

Rating the Packers: Week 11 vs Eagles

Packers dominate at home again

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

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Green Bay - Football weather, make that Packers weather, has arrived, and with it two straight opponents had no chance the past two Sundays at Lambeau Field. Green Bay's 53-20 shellacking of the Philadelphia Eagles almost was over before it began. It was the worst beating for the Eagles since coach Ed Khayat's team fell to the New York Giants, 62-10, in 1972.

The offense moved the ball at will before calling off the dogs after three quarters. The defense allowed 429 yards but was in control all the way and took the ball away four times. Even the Eagles' special teams, regarded as the NFL's finest, were no match when the game was being decided.

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

RECEIVERS (4 ½)

The Eagles don't have any Pro Bowl-caliber players in the secondary, but the four starters and nickel back Brandon Boykin do average 5.2 years of experience. The unit almost always is competitive. Anticipating that his DBs could hold their own against the pass but fretting about the run, coordinator Billy Davis began the game playing base personnel against the Packers' three-WR formation. After softening up LC Bradley Fletcher with an 8-yard out cut to start the game, Jordy Nelson (52 of 68 snaps) ran by him two plays later on a sideline take-off for 64. Remarkably, Fletcher caught Nelson from behind at the 9 and the Eagles forced a field goal. Finding open receivers everywhere, the Packers then produced TD drives of 88, 80 and 80 yards to blow it open. Nelson made another extremely athletic catch, stacking Fletcher at the front pylon and getting his feet down on a 27-yard TD. Fletcher's 18-yard interference penalty against Nelson set up another TD. The second TD was 6 yards to Davante Adams (44) on a slant. He looked like a tap dancer escaping Fletcher's press coverage. Meanwhile, Randall Cobb (55) had three coaches apiece against RC Cary Williams, Fletcher and Boykin. Cobb stretched overhead to spear a 22-yard pass on third and 9 with a quick move that caused Fletcher to stumble. Of Cobb's 10 catches, six were from the slot, two were as the inside man on a three-receiver side and two were solo on the outside. He's separating more now because his cuts are even tighter, plus he's accelerating even faster into routes. Stung by a fumble against the Bears, Cobb appeared to take even greater precaution so it wouldn't happen again. Richard Rodgers (43) and Andrew Quarless were involved in the only sack, but their run blocking and receiving were satisfactory. Granted, newcomer Justin Perillo (nine) is more of a receiver, but until he shows more force as a blocker his playing time will be marginal.

OFFENSIVE LINE (5)

Davis rushed five or more on 44.4% of dropbacks, the highest rate against the Packers since Houston's Wade Phillips blitzed 50% in October 2012. On 15.6% the Eagles rushed at least six. Six days earlier, the Eagles overran Carolina, which started four undrafted offensive linemen, for nine sacks. Davis also used a ton of twists and stunts, including one the Packers hadn't seen. Time after time, the linemen picked up and passed off rushers. The choreography, teamwork and cohesion were extraordinary. Probably the best player was David Bakhtiari, who limited hard-charging OLB Trent Cole to two hurries and wasn't charged with any of the eight "bad" runs. Bakhtiari is a conscientious, athletic battler. Playing next to Bakhtiari, Josh Sitton pass blocked well against DE Fletcher Cox, the Eagles' best D-lineman. The problem for Sitton was he couldn't anchor for the run game at the point of attack because of his damaged toe. You almost never see Sitton being displaced. It happened half a dozen times here, and led to 2 ½ "bad" runs. Sitton has such good balance and control that he at least managed to stay in front of Cox and others. It was surprising to see Mike McCarthy and/or Aaron Rodgers run left so often. Sitton is able to run and pull, but he just can't push off. The run blocking on the right side by Bryan Bulaga and T.J. Lang was better. Their precision against stunts was superlative. Corey Linsley was the only starter not assessed a pressure but did have 1 ½ "bad" runs. Several times, he was able to snatch and drive a defensive lineman that was in the gap. LT JC Tretter, LG Garth Gerhart and RG Lane Taylor played the final 12 snaps and need work. Tretter could have been ejected for leg-whipping Cole, Taylor drew a holding penalty and Gerhart was bulled back by Cox.

QUARTERBACKS (4 ½)

What Rodgers didn't know about the Eagles from preparation he soon found out. He used a hard count to determine where Davis' blitzes were coming, checked out of runs and killed the secondary when the rush didn't get home. Afforded fantastic protection (one sack, one knockdown), he answered every challenge and made it look easy. "There's a reason that the Packers are successful," Eagles coach Chip Kelly said Monday. "It's because they've got one hell of a quarterback who's probably playing as well as anybody in the league right now." Those over-the-top spinners to Nelson were unreal. So were the 24-yard shot he put right on Quarless on third and 18 and the little off-balance flip over the linebacker's head to Eddie Lacy for the 32-yard TD. His accuracy when compared to Mark Sanchez' was like night and day. The responsibility for the shotgun fumble was shared by Rodgers and Linsley. Unlike Sanchez, he made a textbook recovery just before OLB Connor Barwin pounced on his back. Rodgers also fumbled on the sack but escaped when the ball bounced right to Richard Rodgers. His pair of 16-yard runs hurt the visitors as well. Matt Flynn (11) hit Cobb for 12 on third and 4 with Cox in his face.

RUNNING BACKS (4 ½)

Lacy was on the field for all 37 snaps in the first half. It probably was because he's much better than James Starks in pass protection. Lacy has come a long way in his second season as a blocker. The only sack he has allowed was a half Sept. 21 in Detroit. Despite the Eagles' many exotic looks, Lacy allowed just one-half pressure. In all, he broke four tackles in 10 rushes and three tackles in three receptions. It became fairly apparent late that some of the Eagles really didn't want to tackle him. On the first toss, a gain of 10, he looked like a runaway steer. On the 37-yard run, he gained 31 after contact. On the 32-yard TD pass, he simply wouldn't go down. In other words, "Hey, coaches, don't forget about me." Starks played 20 of the 31 second-half snaps and didn't get much going.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4)

Of the 78 snaps on defense, Dom Capers used the 3-4 base only on the last four plays of the game in a successful goal-line stand. In the nickel, Letroy Guion (40) had the easiest matchup in RG Matt Tobin and took advantage. At 325 pounds, Guion was just too big and too strong for the second-year free agent from Iowa, although he wasn't nearly as effective in the last three quarters as he was in the first. On the Eagles' fifth snap, Guion slammed Tobin aside in a one-on-one and rocked Sanchez with a jarring frontal sack. Two series later, he recognized a screen pass and might have prevented a TD by tackling Darren Sproles in the open field from behind. He split a double-team run block by Tobin and undersized C Jason Kelce on another short gain and showed surprisingly good pursuit on another play near the sideline. Mike Daniels (42) had the much tougher assignment against LG Evan Mathis but certainly held his own. Josh Boyd had logged merely five snaps midway through the third quarter before finishing with 24. He had two power surges on the goal line. Gradually working back from an ankle injury, Datone Jones (27) beat Mathis and Tobin for first-half pressures. In the second half, Jones was buckled or buried by several double-teams and was on the ground too much. Mike Pennel (16) relieved Guion late and had a quiet day.

LINEBACKERS (4 ½)

Capers expanded Matthews' role. In 57 snaps, he played 37 at weak inside linebacker in the nickel, only four at outside linebacker (two third and 10's, one third and 12, one third and 13) and 16 when he moved up to become the fifth lineman (eight were on the left side, eight were on the right side). Matthews was able to shift forward at his discretion because it's included in the defensive call. Then he gave way to Sam Barrington (19) in the fourth quarter. Whatever his location, Matthews played fast and ferocious. He blew up Mathis on a pull, drew a holding penalty and stopped LeSean McCoy after a gain of 1. He appeared to stun Mathis by attacking him before the veteran guard could get him on a combo block. On a screen to Sproles, he showed no hesitation and contained it. After sacking Sanchez on a naked bootleg on his second play as the fifth lineman, he helped cause RT Lane Johnson to false start on his third. Meanwhile, A.J. Hawk (78) kept the other nine players on cue with quick calls after Matthews shifted. Perhaps inspired by Matthews, Hawk charged into the pulling Tobin in the second half and would up being flattened. Barrington remains intriguing because of the physical nature that he showed on the goal-line. Julius Peppers (59) made the perfect drop, the perfect catch and the perfect stiff-arm of WR Jordan Matthews on his 52-yard interception return. He led the team with four pressures; on the last, he power-rushed Johnson deep into the pocket before raising an arm to obscure Sanchez' vision on the lollipop that Tramon Williams picked. Nick Perry (54) set a secure edge against the run but didn't have a pressure. Mike Neal (44) slipped by Kelce on a middle rush for a sack in 2.5 seconds. Brad Jones got the final four snaps outside for injured Jayrone Elliott.

SECONDARY (4 ½)

Micah Hyde (60) got the start over Casey Hayward (26) at nickel back because the Packers wanted a better tackler against McCoy. Hyde also forced an incomplection to the ever-dangerous Sproles on a wheel route; the Packers did everything they could to keep Hawk away from Sproles. Capers blitzed less (28.6%) than he has since Game 3. The coverage of choice was man-to-man. With four rushes, Hayward pressured more than any DB. He was coming from the slot when Sanchez fanned on the errant shotgun snap. Johnny on the spot as usual, Hayward grabbed it and went 49 yards for a TD. Williams (60) beat Jeremy Maclin to the ball for the interception, gave up a 26-yard comeback to Maclin and tackled OK. Riley Cooper surprisingly ran by Sam Shields (72) on a post in man coverage for what would have been a 46-yard TD but Sanchez overthrew it. After four missed tackles against Chicago, Shields didn't have any. Morgan Burnett (60) seems at home in the box. His physical presence and consistent tackling helped limit McCoy to a long rush of 13. Ha Ha Clinton-Dix (72) vacated the middle of the field on the Eagles' longest play, a 40-yard bomb to Matthews. Hyde came out of nowhere trying to save the day and almost got the ball out. Although Clinton-Dix had another rough outing in coverage, he filled the alley against the run. When the rookie ducks his head entering contact is when he gets in trouble. The Eagles were able to match Matthews on Sean Richardson (20) deep and the result was a 36-yard completion.

KICKERS (4)

After connecting from 27, Mason Crosby actually appeared to adjust his stroke as a way to prevent the onrushing Jenkins from blocking a 33-yard attempt and managed to hook it through. He also missed from 50. The blocked extra point wasn't his fault. His 10 kickoffs averaged 68.8 yards and 3.73 seconds of hang time. Tim Masthay punted once and had another blocked.

SPECIAL TEAMS (4)

Hyde's 75-yard punt return for a TD was even more impressive considering how well the Eagles were playing in the kicking game. After WR Josh Huff quickly beat Jarrett Bush as the first man down, it was amazing Hyde didn't call a fair catch. Instead, he fielded Donnie Jones' high 50-yard punt, dodged Huff, made a hard upfield cut and went the distance behind big blocks from Davon House, Richardson and Bush. Earlier, Jarrett Boykin stripped KO returner Chris Polk but the fumble bounced to the Eagles. Jones stood out with four tackles. Masthay mishandled a botched extra-point snap. DE Brandon Bair went through Boyd and Gerhart to vault high and block the extra point. When the Eagles rushed eight against eight blockers at the end, LS Brett Goode stepped too flat and LB Bryan Braman zipped by him to block the punt.

OVERALL (5)

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