

Rating the Packers: Week 10 vs Eagles

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

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Green Bay - In unison they chanted "Dee-fense, "Dee-fense," the small-college cheering teams that populate the sidelines at Lambeau Field.

Problem was, the object of their support, the defense of the Green Bay Packers, thought a football game lasted 50 minutes instead of 60 and took the rest of the afternoon off as the Philadelphia Eagles crammed it down their throat.

If the Packers play even respectably on defense, they have an excellent chance Sunday to win a close game. When the unit failed to even compete, the Packers had their most lopsided home defeat in seven years.

Here is a rating of the Packers in their 27-13 loss to the Eagles, with their 1 to 5 football total in parentheses.

RECEIVERS (3)

Scott Tolzien had the hard job, coming in cold with almost no reps in practice. It was up to these veterans to make his life easier, and at the critical moment they didn't do it. After a review, official Mike Carey ruled Jordy Nelson didn't have possession of what would have been a 7-yard TD pass to make the score 27-20. Instead, it's scored as a drop. Earlier, James Jones would have had an 8-yard TD late in the first half but one foot was out of bounds. Poor sideline awareness by Jones cost the Packers another big play earlier in the season. Andrew Quarless (58 snaps) didn't have an easy play to make, either, in the flat on third and 1 with FS Patrick Chung in tight coverage. Still, it's a catch he must make. With his size, Quarless needs to get that first down on third and 9, not come up a yard short. Green Bay's best player was Jarrett Boykin. Targeted a career-high 13 times, Boykin (46) caught eight for 112 yards. Often working against former Raven CB Cary Williams, he used his big body to beat him on a comeback, made a leaping catch high above him on the sideline for 36 on a free play and made him miss the tackle on a hitch for 11. He appeared to signal Tolzien to abort the run and throw his way with a flickering movement of his left hand. He did slip on a third-and-8 slant that went straight for Chung and was almost intercepted. Jones (72) did make two difficult catches, adjusting nicely to passes that weren't as surgically placed as usual. Nelson also took a 30-yard fade away from little Brandon Boykin, who played a more prominent role with CB Bradley Fletcher, the Eagles' No. 1 defensive back, sitting out. Brandon Bostick, in a career-high 28 snaps, flashed his athleticism on a 22-yard double move for a TD and on a 20-yard reception in which he alertly broke off his route and then broke ILB Najee Goode's tackle.

OFFENSIVE LINE (2)

Josh Sitton had another top-notch game. Matched much of the time against DE Fletcher Cox, one of the game's better young interior rushers, Sitton didn't allow a pressure and had just one-half of a "bad" run when he missed MLB DeMeco Ryans on the back side. Evan Dietrich-Smith destroyed NT Bennie Logan on an 11-yard run to open the game, was quick and violent to the second level and pancaked backup NT Damion Square on John Kuhn's fourth-and-1 conversion. He did allow one-half "bad" run on a so-so reach block and also a knockdown by Logan. T.J. Lang played center for the first time in his life after EDS went down with a knee injury late in the second quarter. Lang probably was overly critical of his debut. First and foremost, he didn't scatter a shotgun snap or botch an exchange. His timing was off on when to leave a double-team for the linebacker level, and 1½ of his two "bad" runs came from center. Don Barclay was adequate splitting time between RT and RG before departing with a knee injury. When Barclay moved inside, Marshall Newhouse played the final 42 snaps outside. The Packers must accelerate the return of Derek Sherrod. Newhouse gave up a horrid sack inside in a mere 2.5 seconds to backup DE Vinny Curry on a three-man rush, then false-started on the next play for the only individual penalty on the offense. The fluid athletic ability that Newhouse once played with doesn't seem there anymore. On one run, Eddie Lacy got hung up and took a wicked shot from OLB Connor Barwin, who had an 8-yard running start because Newhouse didn't keep after him away from the ball. On the other hand, David Bakhtiari never stops with the intensity and hustle. He did allow two "bad" runs and one pressure, but considering veteran OLB Trent Cole was his frequent foe it wasn't a bad day. Bakhtiari showed his speed and hitting power, crushing Goode on the sideline after a long run on a screen to spring Boykin for 21.

QUARTERBACKS (1 ½)

Using the NFL standard, Tolzien was 3 footballs. Based on expectations, he deserved 5. Starter Seneca Wallace, who completed all five of his passes, injured his groin on his 10th snap and didn't return. All the work Tolzien put in with Norv Turner in San Diego, Jim Harbaugh, Greg Roman and Geep Chryst in San Francisco and the Packers staff paid off. He throws a better ball than he did for the Badgers. The deep sideline shot to Nelson was special because of the throw and the fact Newhouse whiffed on a spin move, enabling Barwin to be in his face. Using a rapid release, he showed good timing on screens, runs-turned-quick passes and check-downs. He showed no fear. He was knocked down five times but shook it off. His hard count was effective. He rolled out three times, stepped away or ran from pressure and threw well on the run. The negative included two interceptions (one too low, one too high) and three batted balls. It was a startling performance, to say the least.

RUNNING BACKS (3 ½)

Lacy (48) took a ton of punishment, lugging it 24 times for 73 yards against a Billy Davis-coordinated defense that concentrated on him with a steady diet of run blitzes and, at times, even employed base personnel against spread sets. One time, Lang missed Goode and Barclay missed DE Cedric Thornton, and they hit Lacy simultaneously at the GB 3. He weathered the shot, got back behind his pads and turned minus-3 into plus-1. Ryans was in position on a third and 3 but Lacy went airborne over him for 4. When he gets those shoulders square, tacklers just have to hop on his back until help arrives. On third and 1, Lacy read a cross-blitz, ducked behind Ryans and got 3. Plus, he has not fumbled since Game 1. All of James Starks' nine snaps came in the first half. On his fourth and final carry, he probably should have stayed inside rather than fleeing toward the sideline and failing to gain. The blocking by John Kuhn (42, 21 at FB) has improved this season.

DEFENSIVE LINE (1 ½)

Mike Daniels (37) was a shining light on a forgettable day for the defense. He had 4½ pressures, including two against RG Todd Herremans and 1½ against C Jason Kelce. He also had a tackle for loss when RT Lane Johnson couldn't handle him on the back side. As usual, the double-teams in pass rush went to Daniels. After LT Jason Peters returned from a head injury, Datone Jones (19) knocked him from the game (thigh injury) with a bull-rush sack in 3.6 seconds. Jones' second sack came when he zone-dropped on a pressure, mirrored Nick Foles and chased him down. B.J. Raji (35) and Ryan Pickett (23), the pillars of the run defense, were awful. Operating against an elite guard in Evan Mathis, Raji never made a play and allowed too much movement. He started playing high late and it wasn't pretty. Pickett looked gimpy on a bad knee. He couldn't anchor, and labored trying to change direction. Johnny Jolly (21) beat Johnson inside for a tackle for loss, went out with a groin injury, returned for two snaps when the defense was embarrassing itself at the end and then limped off again. Inactive C.J. Wilson would have helped prevent the humiliation of the last 10 minutes.

LINEBACKERS (1)

Was it wise to play Clay Matthews (40) with that enormous club protecting his broken right thumb? Probably not. Call it the worst game of his career, and it wasn't even close. He got beat by Foles on two read options. He got washed down by TE Brent Celek on an 18-yard run. He stormed in from the middle impatiently and Foles instantly ran the other way for 16 on third and 6. Allen Barbre, a flop in Green Bay, replaced Peters. On two long TD passes, Barbre stymied Matthews one-on-one. And he drew a roughing-the-passer foul. His entire approach and equilibrium were off-kilter. All it got him was tossed about, battered and bruised. Mike Neal (42) had no excuse for his brutal performance. Johnson has struggled against power all season, but Neal didn't have a pressure. In the bad play department, he shortened down and was obliterated on a 30-yard sweep, was faked out by LeSean McCoy on a 14-yard run and was fooled by Foles on a 9-yard run to close it out. Nate Palmer (24) and Nick Perry (18) didn't offer anything, either, against run or pass. A.J. Hawk (61) did play really well. He didn't miss a tackle or give up anything in coverage, showed tremendous hustle and heart, made a stop in the backfield and didn't stay wired on blocks. This feckless defensive unit would have been blown off the field without Hawk's zeal and unselfish, disciplined approach. He didn't always get there but he came close. Brad Jones (47) missed a couple of tackles, either was late or making questionable decisions and showed no signs of being a good linebacker.

SECONDARY (1):

It's entirely possible that Morgan Burnett (71) has never played this poorly. On DeSean Jackson's 55-yard TD, Burnett was in the middle of a three-deep secondary. If he continues to backpedal smoothly, chances are Foles never throws the ball. But when Burnett squatted, bringing his feet to parallel, Foles let it fly and Burnett was dead meat. Tramon Williams (61) was in good position and made a strong leap for the interception, but in his desperation Burnett ruined it by tipping the ball up and away. On McCoy's 20-yard run, Burnett was unblocked and assigned to hold outside leverage. He ducked his head, stopped his feet and off went McCoy outside. On Riley Cooper's 32-yard TD, Burnett was beat by 10 yards. M.D. Jennings (50) made a bad read, gave up the middle and then compounded his error by running toward a spot instead of the man. These are the mistakes Jennings hasn't been making and can't afford to make again. Williams blitzed effectively, tackled well and showed speed and fluidity in coverage. The best player was Sam Shields (60). He matched against Jackson from late in the first half on and fared well other than a 21-yard reception on a comeback route. Now that Casey Hayward (23) damaged his hamstring for the third time, his return this season has to be questionable to doubtful.

KICKERS (1):

Mason Crosby went 2 for 4 on a windy day, hitting from 26 and 35 and missing from 53 (off right upright, poorly struck) and 42 (wide right, misjudged the wind). His two kickoffs for distance averaged 73 yards and 3.85 seconds of hang time. Punter Tim Masthay's one good, one bad day included averages of 48 (gross, net) and 4.14.

SPECIAL TEAMS (3):

Micah Hyde, who played just 11 snaps on defensive as the dime back, handled all returns. He has been good on punts but is less suited for kickoffs because of speed limitations. What he brings are toughness and instincts. Jarrett Bush and Jamari Lattimore led the coverage units. The holding penalty on a kickoff return by Bush was the team's first since the opener.

OVERALL (2)

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