

Rating the Packers: Week 9 vs Colts

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

Posted: Nov. 8, 2016

Green Bay - The only thing worse Sunday than the performance of the Green Bay Packers was the condition of the DD GrassMaster surface at Lambeau Field. On the warmest November day (68 degrees) the Packers have played on at home since at least 1959, groundskeepers managed to turn the field into a slippery morass that was both unsettling and dangerous for players. At the same time, the underdog Indianapolis Colts sailed into Green Bay and led for the final 59 minutes, 47 seconds, which was until Jordan Todman returned the opening kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown. Here is a rating of the Packers in their 33-32 setback, with their 1 to 5 football totals in parentheses:

RECEIVERS (2)

It's hard to say who is the team's best receiver. It could be argued that Davante Adams (66 of the 69 offensive snaps) is No. 1. Well-traveled CB Rashaan Melvin went nose-to-nose with Jordy Nelson (63) in the Colts' predominantly man coverage scheme and didn't allow much separation. Adams spent much more time in the slot than usual because the coaches didn't put Randall Cobb (23, 20 at WR) in the game until 12 ½ minutes remained in the third quarter. Matched outside against Melvin, Adams almost broke the veteran's ankles on a corner route. Melvin wasn't in the same zip code, enabling Adams to gain 24 after the catch. Later, he blazed right by CB Vontae Davis and FS T.J. Green, both of whom have run in the 4.40-second range, on a bomb that would have been a 75-yard TD if it hadn't been overthrown. Nelson is a deadly serious old campaigner, which showed on his 26-yard TD in the corner. That was remarkable concentration on a ball that appeared would be intercepted by CB-S Darius Butler. Nelson had six other receptions for 68 yards. In several instances, his successful plays are due mostly to scheme. You'd like to see Nelson take the fight to defensive backs and not take all the shots, and he's on the ground too much. On a creative play, Cobb faked a block, then flew across the back of the end zone to make a tough catch of a short-range bullet for a 2-yard TD. Jeff Janis (44) served as No. 3 until Cobb's entrance and didn't shine. He beat Davis, the Colts' best cornerback, on a take-off route but dropped the pass 57 yards downfield when it brushed against his face mask. There was more to be had on his seam shot for 25 from the left slot but he didn't look fluid in the open field and eventually lost his footing. Not even targeted in Game 7, Richard Rodgers (49, including 16 with his hand down) had the second most here (nine). He ran good routes for big gains against Green. He also had a bad drop on a bootleg inside the Colts 20 and got blown up by ILB Edwin Jackson on a lead block for one of the team's two "bad" runs. Justin Perillo (22, eight) had a good day.

OFFENSIVE LINE (2)

The Colts had been blitzing about 31 percent of the time in their first eight games under first-year coordinator Ted Monachino. This time, they blitzed merely 14.8 percent, and on nine of the dropbacks they sent just three. Thus, the degree of difficulty was light against an opponent that ranked 26th in sack percentage. For the most part, the Packers could just sit on their haunches and shove the outmanned rushers around until Aaron Rodgers decided a course of action. Still, the Colts managed three sacks, one knockdown and six hurries. Robert Mathis, their best rusher, never got a sniff in his 40 snaps against David Bakhtiari or Bryan Bulaga. Erik Walden, the other outside linebacker, did a lot of spying and never threatened Rodgers, either. His sack was charged to Rodgers for running into it. Lane Taylor allowed two pressures to DT T.Y. McGill, a hard-charging free agent. McGill also posted a portion of the 1 ½ pressures charged to Corey Linsley, who played his first game in almost 10 months. Linsley always has his head on a swivel in protection, and he's looking to deal out punishment, too. Minus their top two defensive ends (Kendall Langford, Henry Anderson), the Colts' five rotating D-linemen played at fever pitch. They carried the fight to the Packers, outthrusting them to pressure Rodgers or cutting off his escape lanes. The only sack involving the line was one-half to T.J. Lang, who pulled left on a play-action fake and knocked Richard Rodgers off OLB Lavar Edwards.

QUARTERBACKS (2 ½)

It was another up-and-down outing for Aaron Rodgers. It wasn't his fault the special teams took the day off, presenting him with a deficit that never went away. Actually, the Packers' run game was acceptable, but not to the point where the game wasn't squarely on Rodgers' shoulders. Of course, he's paid to win regardless of circumstances. For the most part, Rodgers hunted and pecked away against a conservative containment scheme that forced him into making accurate throws in fairly tight windows. His accuracy was fair. His decision-making was fair. He threw too many passes that were low and incomplete. On a cluster of deep shots, he missed some and got no help from receivers on others. Of the three sacks, Rodgers was charged with two when he tried to extend and was cut down prematurely. He ran for 43 yards. Nelson either tripped or slipped on the long pass in the end zone that was intercepted. It was nullified, but on the next play Butler read Rodgers' intentions on a pass into traffic and went airborne to pick it. Nelson's TD came on a free play when NT David Parry jumped. Through eight games last year Rodgers' hard counts had led to 14 offside penalties; Parry's was the seventh this year.

RUNNING BACKS (3)

After missing a week because of illness related to sickle-cell trait, Ty Montgomery was limited to 31 snaps (24 at RB). In 10 touches he picked up 91 yards. Three times he made defenders miss, resulting in an additional 34 yards: LB D'Qwell Jackson, Butler and Melvin. On another carry, he dragged FS T.J. Green for an extra six. When Montgomery turned up field on a short pass and took a wicked shot from Davis (personal foul penalty), he bounced up as if nothing happened. He showed the ability to get skinny through the hole and pick up his feet over trash. He probably could have waylaid Edwards on his sack but overextended and let him slip by inside. Don Jackson (13) was all right. On a sweep, Cobb tried a shake-and-bake move against Butler and the ball went flying from under his arm. The fumble will be forgotten statistically because it went out of bounds and Bakhtiari's holding penalty wiped the play out. Aaron Ripkowski (22) has provided stability in recent weeks. His lead blocking continues to improve, his blitz pickup has been reliable and he's not bad at all with the ball in his hands.

DEFENSIVE LINE (1 ½)

You could see the rage building within Mike Daniels (played 41 of the 68 defensive snaps) as the Colts basically did whatever they wanted to do on offense. Of the five pressures generated by this unit, he had four. His knockdown, which came on a trashing of LG Jonotthan Harrison, helped cause Andrew Luck's first interception. Daniels split his pressures evenly between Harrison, an undersized backup, and RG Denzelle Good, a 355-pounder. He also stacked strongly at the point of attack, but once or twice the Colts displaced him on runs. Because Daniels demands double teams and frequently collapses the pocket, it's a shame the Packers don't have another big man with pass rush to clean up inside. Letroy Guion (35) basically hasn't had a successful rush in two years. When pass shows he comes out of his stance and just slugs it out with the player in front of him. There's little hand use, pocket collapse or awareness. On a pair of screens that went for 20 yards it's his job to see them, get out of the scrum and make the tackle. He was just too slow to catch up. As always, Guion worked over a blocker once or twice and made tackles for short gains. Rookie Kenny Clark (22) wasn't a factor, and the Packers need him to be because Guion is so limited. Mike Pennel (17) was talented enough to wheel past athletic rookie RT Joe Haeg and register a knockdown. He remains maddeningly inconsistent with pad level, which was evident on Frank Gore's longest run (11).

LINEBACKERS (1 ½)

When coordinator Dom Capers tried four-man rushes without success early, he threw caution to the wind and attacked. His blitz rate of 50 percent was his highest since Game 9 (Detroit) last year; his rate of sending six or more of 14.3 percent was his highest since Game 8 (Carolina) a year ago. One week after Luck skipped away from the onslaught of Chiefs for 60 yards rushing, he managed just 15 this time. The lane discipline was excellent but, without Clay Matthews (hamstring), not enough one-on-one rushes were won, especially against an O-line as nondescript as the Colts'. Julius Peppers (50, 39 at OLB) started for Matthews and led with 2 ½ pressures. As the season goes by he's struggling to finish. Later in halves, he's less effective. All the outside rushers were stymied trying to plant and cut on the abominable turf. Players have been dominating LT Anthony Castonzo but Nick Perry (50), with merely 1 ½ pressures, didn't. For the second game in a row he was fooled on a naked pitch for big yardage, and Luck got him on a 7-yard keeper his way on a big third-and-1. After a strong start Datone Jones (46, 34 at OLB) has come back to earth just when the defense needs him. His batted ball and single hurry weren't enough against this offense. Kyler Fackrell (14) was OK, but for the first time since Game 2 Jayrone Elliott didn't play from scrimmage. Jake Ryan (55) had one of his better games with a tackle for loss, an end-zone breakup against a capable receiver in TE Dwayne Allen and a pair of knockdowns. Capers blitzed Ryan off the edge five times, and as a one-time OLB at Michigan he displayed skilled use of hands and natural bend as a rusher. Blake Martinez (55), who got caught inside and was late to the flat on a third-and-2 pass for 9, wasn't as effective. Joe Thomas (13) has been relegated to the dime only. The play of the ILBs has been little more than adequate.

Secondary (2)

Ha Ha Clinton-Dix (68) scrambled back off a late disguise to intercept Luck in the first quarter, then went a long way to spear another pick two series later. He also sacked Luck off one of Capers' season-high six zone blitzes after being unblocked. Clinton-Dix has given up a series of big plays this season but perhaps none was worse than his blown sack in the final 3 minutes. There's no excuse; he must get Luck down. Morgan Burnett (68) beat Allen for a sack. When Micah Hyde (53) was wrestled down by TE Jack Doyle and suffered a shoulder injury, the coaches went with Kentrell Brice (24) in the slot rather than Demetri Goodson. In fact, Goodson didn't even play from scrimmage after playing all but two snaps in the last two games. A reckless player, Brice obstructed Luck's vision on one leaping blitz and crunched Gore with an explosive tackle. Hyde, with a team-high seven blitzes, demonstrated anew how effective he is as a rusher. His gritty knockdown against Allen led to Clinton-Dix's second pick. T.Y. Hilton blew inside Hyde for a too-easy 17-yard reception. Quinten Rollins (62) returned from a hamstring injury with a solid showing. On the other side, LaDarius Gunter (68) was exploited in man coverage by Donte Moncrief for 39 on a take-off and by Hilton for 27 on a game-clinching post when there was no help. Moncrief got him on a back-shoulder for an 8-yard TD, too. Whenever coordinator Rob Chudzinski needed a play, it seemed as if he targeted Gunter.

KICKERS (1 ½)

The embarrassing field conditions were a factor on every attempt for Mason Crosby and Adam Vinatieri. They were a problem for the holders, too, and Jacob Schum didn't make the best hold on Crosby's 48-yard attempt that missed just wide left. In a postgame interview, Crosby said it's a kick he has to make and never mentioned the hold. Crosby deserves a minor part of the blame for Todman's TD with a kickoff that wasn't long enough (64 yards), high enough (3.92 seconds) or well-placed enough (one step outside the hashmark). His boot was much better (71, 3.97, between the hashmark and the numbers) on Todman's 61-yard return. His six kickoffs averaged 69.7 and 3.88 (four touchbacks), and he also hit from 34 and 27. With three solid punts in four tries, Schum's averages were 48.3 (gross), 47.5 (net) and 4.36.

SPECIAL TEAMS (½)

On the opening kickoff, not only did S Jermaine Whitehead vacate his lane but he careened into Fackrell. The collision knocked both of them rear over teacup, creating a gap through which Todman burst untouched to the end zone. Whitehead was benched for Goodson, then cut Monday. Hyde, one of the twin safeties, isn't very fast for that duty. Crosby seems to have slowed up, too; he couldn't even lay a glove on Todman. In 10 years, the only TDs involving Crosby were 102 yards by Atlanta's Eric Weems (January 2011) and 101 by Chicago's Chris Williams (November 2014).

STARS OF THE GAME: 1. Mike Daniels; 2. Ty Montgomery; 3. Jake Ryan.

OVERALL RATING: 1 ½ footballs