

Rating the Packers: Week 9 vs Bears

Packers defense leaves more to be desired

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

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Green Bay - Josh McCown, Chicago's backup quarterback, played better than Green Bay's backup, Seneca Wallace.

Nevertheless, it was the surprising ability of the Bears' offensive and defensive fronts to outperform the Packers' that poured the foundation of their 27-20 upset victory Monday night at Lambeau Field.

In losing their first NFC North home game since 2009, the Packers didn't have a penalty for just the third game in 23 years. Their lines, which had been injury-free and strengths most of the season, were the problem.

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

RECEIVERS (2)

With James Jones (28 snaps) at less than full strength coming off a knee injury, Jordy Nelson was the No. 1 target again. Mike McCarthy's candidates for the slot were Nelson and Myles White. He chose Nelson, whose playing time of 53 snaps included 35 in the slot and three in the No. 3 (innermost) position. Nine of the 21 passes went to Nelson, and he caught four for 67 yards. But by playing Nelson inside and not outside it negated Seneca Wallace's best throws, which over the years have been sideline takeoff routes. Jarrett Boykin (49) didn't get much done against CB Charles Tillman, and Jones didn't appear physically able to run by anyone. White had just eight snaps. Wallace never did go long, but that also was due in part to shoddy protection. TE Andrew Quarless (42) blocked defensive ends well for the second straight game. He did one-on-one work against DE Shea McClellin on three carries by Eddie Lacy totaling 76 yards. Some of the blocks were angle blocks when Quarless had automatic leverage, but there were others at the point of attack when he sustained for several seconds. He also caught five of seven short passes for 34 yards but had a crucial juggle/drop at the Chicago 25 on third and 11 that necessitated a punt. Brandon Bostick (15) continued to play ahead of Ryan Taylor (three) and Jake Stoneburner (one). There were just five "bad" runs, and Bostick's one-half was the only one assessed to a receiver.

OFFENSIVE LINE (1 ½)

It's possible that this might have been the last time in a Packers uniform for Marshall Newhouse. Derek Sherrod was activated Tuesday, and Newhouse's performance at right tackle in the second half was awful. With the game on the line, he gave up two sacks to McClellin in the fourth quarter that just cannot happen. McClellin, who had done next to nothing for 1½ seasons, beat Newhouse with a spin move in 4.4 seconds and then circled wide to sack Wallace in 4.3 as he looked to go deep on the final play. He wasn't using his hands properly and looked stiff. Newhouse didn't have a bad miss in the run game, but watching him play tackle compared to David Bakhtiari and Don Barclay was revealing. Newhouse makes contact, and stands there. The starters never stop trying to pick off a defender downfield or maybe get in position to recover a fumble. It's just a difference in temperament that the Packers can only hope to find in Sherrod. Both McClellin and RE Julius Peppers played far better than in any game this season. Well-rested and seemingly inspired, Peppers had Bakhtiari off-balance and hanging on for dear life all night. In 19 rushes against the Colorado rookie, Peppers was double-teamed by Josh Sitton (three), John Kuhn (two) or a tight end (two). After allowing 2½ pressures in the first half, Bakhtiari didn't allow any in the second. Newhouse made his 2013 debut at tackle after T.J. Lang sat out the second half with a concussion. Barclay had to replace him at right guard, and other than yielding an up-the-field sack by DT Corey Wootton he fared OK. Evan Dietrich-Smith had two of the five "bad" runs when he couldn't execute reach-blocks against Wootton and NT Stephen Paea but wasn't charged with a pressure. Five of the individual pulls by the unit were made by Sitton, who created movement and didn't have a "bad" run or pressure. Twice in the early going he fell off blocks and the gains were minimal.

QUARTERBACKS (1 ½)

Aaron Rodgers suffered a broken collarbone as he scrambled out to the right and was downed by McClellin on a classic coverage sack. The game was 2½ minutes old. In 11 series, Wallace generated 17 points, 259 yards and 13 first downs. Just as Wallace had little or no practice time with the No. 1 offense, Mike McCarthy wasn't prepared to play to Wallace's strengths. In order to succeed, Wallace can't be confined to the pocket, where he was four times on seven-step drops and twice on five-step drops. Of his 48 snaps, just 17 came in shotgun. He will have to be used on bootlegs and half-rollouts because of his stature. The batted ball by Peppers that he intercepted was a running play in which Wallace decided to throw because of a crowded box. Rodgers does that, too, but he does it almost instantly. Wallace was too slow and Peppers had time to get his arms up. He also made a bad read on a sideline throw that should have been intercepted by SLB James Anderson. Wallace's composure was good. There were no delay of game penalties, dropped shotgun snaps or bobbled center exchanges, the procedural miscues that plague backups. Even when protection disintegrated into jail breaks, he wasn't pointing fingers or looking frustrated. He threw a difficult pass moving to his left. How well teammates and assistant coaches rally around Wallace and if McCarthy devises a suitable game plan will determine his rate of success. The knee-jerk, negative evaluations of Wallace being made outside the building will have meaning only if McCarthy allows them to permeate the organization. It's about winning, and McCarthy must forge a winning formula behind a No. 2.

RUNNING BACKS (4 ½)

After Rodgers departed, Eddie Lacy plainly elevated his game. This was the type of individual performance that the Packers needed to win without their superstar, but other than Lacy almost no one else elevated his game. A one-back coach all season, McCarthy used a two-back set with FB John Kuhn on Wallace's first 11 snaps. Lacy gained all 18 yards of a second-series carry after contact, breaking tackles by Paea and SS Major Wright and dragging Tillman the final 11 yards. He just wouldn't go down in his most dominating showing yet. The Bears kept trying to strip Lacy but he hasn't fumbled since Game 1. FS Chris Conte had a terrible game tackling, and his open-field miss of Lacy enabled a 17-yard run to rupture into 56. Lacy played 38 snaps compared to James Starks' 12. Starks also made Conte miss at the 14 on his 32-yard TD run straight up the gut. The Packers will have to ride their two horses like never before. Twenty of Kuhn's 25 snaps were as a fullback, and he did a solid job blocking.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4)

Mike Daniels (33), the Packers' only threat as an interior pass rusher, was limited to one pressure. Bears coach Marc Trestman spread the defense out; just eight of the 76 snaps included three D-linemen, and only three had four. Dom Capers blitzed on 31.8% of passes. When the Packers rushed four, C Roberto Garza fanned toward the guard in front of Daniels and double-teamed him. That left Datone Jones (18) or someone else one-on-one with LG Matt Slauson or RG Kyle Long, and most of the time the guards won. Jones' effort is high. He pursues well laterally. But he isn't playing explosively or with power. At times, O-linemen almost manhandle him. His rush is sluggish. Daniels lost containment enabling McCown to scramble underneath him for 20. Wide bodies B.J. Raji (48), Ryan Pickett (37) and Johnny Jolly (29) were up and down. Raji ruined a pair of screens with instant reaction and shed blocks for a few tackles. Both Raji and Jolly were victims of the Bears' beautifully executed trap plays. Many times in the past Raji and Pickett proved immovable to the Bears. Not this time. The Bears went muscle on muscle with the big boys. Chicago's 18-play, 80-yard, 8:58 field goal drive at the end was the ultimate indignity for Green Bay's run defense.

LINEBACKERS (1)

After losing ROLB Andy Mulumba (21), who started ahead of Nate Palmer, the Packers had to play the final 52 snaps with Mike Neal at left outside and Palmer. Starters Clay Matthews and Nick Perry sat out again. Neal beat rookie RT Jordan Mills off the edge on third and 6 and had both arms around McCown. But he couldn't finish and a sack turned into a 23-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Marshall. As vulnerable as Mills has been, Neal settled for four pressures. He also was washed down inside several times and missed two tackles. Palmer beat sixth O-lineman Eben Britton and brought down Matt Forte for minus-2 and stayed home on a reverse, but went absolutely nowhere rushing against LT Jermon Bushrod. A.J. Hawk's limitations were exposed for the second straight game. He has lost weight to increase his range, but in a ground-and-pound contest like this his lack of bulk hurts the defense. He was engulfed, trashed and bounced too much. To his credit, Hawk almost never quits on a play and is forever trying to spin off blocks and into the ball carrier's legs. Then TE Martellus Bennett ran right by him in man coverage for 27 yards even when he had inside leverage. Hawk played all 77 snaps ahead of Brad Jones (43), who alternated with Jamari Lattimore (23) on the other side. Jones returned from a three-week absence; it will be interesting to see if McCarthy goes back to Jones or stays with Hawk as his every-down linebacker. Jones was a non-factor. Lattimore guessed wrong on a 17-yard draw by Forte.

SECONDARY (½)

Six missed tackles (three by Sam Shields, two by Morgan Burnett, one by Casey Hayward) and no takeaways marked a forgettable performance. The Bears were committed to making the cornerbacks tackle with their screen and running games. It was a good decision. Shields reverted to his old form, staying wired on wide-receiver blocks and seldom seeking contact. Hayward, in the slot, killed any comeback chance by missing the tackle on Martellus Bennett in the flat. Whereas Hayward played 42 snaps, the best tackler in the secondary, Micah Hyde, played merely 11 as the dime back. Neither Tramon Williams (76) nor Davon House (24) provided a physical presence, either. From bunch sets, Marshall and Alshon Jeffery easily managed separation too much. There was indecision if not confusion in some coverages. Williams appeared to misjudge the flight of the long TD pass to Marshall. House didn't really compete on the third-down fade to Jeffery for a 6-yard TD. For some reason, House doesn't play to his timed speed of 4.41 seconds. Burnett and Hawk missed Forte in the backfield on fourth and 1, and Burnett's miss of Forte on a 33-yard pass resulted in an additional 16 yards. Burnett did make a great play, stuffing the pulling Long and tackling Forte for minus-1. Chris Banjo never played a snap.

KICKERS (3)

Reinstated on kickoffs against Minnesota, Mason Crosby averaged 67 yards and 3.83 seconds of hang time on six books. He also kicked FGs of 30 and 23 yards. A premier onside specialist, Crosby hit a high-bounding beauty that the Packers recovered. Tim Masthay averaged 41.7 (gross), 37.8 (net) and 4.37 (hang time) on six punts.

SPECIAL TEAMS (5)

Lattimore beat the block of TE Dante Rosario and blocked Adam Podlesh's punt in 1.82 seconds. Shawn Slocum rushed eight against eight, and Joe DeCamillis' unit failed to pick it up. On the surprise onside kick, Jarrett Bush and Hyde attacked LB Blake Costanzo. When a prone Hyde scraped it away from Costanzo, Lattimore swooped in for the recovery. Lattimore and Banjo made big hits on Devin Hester, who aside from a 23-yard punt return was held in check. Hyde replaced Johnathan Franklin as the kickoff returner. Two punts by Podlesh rolled 19 yards when Hyde elected not to field them. Illustrating the 32nd-ranked kickoff return unit was a third-quarter runback in which tacklers beat blocks by Daniels and Bostick to crush Hyde at the 14.

OVERALL (1½)

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