

Rating the Packers: Week 10 at Titans

By Bob McGinn – Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

Posted: Nov. 15, 2016

Green Bay - The Green Bay Packers trailed by 21 points in the first quarter Sunday for the first time since December 1986 at Giants Stadium.

Well, at least the Packers didn't embarrass themselves like coach Forrest Gregg's team did in a 55-24 pasting from coach Bill Parcells' Super Bowl-bound club.

John Hilton, the Packers' special teams coach, turned toward the Giants' coaches in the press box late in the game and flipped them the bird. His obscene gesture lasted for several seconds.

Hilton was angry because he thought the Giants were rubbing it in on a fourth-down decision. Parcells denied it.

Anyway, neither Mike McCarthy nor anyone on his coaching staff made a spectacle of himself in the 47-25 upset loss against the Tennessee Titans in Nashville. However, this was a comedy of errors as was the Packers' showing in the Meadowlands 30 years ago.

Here is a rating of the Packers in their 33-32 setback, with their 1 to 5 football totals in parentheses:

RECEIVERS (3)

The Titans' worst position probably is cornerback but that didn't stop coordinator Dick LeBeau from going after the receivers with predominantly man coverage. Davante Adams (played 74 of the 78 offensive snaps) was the Packers' best player, and it really wasn't close. He looked fluid, supple, energized and sure-handed. He extended to snatch a slant for 17 yards against Jason McCourty, the Titans' best corner. He broke a tackle by CB Perrish Cox and gained 29 yards after the catch. He ran a stop-and-go against McCourty for 35. Of his 156 yards in six receptions, 77 came after the reception. He still runs a little too straight up and got his legs chopped out from underneath him twice. The key is the way Adams attacks the middle of the field and turns north-south once he gets it. He accelerates in a hurry, but his one drawback appears to be go-the-distance speed. Jordy Nelson (73) might have played his best game since knee surgery. Not only did he sustain some blocks well downfield but he also showed some of his old body control and sideline knack. He isn't dynamic like Adams with the ball in his hands but there was a time or two where he wasn't looking to get down and made tacklers miss. At times, he has appeared to throttle down against double coverage. He appeared to attack doubles better this week and his production reflected it. In the slot, Randall Cobb (54) played through several injuries. He slipped early on a route that would have produced a first down. Later, he burned Cox badly with a double move that should have been a 40-yard gain but the pass was way overthrown. Geronimo Allison (18) was No. 4 Sunday, and Jeff Janis (10) and Trevor Davis (five) got garbage time. Allison made a sharp cut to spin away from the defense on a 17-yard catch in the middle. Janis still looks so raw as he ran routes late. Both Davis and Richard Rodgers (65, six with his hand down) had bad sideline drops in the fourth quarter to thwart any chance for a comeback.

OFFENSIVE LINE (2)

Corey Linsley couldn't have been more impressive in his second start since replacing injured JC Tretter. Jurrell Casey, the Titans' superlative 3-technique, had just two tackles and one pressure (stunt against Jason Spriggs). It wasn't all because of Linsley, but some of it was. Linsley moved Casey in the first quarter once or twice before the Packers forgot about the run game. He also did a good job sorting through the myriad of stunts that LeBeau incorporated into his five-man pressures. If and when Tretter returns from a knee injury, it'll be a difficult decision which man to play. When T.J. Lang (ankle) went down on the fourth snap it was Don Barclay's first chance to play extensively since Game 15 last year. Considering almost all of Barclay's experience has been at tackle and he had played just 20 snaps in Games 1-8, his performance was unexpectedly solid. His pass set was excellent. Although Barclay has massive hands, his arms are comparatively short. He appeared to be punching in protection and then pulling back so the rusher couldn't get to his chest. It was a positive development for the unit if Lang is to be out indefinitely. David Bakhtiari played one of his poorest games in ages before departing with a knee injury after 54 snaps. He had two penalties, including a blatant hold when OLB Brian Orakpo beat him inside. Bakhtiari is big, talented and ornery, but at times he does get lazy and penalties often are the result. Orakpo knocked him off balance on a stunt for the first sack. Spriggs, with just 12 snaps at tackle in the first eight games, replaced Bakhtiari and was up and down over the final 24. His athleticism, feet and arm length are easy to spot. However, Orakpo kept knocking Spriggs' hands down and the result was two sacks off the edge. Bryan Bulaga, who was mostly battling OLB Derrick Morgan, and Spriggs led in pressures allowed with three. Morgan probably won that matchup. Lane Taylor drew two penalties for holding Casey on running plays and was charged with two pressures.

QUARTERBACKS (2 ½)

Part of the reason for the team's terrible start was Aaron Rodgers' terrible start. It was reminiscent of Brett Favre. If he completes that routine third-and-4 to Cobb on their first series, the Packers would have scored at least three points. On the second series, he fired low on a slant to Nelson and then was fortunate there was a quick whistle that turned his fumble into a sack. On the third series, he threw high to Nelson and then was charged with the first of his two sacks for not extending or getting the ball out. When McCarthy went spread, Rodgers immediately responded and ended up throwing for 379 yards. He made a magnificent decision to run on second and 8 and ended up with a 20-yard TD. He was on the money deep to Adams. During the mid-game comeback, he seemed to be rallying the players with a one-for-all, all-for-one approach. For the most part, he was taking the easy completions and moving the ball. LeBeau blitzed (five or more) on 32.8 percent of the 61 dropbacks. Interestingly, he sent just three on 36.1 percent. Rodgers' progressions remain inconsistent. Sometimes he locks on to someone, usually Nelson, and just flings it regardless of coverage.

RUNNING BACKS (2 ½)

James Starks' return from a four-game absence (knee) changed everything at the position. He started, and played 55 snaps. Don Jackson was inactive, Aaron Ripkowski didn't get in for the first time, Ty Montgomery was limited to 22 snaps and Adams had merely one. It had been a rough season for Starks so any success should buoy his spirits for the stretch drive. He averaged 4.7 in seven carries and had a 16-yard gain on a draw play wiped out. On his 13-yard screen for a TD, he made a beautiful run slicing inside of pursuing safeties Daimion Stafford and Kevin Byard. He became a major threat on screens last year, especially in the red zone, and will be asked to become one again. His pass protection was adequate, too. Seeing Starks on the same field with Montgomery, it was obvious who is the more physical, rugged runner. Montgomery, however, will have a role in the backfield.

DEFENSIVE LINE (½)

Like most games, Mike Daniels (32 of the 60 defensive snaps) posted the only pressure by a lineman. He had just one, an upfield charge against feisty backup LG Brian Schwenke. Otherwise, he had one of his worst games. First, he jumped offside on the opening play of the game. On the next snap, Schwenke blocked the wrong way, leaving Daniels virtually uncovered in the hole against DeMarco Murray on an inside zone. If the ILBs, particularly Blake Martinez, hadn't been influenced by backfield action, they would have been over the top and in position at least to make the tackle downfield. In the end, it left Murray against Daniels. When Daniels went straight for Murray instead of taking an angle, he never laid a glove on him and the result was a 75-yard TD. Later, Daniels lost his composure and hung around the pile taunting Murray. That shouldn't be tolerated, especially from a player of Daniels' stature. Letroy Guion (22) and Kenny Clark (22) were OK. Mike Pennel (19) and Dean Lowry (five) also played. Guion jumped offside to open the second series, took three more steps and flattened Marcus Mariota (personal-foul penalty). All that does is enrage the opponent. It was an awful, undisciplined performance for this group.

LINEBACKERS (½)

Nick Perry (39), the best player on defense all season, was the best again Sunday. In some ways, the Titans ran away from Perry. Their run game was tilted heavily behind RT Jack Conklin, and when Kyler Fackrell (29) or Datone Jones (39, 28 at OLB) were on the play side they often were shoved up the field, hooked or covered up. Perry set a heavy-handed edge, as usual. When his responsibility is over, he clears his feet, sifts or slams through trash and often assists in the tackle. It was a terribly disappointing pass-rush day for the unit that misses Clay Matthews more with each passing week. Of the five pressures by LBs, Perry and Jones each had two. Even after LT Taylor Lewan, a pass-rushing pillar all season, was ejected, the Packers registered just two hurries against backup Dennis Kelly. Jones was lifted briefly when he was up the field and Murray ran underneath him for 19. Fackrell needs mass and strength that only an offseason can bring. When Jayrone Elliott showed a hot hand with two tackles for loss, he played more snaps than he has since Game 3. The coaches must not have been happy with Julius Peppers' 74 snaps at OLB the last two weeks. He did start and was on the field for the first two plays, but after that 16 of his remaining 17 snaps came as a lineman in sub packages. His ability to move and play the run from the edge has diminished. Father Time is undefeated. Blake Martinez (44) was adequate. When Jake Ryan wrecked his ankle blocking for a punt, Joe Thomas (60) had to play every snap for the first time. He had one or two good hits, but otherwise played small and without decisiveness against run and pass. He wasn't lined up properly on Murray's wheel route for 35.

Secondary (½)

This was a dark day for this unit, and injuries can't be used as an excuse. The only player with a passing performance was LaDarius Gunter (54), who broke up a slant in the end zone and didn't have any of the seven missed tackles by the defense. On the other side, Quinten Rollins (33) was off his game to such an extent that Demetri Goodson (27) replaced him at times. He appeared to be peeking in the backfield on the TD passes to Tajae Sharpe and TE Delanie Walker, and either let up or lacks chase speed on Murray's 75-yard run. He should be more advanced than play like this suggests. It was a long afternoon as well for Micah Hyde (53), who found himself isolated deep against Rishard Matthews and offered too little resistance on the 32-yard TD. Earlier, he lined up too deep and was late reacting in the flat on Kendall Wright's 6-yard TD. Walker (9-124) basically got open whenever he wanted. On two of Walker's receptions for 49 yards, Kentrell Brice (21) lost leverage in press coverage and then used poor technique trying to defend with a two-armed dive. He just fell off the tackle and away went the tight end. The rookie did show range and timing on a break-up of a 30-yard vertical route to Walker. Ha Ha Clinton-Dix (60) should be playing so much better than this. He's tackling too high, not reading well and had three penalties (one on special teams) that reflect too much emotion and too little poise. This defense needs him to stand out, not struggle. Morgan Burnett (57) flew unblocked off the edge and managed to clip the physically imposing Mariota for a sack. He also made a stiff hit on third and 2. However, his reaction on the option TD was poor, especially for a conscientious seven-year veteran.

KICKERS (1 ½)

Mason Crosby's missed extra point was due in part to Jacob Schum's second wayward hold in two games; he did connect from 29 and 38 yards. His four kickoffs averaged 73 yards and 3.79 seconds (hang time). His one attempt at a popup was short (53), not high (3.60) and not successful. As a punter, Schum did the job. His four-boot averages were 50.5 (gross), 39.8 (net) and 4.48.

SPECIAL TEAMS (½)

The six players arrayed 14 yards from K Ryan Succop on the opening kickoff, from left to right, were Marwin Evans, Ryan, Thomas, Martinez, Fackrell and Brice. Only Thomas and Martinez were holding their position when Succop's onside kick materialized. Thomas' recovery was perfect, and Martinez gently fell on top to protect the football. Davis ran up under a short punt with just 4.0 hang time, waved for a fair catch and lost what officials ruled to be a fumble. Making matters worse, Fackrell was penalized for pulling a Titan off the pile. Goodson had a chance to catch/down a punt at the 1 but couldn't quite pull it off. The return game was plagued by lousy blocking.

STARS OF THE GAME: 1. Davante Adams; 2. Nick Perry; 3. Corey Linsley..

OVERALL RATING: ½ footballs