

# Rating the Packers: Week 13 at Lions

## Few Showed Up To Play

*By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

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**Green Bay** - Mike McCarthy, his coaches and players proved one thing. They cannot right the ship.

Listing out of control for a month, the Green Bay Packers' season ran aground Thanksgiving Day in a 40-10 whipping administered by the Detroit Lions.

Soft football is back in Green Bay. In possibly the worst performance of McCarthy's tenure, the Packers didn't even compete with the NFC North lead at stake.

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

### RECEIVERS (2)

Where is Matthew Mulligan when the Packers really need him? The staff has so little confidence in rookie TE Jake Stoneburner that it didn't give him a snap from scrimmage in a rout even with Brandon Bostick (concussion) out. It was Andrew Quarless (34 snaps) and Ryan Taylor sharing the load of a light 43-play game. There were seven "bad" runs, and Quarless had a hand in three of them. He was blown up leading from the backfield by SLB Ashlee Palmer, got shoved back at the point of attack by DE Willie Young and was drilled by DE Devin Taylor on another. When the Packers had eight blockers from an inverted wishbone set to handle a five-man zone blitz, Quarless made a misread and got the quarterback sacked. Mulligan, who plays for New England, isn't as athletic as Quarless, although evidence of that is hard to come by lately, but he would be making most of these blocks that Quarless has been missing. In August, Mulligan was 275 pounds of rugged, fundamentally strong and prideful blocker. No one in this TE corps comes close in the physical part of the game. James Jones accounted for 79 of the 126 total yards. He had an early reception for 16 with MLB Stephen Tulloch draped all over him. He had a late reception for 56 by seizing a take-off route away from rookie CB Darius Slay and bolting for an extra 23. Like Jones, Jordy Nelson played every snap and probably would have had a big game against slot CB Bill Bentley if the ball had been coming out. Jarrett Boykin (31) was shut out by Rashean Mathis and the other cornerbacks, which constitutes the Lions' worst position.

## **OFFENSIVE LINE ( ½ )**

The trip to the Lions' woodshed was about as bad as it gets. There were multiple jailbreaks at QB Matt Flynn's feet, constant penetration against the run and a glaring lack of tenaciousness and power. The only adequate performance was by Josh Sitton. Matched most of the day against DT Nick Fairley, and often one-on-one in pass protection, Sitton kept him at bay. Fairley did blow up a fourth-quarter run against T.J. Lang and a second-quarter run by bouncing Evan Dietrich-Smith, who departed after 18 snaps with a knee injury. RT Don Barclay returned after missing two games. It goes without saying that Barclay was an improvement over Marshall Newhouse, but it's unclear if his knee still was hindering him. Barclay gave up 3½ pressures and 1½ "bad" runs. Several times he was either late or unable to sustain in the run game. When Dietrich-Smith departed, a trainer came out to cut the heavy tape job off Lang's right hand so he could grip the ball as the emergency center. It's somewhat astonishing that Lang can even execute the shotgun snap as well as he does. He's not quick enough to be a center, and management has hurt the offense by not having another legitimate pivot on the team. Lang had a forgettable day, allowing one-half pressure and two "bad" runs in addition to snapping the ball low and off line to Flynn on the bungled exchange that went to Detroit. Newhouse was awful in 16 snaps at right guard before being pulled early in the fourth quarter for Lane Taylor. He couldn't even set properly to take away Ndamukong Suh's inside charge on the safety. Newhouse was just hanging on for dear life against Suh. The Packers finally put Derek Sherrod on the field for the last six plays. He showed get-off and strength on a back-side cutoff and was OK until his fifth snap. That's when veteran Israel Idonije ran a stunt and Sherrod was so off-kilter that he ended up on his butt. The Lions must have studied the Minnesota tape because their plan was to attack David Bakhtiari's inside number with power. Rookies Ziggy Ansah and Devin Taylor each had two pressures (three were sacks), and three of the four pressures came on bull rushes that Bakhtiari couldn't handle.

## **QUARTERBACKS (2)**

According to STATS, the Lions had blitzed (rush five or more) a league-low 15.6%. Against Flynn, defensive coordinator Gunther Cunningham blitzed 28.6%, including 7% with six or more. Three of the seven sacks came on blitzes. From snap to first contact, the time of the sacks were 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 2.8, 2.9, 3.4 and 2.0 seconds. To Flynn's credit, two of his better completions (for 25 yards) ended with him on his back from smashing hits. The man can take a punch. He's tough as an old boot. However, there were times when Flynn was holding the ball too long. Scott Tolzien has gotten the ball out of his hand quicker. Plus, he has a much better arm. Not only didn't Flynn drive the ball downfield, he threw into double coverage too many times. He was intercepted once and was fortunate it wasn't three times. Could Aaron Rodgers have escaped the Lions' extraordinarily hungry rush? He would have gotten the ball out much quicker and with more zip, but the Lions would have been punishing him, too. Flynn, 28, doesn't seem quite as fleet afoot as he did six years ago, either.

## **RUNNING BACKS (1)**

Against Minnesota, Eddie Lacy missed a cut to the right on first and goal from the 7 that the coaches felt probably would have been the winning touchdown. Against Detroit, he almost never even got underway before being snowed under. Lacy tried hard. He didn't break even a single tackle but his effort was there. Lacy's 99 yards on Oct. 6 were the most any back had against the Lions, and with Cunningham playing a one-high safety look they were jacked and took him completely out of the game. Detroit's linebacker play was just exceptional. Lacy (25) and James Starks (seven) were involved in protection miscues that led to sacks. On Starks' first play, he tried a careless cut block on Devin Taylor, who skipped over his prone body and sacked a scrambling Flynn.

## **DEFENSIVE LINE ( ½ )**

After watching Jerel Worthy fail to hold his ground in a nine-snap debut against the Vikings, McCarthy put him down and gave a uniform to rookie Josh Boyd. In 11 snaps, just three fewer than he had all season, the 310-pound Boyd was more square against double-teams than the 295-pound Worthy. It was the only promising development against a Lions' offensive line that played its best game in four years, according to LG Rob Sims. Of the three veteran wide bodies, Ryan Pickett (41) was more effective than B.J. Raji (46) or Johnny Jolly (36). Pickett wasn't great. There was a time or two when rookie RG Larry Warford was able to control him by himself enabling C Dominic Raiola to get onto an inside linebacker. But Pickett also got off a few blocks to reach the ball, made a big hit on the goal line, showed some pursuit and actually had the only pressure by a D-lineman. That should tell you how bad the pass rush was. Raji was displaced only once or twice. However, there were too many times that Sims blocked him by himself on runs. When Jolly attempted a big swat move inside, Matthew Stafford saw it and scrambled through his lane for 9. Jolly also took his good old time getting off the field and was penalized for being the 12th man. This probably was the worst rush game of the year for Mike Daniels (31). In a ground-and-pound game, the coaches refused to play Datone Jones (11) if there was even the threat of a run.

## **LINEBACKERS ( ½ )**

Back from a long hiatus, Nick Perry beat LT Riley Reiff for a strip-sack that Morgan Burnett turned into a TD. He came off hard, ripped inside and pivoted toward Stafford off his inside foot just the way Kevin Greene teaches it. His tomahawk chop hit home in just 2.4 seconds. Perry played 38 snaps, but only 13 were from the right side where he does his best work. The coaches are going to have to accommodate Perry. Any other plays here were made by Clay Matthews (56). He split a double-team block to force Reggie Bush's fumble, delivered a crushing hit on tough guy Joique Bell on a wayward pass and kept flattening down inside to curtail running plays. In 21 individual rushes against Reiff (just five were double-teams), Matthews managed merely one-half pressure. Reiff has had problems as a first-year starter; the Packers have got to have more pressure from Matthews. Mike Neal (40) probably is even easier to fool than Erik Walden in 2011. Walden became a much smarter player last year, and the Packers can only hope Neal follows the same track. He was almost comically out of position on two bootlegs, then charged in out of control and fanned in the backfield on a 12-yard run by Bush. Brad Jones (70) and A.J. Hawk (81) had losing efforts; they paled in terms of speed, explosiveness and strength to Detroit's DeAndre Levy and Tulloch. Time and again their deficiencies in speed and quick-twitch prevented them from cutting off running backs as they broke the line. Coordinator Scott Linehan exposed the slow-to-read Jones in the flat on a 26-yard play pass to No. 3 TE Dorin Dickerson, and Hawk on a surgically-placed 32-yard bomb to Bush. Almost all their tackles were 4 yards or more downfield. Hawk plays faster than the leggier Jones, but not by much. Their discipline in run fits didn't appear sharp, either.

## **SECONDARY ( ½ )**

Of the 14 missed tackles on defense, 10 came here. Burnett (81) led with four, followed by M.D. Jennings (64) with two and Davon House (65), Tramon Williams (81), Sam Shields (81) and Chris Banjo (six) with one apiece. Shields matched on Calvin Johnson, who played the majority of his 69 snaps wide and most of the others in bunch sets. Shields competed. Not trusting his blazing speed, Shields panicked on the slants, opened his hips too early and gave up three for 46. Had Shields stayed square, Johnson might have had to run something else. With an extra safety up most of the day, Dom Capers relied on Shields to battle Johnson deep. Battle he did, digging out a jump ball in the end zone before making a spectacular end-zone interception. Williams had Nate Burleson, and in 58 snaps he was targeted just once. He baited Stafford into a sideline interception and tackled aggressively. With TE Brandon Pettigrew pulling right at him, Williams refused to take the easy way out by diving. At the risk of a midsection goring, he slipped the block and assisted on the tackle. After being pancaked and mauled by TE Joseph Fauria, Williams lost his cool. A few plays later, Raiola incited Williams with a cheap bump in the end zone. Williams turned hot-headed again, pushed the back judge and undoubtedly will be heavily fined. House wasn't consistent in coverage against Kris Durham, covered poorly on Kevin Ogletree's 20-yard TD and hung back again as a tackler. Burnett was active on two fumble recoveries but can't be missing that many tackles.

## **KICKERS (4½)**

After connecting from 57 in warmups, 54 must have seemed like a chippie for Mason Crosby. He crushed it down the middle. His three-kickoff averages were 70.7 yards and 3.61 seconds of hang time. On six punts, Tim Masthay averaged 47.8 (net), 40.2 (net) and 4.30 (hang time).

## **SPECIAL TEAMS ( ½ )**

Physical ILB Victor Aiyewa, promoted from the practice squad Wednesday, played 12 snaps and made his presence felt. On the opening kickoff, he sifted through a double-team and sent Jeremy Ross flying with a tremendous individual effort. His all-out hustle in practice got him to the 53. It was mostly downhill from there. On Ross' 35-yard punt return, House, Stoneburner and Ryan Taylor missed. Masthay's punt of 4.75 hang time was tight to the sideline, making the loose coverage even more deplorable. On Ross' 60-yard punt return that was called back, House and two others also missed. Jennings, another hustler, chased Ross down from behind. Quarless, who almost let S John Wendling block a punt, had one of the seven missed tackles. Banjo is a hard-nosed wedge breaker.

## **OVERALL ( ½ )**

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