

## **Rating the Packers: Week 11 at Giants**

### **Middle-of-pack showing for Green Bay**

*By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

*Posted: Nov. 19, 2013*

**Green Bay** - Based on what they had on the field and the way they represented themselves, the Green Bay Packers were just another run-of-the-mill football team Sunday evening at MetLife Stadium.

Their offense was OK. Their defense was OK. Their special teams were OK.

OK got them a third straight defeat, 27-13 to the New York Giants, and now an overall record of 5-5.

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

### **RECEIVERS (3)**

Jordy Nelson caught eight of the nine balls thrown his way for 117 yards. Working inside on 43 of his 54 snaps (he played them all), Nelson ran a tremendous wheel route from the slot against nickel back Terrell Thomas for 29 in which he pulled away after the ball was thrown. On the other hand, Nelson and all the wide receivers and tight ends were sloppy run blocking against the eight-man fronts of coordinator Perry Fewell. Costly mistakes were made when Fewell kept bringing down either FS Will Hill or SS Antrel Rolle late into the box, and Eddie Lacy was the one paying the price. The tight-end snaps counts were 30 for Andrew Quarless, 26 for Brandon Bostick and four for Ryan Taylor. Back-side cutoff blocks against defensive ends and linebackers represent difficult duty; Quarless was responsible for two "bad" runs, and Taylor had another. Quarless' one-handed catch in the flat against speedy WLB Jacquian Williams and 16 yards after the catch was his longest and most exciting play of the season. Of Bostick's 26 snaps, just five came with his hand on the ground. A collegiate wide receiver at Newberry (S.C.), Bostick is more at home flanked than in-line. It was impressive to see him power through a tackle by Hill, a tough guy, for 8 yards after the catch on a 26-yard gain. Meanwhile, Jarrett Boykin (39) looked good again, particularly on a sideline double move in which he stretched out to beat Trumaine McBride on a 52-yard bomb. Quicker than fast, Boykin can run a precise route and knows how to use his big frame to shield defenders. Nelson and Jones each had a drop. Jones isn't quite all the way back from his knee injury of Oct. 13. On two third-down inside routes that were incomplete, he didn't seem to have his legs fully underneath him and wasn't able to separate cleanly. But Jones did have enough speed to run past CB Prince Amukamara for 45 yards after an inside release.

## **OFFENSIVE LINE (2)**

Other than Marshall New-house and T.J. Lang in the fourth quarter, pass protection was more than adequate (no sacks for the first time since Game 4 of 2012) against a defense that rushed five or more on 28.6% of passes and six or more on 14.3%. Neither Josh Sitton nor Evan Dietrich-Smith gave up a pressure, and working most of the time against DE Jason Pierre-Paul, rookie David Bakhtiari held up just fine with 1½ pressures. Bakhtiari continues to make progress. Lang was pitching a shutout and punishing people until he got sloppy late. He let rookie DT Johnathan Hankins come free and drill Scott Tolzien on his long toss to Boykin. Later, after DE Justin Tuck beat Newhouse up the field and flushed Tolzien, Lang let up and DE Mathias Kiwanuka come off him to flatten the quarterback on his third interception. Lang about incited a riot by peeling Kiwanuka off Tolzien immediately. Newhouse's scorecard included 4½ pressures, including 2½ knockdowns. Playing for injured Don Barclay (knee), Newhouse has been the weak link three weeks in a row. There was nothing glaring in the run game against the Giants. But Newhouse seems to lack some confidence in his ability, which might be causing some of the assignment errors that are creeping into his game. It's understandable that the coaching staff doesn't want to ruin Derek Sherrod's confidence if he isn't ready to play. Mike McCarthy keeps discussing Newhouse as if he's a first-team player. Well, he has proven that he isn't, so the Packers must have reservations about Sherrod or he'd be in there. Going the distance on a bad knee, Dietrich-Smith didn't move well and lacked his customary aggressiveness. DT Cullen Jenkins beat him back-door early to wreck a run by Lacy, he was late to the linebacker level a few times, he didn't always cut the defense effectively and he missed a block on a screen pass. Sitton pancaked Jenkins on a zone run and really got after MLB Jon Beason a few times.

## **QUARTERBACKS (2 ½)**

There is much to like about Tolzien. Making his first start, in the Big Apple no less, he wasn't the least bit awed by the moment. Receivers drop passes, he never changed expression. Smashed to the turf on several of his five knockdowns, he bounced up as if nothing happened. Facing a deficit in all but the first series, he stayed with the plan and seemed oblivious to the long odds. Unable to get decent yardage on first-down runs all day, he just kept firing away against a veteran defense that knew he had to throw. His 40-yard dash (4.94) and vertical jump (29½) certainly weren't impressive three years ago, but he stepped around in the pocket and challenged defenders to tackle him on two late scrambles with both hands wrapped around the ball. McCarthy seemed stunned how far and how accurate his half-dozen deep balls were. Beason and Pierre-Paul made great plays on two of his three interceptions. On the third, a hurried overthrow into the middle of the field, Tolzien showed he was human. To those calling for Matt Flynn, I can only say that Tolzien's two appearances were better than Flynn's start Sept. 29 for Oakland against Washington.

## **RUNNING BACKS (2 ½)**

Lacy (33 snaps) kept running into unblocked defenders in his 14-carry, 27-yard performance. He was tackled by one player probably more than he had been all season. In fact, he broke just one tackle in his 14 rushes and two screen passes (for 21 yards), and that was Jacquian Williams early. His best moment was the 4-yard TD. Jenkins came off a block and hammered Lacy in the chest and neck area at the 3. He bent from the impact but seemed to smell the end zone and made a heroic effort to get there. For the second game in a row James Starks (four) didn't play in the second half. On his last snap, a carry for minus-1, Starks might have gained a yard or two if he had stayed inside, where Lang was getting no movement and Quarless was late cutting off Pierre-Paul. Perhaps the coaches didn't like his decision to bounce wide, where he was snowed under. John Kuhn (26), the third-down back, made some near-instantaneous blocking adjustments in the run and pass game. There was a Johnathan Franklin sighting (two snaps) after there was none at all from scrimmage in the previous three games.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE (2 ½)**

Mike Neal had put his hand down and rushed in sub packages on just two plays in the last five games. On Sunday, the Packers gave him two more, and the second was so good it might be worth a renewed look. On a stunt with Clay Matthews, Neal eased around athletic LT Will Beatty, turned the corner beautifully and burst into Eli Manning's blind side for a sack in 3.1 seconds. Actually, the starting sub rush from Mike Daniels (33) and Datone Jones (16, including two at OLB) was better than the wide-body crew that played 30 snaps of 3-4 and five snaps of 4-4. Daniels had three of the seven pressures by the line, and all came at the expense of veteran RG David Diehl. At 6 feet ½ inch, Daniels kept getting under Diehl (6-5½) and walking him back to Manning. He's just so active. Jones continued on the upswing with two pressures, and there was nothing cheap about either one. He was too fast for LG Kevin Boothe to fan back and pick up, and then he beat Diehl with a quick inside charge. After Johnny Jolly had to leave after 16 snaps with a recurring groin injury, C.J. Wilson logged a season-high 22 snaps and found the ball carrier more than B.J. Raji (44), Ryan Pickett (36) and Jolly did. The starters didn't register a tackle, but Raji and Pickett each had a pressure. Playing on a bad knee, Pickett doesn't have his customary bulk strength and elasticity against double teams. On rookie Josh Boyd's fourth and final snap, he was buried 5 yards back by Beatty.

## **LINEBACKERS (2 ½)**

Inconsistency was evident. A.J. Hawk (67) and Matthews (61) each missed two tackles, and Brad Jones (52) and Neal (50) each missed one. Jones was so up and down. He blitzed through A gaps for a sack in 1.6 seconds and a tackle for loss. He was quick to cover the flat against FB John Conner and beat Boothe inside to wreck another run. At other times, he didn't exhibit much power, speed or block-shedding ability. Hawk was credited with a jump-on sack, his second cheapie in his four-sack season. He also took the worst of several collisions with Conner on isolation runs and really wasn't much of a factor. Still, the coaches must have liked what they were seeing because Jamari Lattimore didn't get a snap from scrimmage for the first time since Sept. 22. Matthews trashed C Jim Cordle for a sack on a stunt and batted two balls. When Matthews couldn't get much going rushing against Beatty with a bad thumb, Dom Capers had him drop into coverage 10 times. He gave up a 30-yard pass to Victor Cruz on a double move and also was penalized for holding. He just can't get off blocks or roam about recklessly, and the defense suffers as a result. Other than the sack with his hand down, Neal was unable to solve rookie RT Justin Pugh. Bad blood simmered between them at the end.

## **SECONDARY (2):**

Opponents have tried to make the cornerbacks tackle all season because it's a perceived weakness. Manning does a ton at the line, and when he saw an eight-man box and the corners off he checked to hitches. In his finest game this season and perhaps in two seasons, Tramon Williams was a tackling machine. One-on-one three times against hitches, he limited the net gain to 4 yards. He made crisp solo tackles against jumbo backs Andre Brown and Brandon Jacobs. He also was quick to gang tackle, too. On the interception, he maintained outside leverage and peripheral vision to Manning and made a great catch. Set to cover Cruz from the slot in sub defenses, Williams (66) played the entire game outside with Sam Shields (hamstring) a late scratch. Unfortunately for the Packers, they didn't have Casey Hayward to match with Cruz. He was too talented and savvy for Micah Hyde (32), who played nickel while Jarrett Bush (18) took over for him as dime. Cruz caught three balls for 46 yards against Hyde, and Hyde was overextended and beat on the 26-yard TD toss to Rueben Randle. Morgan Burnett (67) and alternating free safeties M.D. Jennings (46) and Chris Banjo (20) disguised their intentions to the extreme because Manning's so smart. Burnett was physical in the run game but made a bad mistake on a 35-yard completion and never made a play on the ball. Jennings is small and plays small.

### **KICKERS (4 ½):**

Taking advantage of a strangely calm day in the Meadowlands, Mason Crosby hit a field goal from 57 yards, the second longest in club history. He also was good from 24 and averaged 68.3 yards and 3.84 seconds of hang time on three kickoffs. Tim Masthay's four-punt averages were 45 yards (gross), 37 (net) and 4.35 (hang time).

### **SPECIAL TEAMS (1½)**

Missed tackles by James Nixon, Jake Stoneburner and Ryan Taylor on Randle's 32-yard punt return got the Packers off to a lousy start. Otherwise, the coverage was exceptional, most notably Banjo's two inside-the-20 tackles on kickoffs. Hyde averaged 23.0 on three kickoffs and 11.3 on three punts. He's a smart, get-what's-there style returner. But he does take a fearful pounding. Back-up safety Ryan Mundy spotted Jennings in for Kuhn as the personal protector and yelled to his teammates. That reduced the element of surprise in what became a 6½-yard gain for Jennings with a direct snap from punt formation on fourth-and-7. If Taylor could have sustained his block on LB Spencer Paysinger a half-count longer, it would have been a first down near the Giant 35. Davon House and Lattimore drew major penalties.

### **OVERALL (2)**

*From the Nov 19, 2013, editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*