1 ½)

After averaging 6.8 targeted passes in the first 10 games (and catching 4.2), James Jones never saw a ball. Besides being a personal setback for Jones, it symbolized the dysfunction of the passing game. One time, Aaron Rodgers checked out of a play designed for Jones and went to Randall Cobb. That's the way it went on a day in which Rodgers had little time to even consider the outside receivers after the Giants began to sit in variations of two-high safety coverage for the final 3 ½ quarters. Jones played 57 of 61 snaps, and he was by himself to a side with no TE on 27 of them. The outside CBs, Corey Webster and Prince Amukamara, were vulnerable. The only TD came on Jordy Nelson's fiendish double move against Webster in which he was 3 yards behind him at the 29-yard catch point of a 61-yard sideline route. But Nelson, who played 54 snaps, had only three targets himself. Matched in the slot most of the time against veteran handyman Antrel Rolle, Randall Cobb (37) saw seven passes and caught four for 39. Rolle pestered Cobb, who had a drop. Donald Driver, the target of 12 balls in 11 games, played seven snaps and had none. After a good game in Detroit, Jermichael Finley seemed to occupy a more prominent place in the plan. Of his 35 snaps, a hefty 57% came as a split receiver. He stiff-armed Rolle and shouldered over the top of Amukamara on a nifty 9-yard bootleg. On the first play of the second half, Finley showed great hustle catching a deflection for 16 on a wayward ball that should have been intercepted by MLB Chase Blackburn. But then, Finley also dropped an easy pass in the flat.

### OFFENSIVE LINE ( ½ )

Defensive coordinator Perry Fewell rushed five men on five of 34 drop-backs (14.7%), a low total in line with what Jacksonville's Mel Tucker (9.5%) and Detroit's Gunther Cunningham (0%) did in two of the previous three games. The Giants' rush was dominating (five sacks, four knockdowns, six hurries), enabling Fewell to keep seven people in coverage. The pressure totals were 4 ½ for T.J. Lang, three for Evan Dietrich-Smith, 2 ½ for Marshall Newhouse, 1 ½ for Jeff Saturday and one-half for Josh Sitton. Not only did Lang have the most pressures, three of the five "bad" runs were on his side of the ledger as well. It should be pretty clear after Lang's two starts that he's uncomfortable at RT. He is trying to play outside with a bad right elbow, 32 ½-inch arms and insufficient background at the position. Given the fact that Dietrich-Smith so far seems stopgap only at LG (his size and physical attributes are better suited for center), maybe the Packers would be better served rolling the dice with hard-trying rookie Don Barclay at RT and putting Lang back at LG. Provided Newhouse plays better than he did Sunday, Mike McCarthy could give Barclay some sort of help on almost every pass with a degree of difficulty and not have to worry about what's going on at LG. Lang is struggling with his footwork, his punch and his balance. It's a little hard watching this proud, productive guard reduced to just hanging on at tackle. The Packers have been adding pattern-oriented runs to what was almost a no-pull ground game for years. But in the third quarter, when Lang was asked to pull to his right and lead for Green, he didn't get close enough to Webster in order to throw his block, missed and Green went down for no gain. On another run, Osi Umenyiora beat Lang inside and knocked off Sitton, leaving WLB Michael Boley free to smear Green. On a classic outside zone, Dietrich-Smith and Saturday double-teamed the nose tackle and then Saturday was supposed to get off and block Blackburn. It's an example of having two smaller players next to each other. Saturday stayed too long, enabling Blackburn to have a free run and blast Green in the hole for a 1-yard gain. Jason Pierre-Paul had 28 pass rushes, including six one-on-one's against Lang, four against Dietrich-Smith and three against Newhouse. He ran stunts on four others and was double-teamed on 11. Pierre-Paul did most of his damage against Lang, whereas all of Newhouse's pressures came against Umenyiora. When Newhouse fails almost to get a hand on a rusher, it's as if he lacks confidence in his ability and is doing too much guessing.

## **QUARTERBACKS (2)**

There were maybe five cases in which Rodgers had all day to throw and couldn't pull the trigger. He has made it clear how much he abhors interceptions and is striving to keep away from a double-digit total for the season. Rodgers said he didn't throw the Hail Mary at the end of the first half partially because he might have taken a big hit from Mathias Kiwanuka when he reared up to unleash. Offensive coordinator Tom Clements approved of his decision. But it's also likely that Rodgers doesn't want to give away a cheap pick, either. In any event, Rodgers did as much weaving as he did looking downfield because of the rush. The Giants' front four also is much taller than most, and Rodgers was on his tiptoes more than once trying to see over the trees. An assortment of screens, shovel passes and route combinations weren't executed properly. Rodgers got Webster on the long TD and Webster got him on the pick, a daring maneuver that Casey Hayward has pulled off a few times and veteran CBs have been chancing for several years. Graham Harrell played one series (nine snaps) at the end. He handed off without incident, threw a high check-down that was caught by John Kuhn and a seam route that was slightly behind D.J. Williams.

## **RUNNING BACKS (2 ½)**

After the coaches hurt Green's feelings last week with a six-snap, one-touch outing in Detroit, he actually played more than James Starks (25 to 16) and fared pretty well. He hit a few holes hard and was effective in pass protection. Even though Kenny Phillips should have been blocked on third and 1, Green is heavier and needs to charge through the free safety and get that first down. Instead, Phillips made the solo tackle just short of the sticks. Green appeared to drop a shovel pass, and Starks couldn't catch a somewhat low check-down. On Cobb's only play as a RB, he froze Pierre-Paul on a reverse, turning minus-6 into a gain of 12. Kuhn (29) made a sweet decision on an option route through the middle, running away from the defense for a 32-yard reception that doubled his career long. On Nelson's TD, Kuhn alertly came across to pick up DE Justin Tuck after he came free against Tom Crabtree.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (1 ½)**

C.J. Wilson, the Packers' second best D-lineman against the run, damaged his knee on the first play. He limped around long enough to play 14 of the first 20 snaps against a power-running team that made it a base-defense kind of night. But Wilson didn't have the lower-body strength to stay square and shed blocks, and it was reflected in the tone-setting steadiness of the New York ground game. After Wilson was shut down, Jerel Worthy played base until the third quarter when Mike Daniels got his shot. On the goal line, the Giants wisely ran away from Ryan Pickett and pancaked Worthy on Andre Brown's 2-yard TD. When Ahmad Bradshaw burst through the middle and scored standing up (13 yards), Worthy was badly displaced. B.J. Raji led with 53 snaps, followed by Pickett (52), Daniels (23), Worthy (20), Mike Neal (14) and Wilson (14). Daniels is a fun study. He's like a bull in a china shop. The only pressures were by Raji (three), who had his second top-notch rushing game in a row. He was active, powerful and quick against Pro Bowl RG Chris Snee, especially early. Neal deserves most of the blame for Manning's 13-yard scramble up the gut because he was dealing with just one blocker and Raji had two.

## **LINEBACKERS (1 ½)**

In a physical game against a physical team, it's important to have a physical presence in the middle. A.J. Hawk has never been that, and he certainly wasn't Sunday night. The Giants admire the abilities of second-year FB Henry Hynoski, but he's also a free agent. Three or four times, Hynoski controlled if not dominated Hawk on isolation blocks. He has never shown horsepower on the goal line, and on Bradshaw's 13-yard TD right up the chute he got twisted and eliminated. Most of his tackles came in garbage time. Dom Capers blitzed more than he has lately (31.3%), and one time Hawk found himself matched against TE Martellus Bennett. The 15-yard reception was too easy. Meanwhile, Brad Jones stepped up and stuffed Hynoski on third-and-1, engulfing Bradshaw for minus-1. Other than that tremendous play, Jones was just so-so. Minus Matthews, the OLB play chart showed Dezman Moses (all 65 snaps, two pressures, one batted ball), Erik Walden (34, one pressure) and Frank Zombo (31, none). Walden made the worst mistake of the game, overrunning a screen pass and then missing Bradshaw 6 yards downfield on a play that ruptured. For reasons unknown, Walden sat behind Zombo for the last 1 ½ quarters. Moses used his expanding pass-rush repertoire to keep the heat on LT Will Beatty. Other than Walden's lone hurry against RT David Diehl, it was disappointing that the OLBs couldn't get after Diehl and backup Sean Locklear. The group didn't set much of an edge against the run, either.

## **SECONDARY (½)**

Tramon Williams (63 snaps) is becoming a real liability as a tackler. He didn't want any part of Bradshaw on the screen, turning toward Hynoski even though the charging Bradshaw was closer to him. He played patty-cake with Rueben Randle, turning his 6-yard catch into 10. It appeared that at the line Manning was changing the direction of runs toward Williams when it was clear what side he was on. There are tough CBs all over the league who knife in to prevent break-out runs. Not Williams, who isn't fighting to separate from WRs. Even Manning knew the book on Williams and drove a shoulder at him in the open field rather than slide. Future opponents might tailor their ground game at No. 38 once this tape gets around. Hayward (21) had another strong game covering Victor Cruz except for a dropped interception early. Davon House (63), who started over Hayward in base because the coaches preferred size against Hakeem Nicks, allowed two TD passes and a 30-yarder. He's still learning and at times seems a little stiff. House did show Nick Collins-like speed and hustle chasing down Bradshaw on the screen. At least he battled. Morgan Burnett (65) missed two vital tackles and showed little route recognition or burst on a 25-yard completion to Nicks. M.D. Jennings (44) and Jerron McMillian (30) weren't on their games, either.

## **KICKERS (2 ½)**

Mason Crosby hit a good ball but had his attempt from 55 hook just left. Despite a subpar hold with laces showing, he used textbook technique to connect from 28. His three kickoffs averaged 65.7 yards and 3.97 seconds of hang time. Tim Masthay was adequate, averaging 38.5 (gross, net) and 4.37.

## **SPECIAL TEAMS (2 ½)**

Jarrett Bush did well to force a fair catch and almost had a chance to recover Randle's muff. Rob Francois and Jamari Lattimore, who drew the team's first holding penalty on a return in 2012, also stood out. In eight returns, Cobb's longest was 30.

## **OVERALL (1)**

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