

Rating the Packers: Week 11 vs Ravens

By Bob McGinn Posted: Nov 21, 2017

Baltimore coach John Harbaugh called his team's performance "spotless." Green Bay coach Mike McCarthy didn't label his team as "pointless" but he certainly could have. Since Ron Wolf and Mike Holmgren started turning it around in 1992 the Packers have played 448 games, counting playoffs. Their record is 280-167-1 for a winning percentage of .626. Mike Holmgren's teams were never shut out in his seven seasons. Ditto for Ray Rhodes in one season and Mike Sherman in his six. McCarthy opened his career in Green Bay by getting blanked at Lambeau Field by the Chicago Bears, 26-0. The Packers were so bad that day, they never advanced inside the Chicago 35. In Game 10 of that 2006 season, the Packers' 35-0 setback at the hands of the New England Patriots was their worst at home in 36 years. Other than their drive to the Baltimore 5 at the start of the game, the Packers never got closer than the Ravens 41. Although it was the Ravens' third shutout of the season, linebacker Terrell Suggs acknowledged how difficult shutouts are to pull off in the NFL by comparing them to a no-hitter in major league baseball.

What was worse than the Packers' inability to move the ball was their five turnovers. It equaled the highest total during McCarthy's 204-game tenure. In the nearly eight full games that Aaron Rodgers sat out in 2013, backup quarterbacks Matt Flynn, Scott Tolzien and Seneca Wallace limited the team's turnover count to 14. Before the 23-0 loss Sunday to the Ravens, quarterback Brett Hundley had presided over an offense that turned the ball over just four times in nearly four full games.

Then the unthinkable happened to a McCarthy-coached team Sunday at Lambeau Field. Hundley was to blame for all three of his interceptions and his lost fumble on a sack just as Devante Mays was responsible for his lost fumble on a carry.

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

The three stars of the game were: 1. Nick Perry; 2. Davante Adams; 3. Ahmad Brooks.

As a team, the Packers received one-half football.

RECEIVERS (1)

The more Lance Kendricks plays, the more ordinary his level of performance becomes. The former Ram played 38 of the possible 67 snaps on offense (16 with his hand down) whereas Richard Rodgers played 10 of his 37 from a three-point stance. They combined for eight yards in two receptions, 2 ½ pressures and two "bad" runs. After a strong showing as a blocker in Chicago, Rodgers was trashed by OLB Matthew Judon on Devante Mays' lost fumble and couldn't get MLB C.J. Mosley blocked on a draw play that went nowhere. The two veterans shared responsibility on the first sack and then Kendricks yielded another 1 ½ pressures. It's obvious that Davante Adams is Hundley's favorite receiver. He should be, too. He has been the team's No. 1 since last season. Adams caught eight of his 10 targets for 126 yards, and six earned first downs. Had Hundley's long pass behind CB Brandon Carr on the first series not been underthrown the 33-yard reception for Adams would have been a 43-yard TD. Adams kept beating Carr so the Ravens replaced him with rookie Marlon Humphrey, a faster and more talented player. Adams was charged with his seventh drop of the season on a sideline cut that Humphrey belatedly ripped away. On the other side, Jordy Nelson (62) beat Carr across the middle for 17 on the first play from scrimmage before catching one of his remaining five targets for seven yards in his last 61 snaps. His other catch came from No. 3 on the inside left when the Ravens covered him with a strong safety (Tony Jefferson). Randall Cobb (45) did a lot of pre-snap motioning and gadgetry that removed him from the conventional slot role. McCarthy pinpointed "scramble spacing" as an area that could have been better.

OFFENSIVE LINE (one-half)

There can be little doubt that the coaches want to find out if Jason Spriggs fits their future plans. Nevertheless, the only reason to play Spriggs at this point would be experimentation. As limited as Justin McCray might be at right tackle, he's tougher, stronger and more resourceful than Spriggs. When McCray left after 45 snaps with what appeared to be a minor knee injury Spriggs played the last 22. Spriggs was horrendous, allowing 1 ½ sacks, 1 ½ knockdowns, 2 ½ hurries and one-half "bad" run. Ulrick John gave up four pressures at Minnesota, 1 ½ fewer than Spriggs, and played 10 more snaps. Just off injured reserve, Spriggs is the same player he was as a rookie and in August. His shoulders get turned frequently in pass protection, he gets knocked off balance almost every other play and there doesn't seem to be any of the typical offensive lineman's grit and power in his play. Unless something unforeseen happens in his development Spriggs looks like one of GM Ted Thompson's major draft busts. McCray wasn't any great shakes, either, with three pressures, but at least he always makes his presence felt physically. Spriggs is a physical pushover. Even when DE Carl Davis was limited to 19 snaps with an unspecified injury, DE Willie Henry (51) joined DE Brandon Williams (43) and NT Michael Pierce (21) to shackle the ground game. Lane Taylor protected well (one-half pressure) but had a dreadful showing in the run game. He was involved in five "bad" runs, finishing with a total of three. Corey Linsley and Taylor both failed on the unsuccessful fourth and one. When the line couldn't get enough movement, McCarthy tried six runs with pull and angle blocks but the net was just 16 yards. Jahri Evans didn't get beat run blocking but leaked two pressures. David Bakhtiari blocked Terrell Suggs more than anyone else and had an adequate showing.

QUARTERBACKS (one-half)

There still are some things to like about Brett Hundley. For one thing, he's tough. Sacked six times and knocked down another five in freezing cold, he kept coming back for more. He's wiry and strong. For another, he isn't pointing fingers on the field or making excuses afterward. My guess is that players enjoy trying to help him succeed. One must admire his confidence, too. He doesn't look like someone going into the tank any time soon. On the other hand, his performance would rank among the two or three worst since the Packers' resurgence began 26 years ago. Even when Adams came wide open underneath, Hundley didn't even start his progression and just threw to the end-zone corner for Cobb. That made for an embarrassingly easy interception for CB Jimmy Smith. His second pick was an amateurish home-run ball under pressure that had little or no chance of getting the 50-plus yards to Kendricks. The third interception was sailed high when half of Maryland was ready to pile on top of him in the end zone. Defensive coordinator Dean Pees blitzed five in the early going (he never blitzed six), finishing with a low blitz rate of 22.2%. Pees backed off because Hundley was just holding the ball, anyway. All six of the sacks came on routine four-man rushes. Even after all this "quarterback school" stuff and three training camps, Hundley isn't seeing the entire field. He reacts late, for some reason seems hesitant to use his best asset (legs) to run and often ends up fading aimlessly to the right and tossing the ball out of bounds. He remains an unpolished, 24-year-old quarterback with a ton to learn in what might be the opportunity of his career.

RUNNING BACKS (one-half)

Last year, Ty Montgomery came through when his chance arrived. This year, Aaron Jones and Jamaal Williams did as well. Then there's Devante Mays. Pressed into duty behind Williams because Montgomery (ribs) and Jones (knee) were out, Mays entered the lineup for the first time this season on the 19th play. On a toss left, he bobbled the ball, secured it, was confronted by Judon two yards behind the line and promptly fumbled. In the previous 23 games, counting playoffs, the Packers' only lost fumble on a running play was by FB Aaron Ripkowski in the NFC Championship Game. McCarthy banished Mays until he was three scores down and 2 minutes were left. All McCarthy wanted to do at that point was get in base personnel, run a few plays and flee the scene. Honest, Mays then proceeded to have the ball stripped by Mosley; at least Spriggs demonstrated that he can recover a fumble. Curiously, McCarthy suggested that his run rate was a low 32.8% because he didn't trust Mays and was afraid to overwork Williams. Ripkowski had 43 rushes last year, including nine in one game, and with a Wonderlic score of 31 he knows the protections. The better play would have been to run the ox-strong, fresh-legged Williams until he couldn't go anymore. As it was, Williams (59) gained 95 yards in 22 touches. He was stopped short on fourth and 1, dropped a check-down that was inches from being a lost fumble and broke only one tackle. But he did run tough. The Packers must consider using Ripkowski (10) or even Joe Kerridge (three) in more two-back sets, or even together in the old inverted wishbone. Those smart fullbacks can help Hundley and Williams. On a failed third-and-2 run by Williams, his backfield mates were Cobb and Kendricks. Go figure.

DEFENSIVE LINE (2 ½)

The Ravens didn't go anywhere on the ground, either. Mike Daniels (51), Kenny Clark (37), Dean Lowry (29) and Quinton Dial (24) stood firm and at times played across the line. Dial was on the game-day roster but Montravius Adams wasn't. Lowry bull-rushed RT Austin Howard for a sack and made a series of nice run stops by shedding blocks quickly. The only other pressure came from Clark, and Daniels posted the only tackle for loss. The Ravens have been without starting guards Marshal Yanda and Alex Lewis almost all season, and LT Ronnie Stanley (concussion) was somewhat of a surprise scratch. The Packers suffered a major blow early in the fourth quarter when Clark suffered what NFL Network reported was a high-ankle sprain. Ha Ha Clinton-Dix claimed C Ryan Jensen, regarded by some scouts as an enforcer-type player, was responsible for the injury by pushing Clark as he was stuck in the pile after a 2-yard carry inside. Harbaugh said what he saw on tape Monday coincided exactly with what Jensen told him after the game. "He was really trying to hold him up," Harbaugh said. "He wasn't pushing him over the pile. He felt really bad about it. I know he has every intention to get a hold of Kenny and let him know." When the Ravens took a knee on the final play, Daniels and other Packers refused to acknowledge Jensen as they milled around shaking hands with other Ravens.

LINEBACKERS (3)

Minus Stanley, the Ravens' best offensive lineman, LG James Hurst had to move outside. Hurst was a four-year starter at LT for North Carolina and a 17-game starter there for the Ravens from 2014-'16. Nevertheless, it was a difficult transition, and Hurst allowed four pressures on edge rushes. Clay Matthews (13) dinged him for a sack in 2.5 seconds 10 plays in, or not long before a groin injury ended his day. Perry (39) had all four of the club's knockdowns, and two came off the edge against Hurst. Ahmad Brooks (26) also beat Hurst inside for a pressure. Meanwhile, RT Austin Howard gave up four pressures as well, including the sack to Lowry and another to Kyler Fackrell (34), a knockdown to Perry and a hurry to Brooks. All four outside linebackers set a hard edge that prevented RB Alex Collins from doing much business outside. Brooks, in particular, was impressive from a physical sense. Playing off the line on one snap in a 4-3, Brooks roared in and knocked pulling RG Matt Skura off his feet. He tackled a surprise shovel pass after 2 yards, leaped over RB Buck Allen in blitz pickup and seemed to take personally that the Ravens were taking over Lambeau like they owned the place. Fackrell enjoyed one of his better days. Taking a large share of Matthews' snaps, he was the rover in the dime defense six times. Three times Fackrell aborted his charge, turning a four-man rush into three, and by guessing right fouled up some screens and check-downs. Vince Biegel (16) showed he's up for the rough stuff, too. On the inside, Jake Ryan (45) made a great read and successful run-through to tackle Collins for minus-3 on third and 2. He missed two tackles but made other plays, too. Blake Martinez (59) has had much better games. It was Martinez' missed tackle, one of his four on the day, that enabled Collins to turn a check-down a yard behind the line into a gain of 21. Until Morgan Burnett returns the responsibility for wearing the electronic helmet and calling the defense falls on Martinez. That can be a burden for a young player.

SECONDARY (3)

The Packers have been waiting to see more aggressiveness out of Ha Ha Clinton-Dix (59). He was flying around, filling the alley against the run and showing excellent read and range in coverage. When the Ravens ran clever little Danny Woodhead on a wheel route from the Green Bay 24, Clinton-Dix pressed him early, leaned against him downfield and elevated to make the interception. Earlier, he moved into position from a single-high look to pick off an overthrown seam route to TE Nick Boyle but dropped the diving attempt. It's hard to fault Clinton-Dix for his late-hit penalty; he put his hand on Collins just trying to keep his footing and avoid getting hurt. Replacing Burnett was Josh Jones (59). He was unable to cover Woodhead out of the backfield and had another up-and-down performance. With Kevin King (shoulder) sidelined, Damarious Randall (45) started outside with Davon House (58). In nickel, Randall moved inside and Josh Hawkins (28) was inserted outside. Randall played effectively except for the 21-yard TD to Mike Wallace, who beat man coverage by Randall on a vertical route from the slot. Randall never looked back, trying to play off the fleet wide receiver's hands. Despite being chest-to-chest, Randall wasn't violent enough and lost the 50-50 ball. House gives the coaches an honest day's work. Hawkins was OK, too, against the NFL's 32nd-ranked passing attack.

KICKERS (one-half)

Justin Vogel, a native Floridian, punted in the cold for the first time and wasn't very good. His low punt between the hashmarks just before halftime led to a long return and field goal. His five-punt averages were 40.4 yards (gross), 34.8 (net) and 3.82 seconds of hang time. In what was the quietest day of Mason Crosby's 11-year career, all he did was kick off once (59 yards, 4.02 hang time). However, Crosby delivered a sure solo tackle on the play.

SPECIAL TEAMS (1)

Michael Campanaro's 28-yard punt return was the longest in Ron Zook's 2 ½ years as coordinator. Not since Buffalo's Marcus Thigpen went 75 for a TD in Game 14 of 2014 has an opponent returned one longer. Jerry Rosburg, the Ravens' special-teams coach, double-teamed Jeff Janis on the return even though Zook motioned Janis in an attempt to free him. Trevor Davis beat his single block and was right there to tackle Campanaro but came up short. Chris Moore's return on the kickoff was 35. Davis broke two tackles on a 30-yard KO return but later downed balls 5, 4 and 3 yards deep. If Hawkins keeps giving such great effort he might just block a placement off the edge. Brett Goode's two relatively high snaps didn't help Vogel.