

Rating the Packers: Week 10 at Bears

By Bob McGinn Posted: Nov 15, 2017

The so-called “smart” money came in on the Green Bay Packers in the 24 hours before kickoff at Soldier Field in Chicago. Favored by 5 ½ to six points after mid-week, the Bears went off as a 4 ½-point favorite at noon Sunday. It’s likely that the Packers’ dominance at Soldier Field for a generation led to the narrowing of the point spread. Green Bay hadn’t been a road underdog against Chicago since 2008. With their 23-16 victory, the Packers won for the eighth straight year at Soldier Field. The game marked the first time in the rivalry since December 1991 that neither Aaron Rodgers nor Brett Favre was the Packers’ starting quarterback. Mike Tomczak, a former Bear, posted a passer rating of 69.9 in the Packers’ 27-13 defeat on a 57-degree afternoon at Soldier Field in ‘91. His counterpart, Jim Harbaugh, had a 100.3 rating. Since Favre won the starting job in Game 4 of 1992, Sunday was the 12th time the Packers played a game without him or Rodgers behind center. Mike McCarthy was the coach in all 12 games. The victory improved McCarthy’s record to 4-7-1 with a backup quarterback. The seven-point margin of victory Sunday was the largest. The other three victories were quarterbacked by Matt Flynn: 45-41 over Detroit in Game 16 of 2011, 22-21 over Atlanta in Game 13 of 2013 and 37-36 at Dallas in Game 14 of 2013.

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

The three stars of the game were: 1. Jamaal Williams; 2. Nick Perry; 3. Brett Hundley.

As a team, the Packers received 4 footballs.

RECEIVERS (4)

The cat-and-mouse game between Davante Adams and Kyle Fuller, the Bears’ best cornerback, tilted toward Adams. On the first series, Adams (played 54 of the possible 66 snaps on offense) caught a hitch, made Fuller miss and picked up 8 yards. Other than another hitch for 3 and a dropped slant, Adams was quiet until the last 10 ½ minutes. With the Packers clinging to a 16-13 lead, Adams began a drive with a sliding catch inside a zone off play-action for 18. Adams ended it with a 19-yard TD catch in which he scrambled his route against man coverage by Fuller, flipped his hips adjusting to a back-shoulder ball at the goal-line and made the catch with his hands away from the body. It remained a three-point game with 2:12 left when Adams caught Fuller squatting on third and 10. On a stop-and-go route, he outran the speedy Fuller before securing the ball against his chest with his right hand as the corner was holding his left. That 42-yard gain, Adams’ longest of the season, secured victory. Jordy Nelson (64) hasn’t had a 100-yard game in 2017 or more than 60 yards since the first Bear game on Sept. 28. He just goes about his business, blocks and works trying to separate. One of his best features is drawing pass-interference penalties. He’s a household name across the league, and although he flaps his arms at the slightest suggestion of contact his actions aren’t so over the top to turn officials off. This week, he received a 29-yard call against Prince Amukamara. Randall Cobb (27 at WR) turned a 5-yard in-breaking route into 38 by making Fuller miss. It was surprising, to say the least, when linebacker Nick Kwiatkoski and nickel back Cre’Von LeBlanc both easily ran him down from behind. Kwiatkoski ran a 4.68-second 40 in 2016; LeBlanc clocked just 4.67 the same year. Cobb, who ran 4.47 before the 2011 draft, still is quick but has lost long speed. Geronimo Allison (12), Trevor Davis (seven) and Jeff Janis (one) weren’t targeted. With Martellus Bennett already playing Sunday night (seven snaps) for New England, Lance Kendricks (46, including 24 with his hand down) and Richard Rodgers (32, 24 down) each caught the only ball thrown to them. Their job was to block in the run game, and each gave good effort. Now in his fourth year, Rodgers was as aggressive blocking as I’ve ever seen him. It’s clear taking third-string snaps didn’t agree with him. He wants to play. Rodgers kept driving and driving OLB Leonard Floyd until he was out of bounds well away from one play. Floyd glared at him like he was off his rocker, but for Rodgers to remain in the league it’s paramount that he display a more hard-nosed style on tape. Rodgers was involved in three “bad” runs compared to one for Kendricks, who was asked to “wham” block defensive tackles twice (he went 1-for-2). No tight end need apologize for getting put through the wringer by DE Akiem Hicks, which happened to Rodgers twice.

OFFENSIVE LINE (4)

Pittsburgh (70 yards, 4.1) couldn't run against the Bears. Neither could Atlanta (64, 2.8) nor New Orleans (101, 3.4). The Packers pounded out more yards (160) than the Bears have allowed this season while averaging 4.3. Bad ankle or not, Justin McCray made it work. No way was McCray even close to being a weak link as he begins his tenure replacing Bryan Bulaga (knee). No right tackle really wants the Bears because it means Hicks on early downs and Floyd on passing downs. McCarthy helped McCray, but only a little. At 317, he has the mass to bump bellies with the imposing Hicks (6-4 ½, 332). An athletic mismatch against Floyd, McCray maximized what he has. When Floyd finished with just one sack and one knockdown against McCray, that was a win for the Packers. Of the Packers' 11 "bad" runs, McCray was charged with just one-half. Jahri Evans, who played next to McCray, knows how challenging Hicks can be. As Saints, they practiced against each other from 2012-'14. Of Evans' 4 ½ "bad" runs, 3 ½ came against Hicks, and of his three pressures two came at the hands of Hicks. Even as a 12-year veteran, there are plays in which Evans seems either to short-circuit or make poor decisions. The Packers pulled a lineman on a season-high total of 10 running plays, and on Evans' five the net was 20 yards. He's too slow nowadays to deliver a smashing blow on the move, but his girth can make it tough on linebackers. Lane Taylor and Corey Linsley were in top form, limiting NT Eddie Goldman to one tackle and one pressure in 48 snaps. Taylor knocked the 320-pound Goldman, an excellent third-year player, clear out of the hole on a successful fourth-and-1 carry while Linsley was down-blocking effectively. People misjudge Linsley's strength because he's a little undersized, but time after time he halts rushers or tacklers dead in their tracks. David Bakhtiari had a solid performance (1 ½ pressures, no "bad" runs) until the end when he allowed DE Jonathan Bullard to slip by twice on the back side.

QUARTERBACKS (4)

Last week, an NFL personnel director assessed Hundley thusly: "He kind of gives you an air of confidence but it doesn't carry over into production. It's like he's a six-, seven-year vet who has started for a number of years. He kind of carries himself, like, 'I got it all handled.' Yet, when you assess him from play to play, it doesn't translate. The question still remains: Is Hundley ready for prime time?" Hundley provided more clues Sunday with his first touchdown pass, his first victory and the best performance of his fledgling career. His day didn't start well. Fuller came close to a pick-six on his first pass before dropping a pick in the red zone on Hundley's sixth attempt. Chewing gum as he barked signals, Hundley was late to recognize some blitzes and was responsible for three pressures, including one sack. Coordinator Vic Fangio went after Hundley (43.3% blitz rate). By early in the fourth quarter he hadn't done much. Then came four decisive plays from Hundley that made Green Bay a winner. The drive-starting 18-yard shot to Adams. When the Bears blew containment on a four-man rush, Hundley saw it and took it on a tight hamstring for 17. On a scramble right, he threw a perfect ball in the corner for a TD. With arms in his face, he pinpointed the take-off to Adams. Hundley finished with a completion mark of 72% and a passer rating of 110.8. He accomplished all that with a wet ball in all-day rain.

RUNNING BACKS (4 ½)

On play after play, Williams really operated as his own blocker. The line probably blocked as well as it could but Hicks, Goldman and, to a lesser degree, DE Mitch Unrein are the epitome of stoutness. It was stunning to see Williams, a relative unknown from Brigham Young with 45 snaps and 11 carries in eight games, breaking three tackles by Hicks and two by Unrein. He broke eight tackles in all on 20 carries. Of his 67 yards, 57 remarkably came after contact. The Bears hit Williams with everything but the kitchen sink and he kept fighting and digging and clawing, never going backward. Fuller won't soon forget when Williams lowered his shoulder and ran him over. Williams has been wildly physical on special teams so his relentless running style wasn't a surprise. He even availed himself of a chance to deal out some pain to Hicks with a solid shoulder to the rib on his way out for a check-down. The Packers haven't had a tough guy lugging the leather like this since Eddie Lacy and James Starks were young. Williams played 35 of the 41 snaps in the second half after starter Aaron Jones (six) and Ty Montgomery (14) were lost to knee and rib injuries, respectively. Jones left after being tackled by OLB Sam Acho. Unlike Williams, Montgomery takes far more punishment than he delivers. He ran to daylight for a 37-yard TD when Amukamara filled the wrong gap. Cobb played 10 snaps in the backfield, one more than he had in the first half of the season. Three were direct snaps to him from a "wildcat" set. Cobb also harkened back to his quarterbacking days at Kentucky with a nifty option keep for 6. The Packers just can't overdo it because, like Montgomery, Cobb isn't built to last running the ball. Now that November is here, FB Aaron Ripkowski (22) will become more valuable. He had an outstanding game. The blocking scheme on Montgomery's TD required Ripkowski to block Unrein one-on-one in the hole. He got it done, too. On third and 1, he ran a crisp flat route and beat ILB Christian Jones for a 12-yard catch.

DEFENSIVE LINE (4)

The Packers caught a break when RG Kyle Long, one of the Bears two best offensive linemen, played just one snap after being listed as questionable with a finger injury. Long has superior strength. He throws defenders around. Minus Long, C Cody Whitehair shifted to guard, where he isn't nearly as good, and undersized Hroniss Grasu started at center. On the first snap, Mike Daniels (played 42 of the possible 60 snaps on defense) trashed Grasu and stopped Jordan Howard for minus-1. Daniels made other plays against the run because of his strength. It also was his best pass-rushing game in weeks. Grasu was unable to set his anchor once Daniels began walking him back. Daniels' three pressures all came on bull rushes against Grasu. Meanwhile, Kenny Clark (37) set up Daniels' sack with a power rush against Whitehair and added a hurry up the field against Grasu. Clark and Daniels took away Howard's interior run, which is the Bears' offensive forte. Clark did miss two tackles. Dean Lowry (18) had a quiet day playing in the 14 snaps of base defense (eight 3-4, six 4-3). With Quinton Dial (chest) sidelined the No. 4 D-lineman was rookie Montravius Adams (seven). He played a lot better than a week ago. On his first two snaps he shed LG Josh Sitton and assisted bringing down Howard and Tarik Cohen for a net of 4. On the next play, he beat Whitehair off an edge and knocked down Mitchell Trubisky.

LINEBACKERS (4)

Nick Perry's four sacks in the first eight games all carried a higher degree of difficulty than his three Sunday. Actually, his two late hurries against RT Bobby Massie probably were more impressive than the sacks. His first sack occurred in 5.7 seconds when Trubisky held the ball forever. His second sack occurred when Trubisky tried to run up the middle and wound up too close to Perry. His third sack came on a naked bootleg when Trubisky inexplicably didn't throw to an open receiver. Perry (48) was on his game against the run, whether it was disengaging from blocks, flattening inside when unblocked or stringing out plays. Dom Capers blitzed on 41.5% of passes, prompting Trubisky to say, "They did a great job confusing us. I have to get it out quicker." On the other side, Clay Matthews (52) had one pressure, one tackle for loss and lost another TFL on Clark's holding penalty. The Bears almost never run naked bootleg action, and that's maybe why Matthews blew coverage on the 31-yard pass to TE Adam Shaheen. In the run game, Matthews beat Shaheen inside, wouldn't be hooked outside and shed him on a wham block. Ahmad Brooks (27, including four with his hand down as a DT), Kyler Fackrell (18) and Vince Biegel (six) also played outside. Chris Odom was inactive. Blake Martinez (60) and Jake Ryan (29) had their ups and downs. Back from a month-long ankle injury, Joe Thomas was confined to special teams.

SECONDARY (3)

Rookie Kevin King (40) played two-thirds of the snaps before a lingering shoulder injury ended his afternoon. Dowell Loggains, the Bears' offensive coordinator, and Trubisky concentrated their perimeter attack on Davon House's side so King wasn't real busy. He remains a little late reacting at the top of routes but closes hard and isn't afraid to hit. By unofficial count House allowed seven completions (six were for first downs) for 134 yards. House wasn't even close a few times. On Josh Bellamy's 46-yard TD, House got beat on an out-and-up route from press position when he didn't get his hands on the receiver and lost contact with the ball in the air. House helped the cause with a sack in 2.8 seconds when he resisted the temptation to jump as his quarry neared, and a tackle for loss. In the slot, Damarious Randall (58) provided more than adequate coverage but didn't seem eager to participate on two screen passes totaling 54 yards. Screens continue to plague the defense. With Morgan Burnett (groin) out, Ha Ha Clinton-Dix (60) and Josh Jones (60) were fixtures and Marwin Evans (21) and Jermaine Whitehead (12) played in various packages. It was an uneventful game for the safeties.

KICKERS (2 ½)

Mason Crosby is being tested to the max. With snapper Derek Hart and holder Justin Vogel, he can't fully concentrate on his job because it's dependent on the work of novices. Nursing a seven-point lead with 1:07 left, Crosby is lined up for a 35-yard attempt when Hart's snap is barely adequate and Vogel drops the ball. Crosby goes ahead and kicks anyway, but there's no chance and the ball veers wide right. He also doinked an extra-point off the left upright from a questionable hold. Off a sloppy track, Crosby did well to hit from 40, 24 and 50. His six kickoffs averaged 61.5 yards and 3.92 seconds of hang time. Besides his bungled hold, Vogel averaged 40.0 yards (gross), 38.0 (net) and 4.34 hang time.

SPECIAL TEAMS (2 ½)

Hart isn't the answer. Of his six placement snaps, it appeared as if just one had perfect laces. His punt snaps were better this week. He isn't cutting it. There were two more penalties on punt returns, increasing the total on that unit to six of the team's 16 on special teams. The guilty parties for illegal blocks were Lenzy Pipkins and Thomas. The one against Thomas shortened Davis' 44-yard return to 15. Davis had one for the books, fielding a 59-yard punt one yard deep in the end zone. Luckily for him, he was able to bring it out to the 8. Otherwise, Davis continued to impress. He's sure-handed, swivel-hipped and a threat. Holding Cohen to a long of 34 yards in five returns was a job very well done.