

2017 Packers Individual Report Card:Defense

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DEFENSIVE LINEMEN (5)

Montravius Adams: His rookie season began inauspiciously when Adams fractured the fifth metatarsal in his left foot during his very first training camp practice. He underwent surgery to insert a screw that stabilized the fracture and missed all four exhibition games, stunting his growth from the outset. Behind on the learning curve, Adams was a non-factor all year, even after he recovered. He was inactive for 10 of 16 games and played more than 10 snaps only twice, with 18 against the Detroit Lions at home and 15 against the Pittsburgh Steelers. He finished with 2 tackles, one quarterback hit and a long way to go before next season. The game appeared much too fast for him in 2017. **Grade: D-**

Kenny Clark: Played more snaps than any defensive lineman (688) in what can only be described as a stellar season. His lateral quickness and willingness to pursue caused problems for opponents week in and week out, regardless of how many double teams he drew. Disengaged quickly and violently to make plays at the line of scrimmage, and the significant strides Clark made as a pass rusher were a welcome addition to everything Daniels already provides. Clark finished sixth on the team in tackles (55) and tied for fourth in tackles for loss (6). He came on strong as a rusher with all 4½ of his sacks in the final five weeks. Earned respect from his teammates for missing only one game after a nasty ankle injury against the Baltimore Ravens. Finished as one of the best players on the team, not just the defense. **Grade: B+**

Mike Daniels: If you swept the Packers' locker room for football purists, the search would stop with Daniels. He adores the physical side of the game and challenges opposing linemen to outwork him on a weekly basis. Gives tremendous effort on every play and takes it personally when the defensive line performs poorly. Has taken strides as a leader in the locker room. Finished third on the team in sacks (5) tackles for loss (8) and quarterback hits (12). Pass rush was fleeting at times, evidenced by four-game stretch without a sack from Week 5 through Week 9. Missed two games with injury and played 59.9 percent of snaps. **Grade: B**

Quinton Dial: Cut by the San Francisco 49ers on Sept. 2, Dial spent three days on the street before signing with the Packers. Former fifth-round pick is a mountain of a man at 6-5½ and 318 pounds, making his presence felt in the locker room and at the line of scrimmage. Proved to be a reliable contributor playing anywhere from 18 to 34 snaps per game. Lacks the explosiveness of Clark or Daniels, but Dial is difficult to move at the point and holds double teams well. Offered virtually nothing as a pass rusher but was fairly stout against the run. Made 19 tackles in 29.4 percent playing time. The 27-year-old will be a free agent in March. **Grade: C**

Dean Lowry: Intelligent player who works hard on his craft. Entrenched himself as the starting 5-technique in the base defense and rotated behind Daniels and Clark in the sub packages. Flashed awareness and made good use of his height to become the only lineman with multiple pass deflections. Finished with 32 tackles, including 2 sacks, in 47.1 percent playing time. Provided one of the highlights of the year by returning a fumble 62 yards for a touchdown against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Developing well after two seasons. **Grade: C+**

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS (7)

Clay Matthews: After playing 46.2 percent of the snaps in '16, Matthews played 62.8 percent in '17. He missed two games, one with a groin injury and the other with a hamstring. Matthews finished with 7½ sacks, marking the third straight season he failed to reach double digits. But he led the team with 12 quarterback knockdowns and also had a dozen quarterback pressures. He was one of the few players on defense who had multiple big plays. His hit on Cleveland quarterback DeShone Kizer resulted in an interception that set up the game-winning touchdown in overtime and his 63-yard fumble return at Minnesota gave the Packers a chance to take control of that game. Matthews had three missed tackles, his worst on a screen pass that the Vikings' Jerrick McKinnon ran 27 yards for a touchdown. As far as rushing the passer, Matthews was far more active from the outside than he was inside. Of his seven sacks, 3½ came when he was lined up on the left, 1½ on the right and 1½ from an inside spot in the dime. Matthews played a stack weak-side position in a 4-3 look that Capers used about 50 snaps. **Grade: B**

Nick Perry: Missing four games due to hand, ankle and shoulder injuries, Perry managed to play 518 snaps or 49.4 percent. He broke his right hand against Atlanta in Week 2 and had to play with a club on it. Finished with seven sacks, three of which came in one game against Chicago's Charles Leno. He played against several backup left tackles and should have been able to do a lot more damage even with a club on his hand. Late in the year, when the defense really needed him, Perry was out. Had seven quarterback hits and just one tackle for loss. When he's healthy, Perry can be a force on the edge. He's particularly good at getting the ball out of the quarterback's hand, but he had just one forced fumble. If the defense is going to get better, Perry is going to have to play more. A lot more. **Grade: D**

Kyler Fackrell: Started off poorly in training camp and flashed only a few decent pass rushes early on. Played too tentatively and was afraid to take any chances. But as the season wore on, he started to play more recklessly and his playing time increased. He wound up playing 42.7 percent of the snaps, mostly in place of Perry, but also as part of a rotation with Matthews and Brooks. Had 34 tackles, three sacks, seven quarterback pressures, three quarterback hits, two tackles for loss and a fumble recovery. Played more snaps than anybody on special teams and after a solid offseason in the weight room, Fackrell needs to really pour it on. He's still not strong enough to be able to slug it out with left tackles but if he can continue to build on his big frame, he has a chance to be a solid contributor. His speed and wingspan make him an intriguing player. **Grade: C-**

Ahmad Brooks: Signed after the 49ers cut him in training camp. Team's scouting department still felt he had something left and at times he showed he did. But a back condition slowed him down early in the season and he never really seemed to get in a groove. Played 33.3 percent of the snaps and had 1½ sacks, four quarterback hits and four pressures. Had four offside penalties, which is too many. Doesn't seem likely that the team will bring him back, but he's an option if it doesn't come out of the draft or free agency with help. **Grade: D+**

Chris Odom: General manager Ted Thompson saw something in Odom, but the coaches obviously didn't. Was on the roster all year after being claimed off waivers from Atlanta. Played just 59 snaps and made nine tackles. Curious thing is that he was on the roster all season while Gilbert toiled on the practice squad. When Gilbert got called up, he made more plays in one game than Odom did all season. Hard to say if Odom fits Pettine's system but after paying him a full salary for a year, the personnel department would look really bad if it cut him. **Grade: F**

Vince Biegel: Suffered a broken foot in offseason workouts and missed all of training camp. Started the season on PUP and finally saw action in the first Detroit game. Played 11.6 percent of the snaps on defense and 32.9 percent on special teams. Had 13 tackles and no splash plays. Faced an uphill climb trying to pass rush with no training camp against NFL talent. Spent so much time rehabbing and practicing, he looked worn out at the end of the year. This will be a huge offseason for him. **Grade: Incomplete**

Reggie Gilbert: Spent all but the last two weeks on the practice squad, then when Perry injured his ankle was signed to the 53. In two games (86 snaps), he had two quarterback hits, two quarterback pressures and a sack. Deserved to play a lot more during the season and should make some nice physical gains during the offseason. **Grade: Incomplete**

INSIDE LINEBACKERS (4)

Blake Martinez: Finished tied for first in the NFL with 144 tackles. Played an amazing 93.6 percent of the defensive snaps and chipped in 54 snaps on special teams. Missed a team-high 11 tackles, but as a percentage of all his tackle attempts, it was only 7.1 percent. Also led the team with 10 tackles for loss. Did a decent job rushing the passer, blitzing both up the middle and off the edge in dime situations. Had a sack, an interception and two forced fumbles. Biggest mark against him was his play against the pass. A year ago, he couldn't be trusted on third downs because he would bite so hard on play-action that he would lose his man or vacate his zone. This year, he played under more control, but he still got lost in zone coverage. Biggest challenge will be learning the entire defense so he has a better idea of where his help is and where he's supposed to provide help. Should remain a three-down player in Pettine's system. **Grade: B**

Jake Ryan: Played 48.3 percent of the snaps on defense and 50.2 percent on special teams. Finished second on the team with 89 tackles and had three for loss along with one sack, one quarterback pressure and one forced fumble. Solid against the run, missed seven tackles. Difficult for him to match up with backs in pass coverage. Was more aware than Martinez in zone coverage but broke up just one pass compared to Martinez's 11. Strictly a run-down-only player who was taken off the field when a safety was moved up in the nitro defense. Later in the season played in the nickel when the nitro was mostly scrapped. **Grade: C-**

Joe Thomas: Made the team based on coverage ability and special teams. Suffered a high-ankle sprain in the first Chicago game and never got back on track. With Martinez entrenched at the dime position, Thomas was relegated to special teams, playing 50.5 percent of those snaps. He finished with just 107 snaps on defense and 14 tackles and a half sack. Understands pass defense better than any of the other inside linebackers and can cover one-on-one. Could be someone that Pettine uses on third downs next year. **Grade: D**

David Talley: Rookie from Grand Valley State was placed on injured reserve on cut-down day last August. **Grade: Incomplete**

CORNERBACKS (7)

Donatello Brown: The undrafted rookie out of Valdosta State started the season on the practice squad before being promoted to the 53 in early November. His lone snap in four games active came in Packers' home finale against Minnesota. Good size at 5-11½ and 190 pounds, but 4.5-second 40 is only so-so. **Grade: Incomplete**

Demetri Goodson: Long road back from torn ACL in 2016 briefly landed him on the 53-man roster in early December. But after only two games (in which he didn't play), he was placed on injured reserve with a hamstring injury. The former sixth-round pick becomes a free agent when his rookie deal expires in March and his future is hard to decipher because of the medical issues. More of a special-teams player than a corner at this stage in his career. Could provide value on return units if healthy. **Grade: Incomplete**

Josh Hawkins: Undrafted out of East Carolina, Hawkins saw more opportunities on defense in his second season. After playing almost exclusively on special teams in 2016, he made three starts as an injury replacement at corner. He finished with 403 snaps — more playing time than King (380) — but didn't do much with them (six passes defended, one fumble forced). Great athlete (4.39) and had some moments (played especially well in the first Chicago game and against Tampa Bay), but too often looked overmatched. **Grade: D**

Davon House: The free-agent acquisition returned on a one-year contract to the team that drafted him in 2011. But injuries were an issue, beginning when he missed most of the preseason with a pulled hamstring. He showed his toughness late in the season, missing only one game with a transverse process fracture in his back. He had only one interception (against Saints quarterback Drew Brees) and six passes defended. He turns 29 in July. If the Packers re-sign him, his value would be as a veteran backup. **Grade: D+**

Kevin King: Despite an impressive size-speed combination, he dropped into the draft's second round because of lingering shoulder concerns. He couldn't put those concerns to rest in a rookie season that ended prematurely with shoulder surgery. Although King never really was healthy, he didn't let the bum shoulder prevent him from showing promise. He wasn't known as a tackler at Washington, but became the Packers' best-tackling corner as a rookie. A high level of confidence helped him hold his own (despite no interceptions) against some of the NFL's top receivers. His future hinges on whether he can stay healthy. **Grade: C-**

Lenzy Pipkins: Only undrafted rookie on offense or defense to crack the initial 53. A hard-nosed corner who impressed the Packers with his work ethic in preseason, he remained on the active roster the entire season, playing 122 snaps in 12 games. The bulk of his playing time came in three games: at Minnesota in Week 6, vs. Minnesota in Week 16 and at Detroit in Week 17. Aggressive and showed a knack for press coverage, but often was overeager and out of position. **Grade: D**

Damarious Randall: Recovered from a sophomore slump to become the best defensive back on the Packers' roster. His season turned after a Week 4 benching against Chicago; Randall was sent to the locker room for sulking after allowing a touchdown shortly before halftime. He responded with an interception in each of his next three games and led the Packers with a career-high four, one more than safety Ha Ha Clinton-Dix. Still has much to work on, with too many fundamental breakdowns leading to big plays for opponents. **Grade: B-**

Quinten Rollins: Appeared to be the Packers' top cornerback at the onset of camp but lost steam as summer went on and produced next to nothing during the season. His future is in serious doubt after a torn Achilles, an injury that can zap a player's speed, ended his season after six games. Speed (4.57) already was a significant deficiency before the injury. Since picking off two passes against the Rams as a rookie, Rollins has one interception in his past 29 games. Will need a big offseason to make the 53-man roster. **Grade: D-**

Herb Waters: Converted receiver from Miami showed potential in the offseason. Drew comparisons to former Packers cornerback Tramon Williams from position coach Joe Whitt, but his season ended on the first day of training camp when a shoulder injury sent him to injured reserve. **Grade: Incomplete**

SAFETIES (6)

Kentrell Brice: Improved significantly as a communicator and played assignment-conscious football during training camp. Entered the season poised for a significant role as the Packers leaned heavily on their nitro package, which moved Burnett and/or Jones to an inside linebacker spot. He averaged 48 snaps per game alongside Clinton-Dix before an ankle injury landed him on injured reserve seven weeks into the season. Remains erratic in coverage, especially against tight ends who know how to use their bodies, and missed way too many tackles for someone known as a big hitter. His athleticism doesn't always translate as expected. **Grade: D**

Morgan Burnett: Heart and soul of the secondary for the Packers. He is the best communicator on defense and wears the headset whenever healthy; the coaches trust him implicitly. Missed four games due to hamstring and groin injuries, the frequency of which makes you wonder if his body is in decline. Still finished fourth on the team in tackles (68) and fourth in tackles for loss (5). Packers applied his football smarts to a variety of positions: strong safety, inside linebacker and slot corner in both nickel and dime alignments. He started to struggle with range as the season went on, evidenced by the 33-yard touchdown to Pittsburgh's Antonio Brown in which Burnett couldn't reach the sideline in Cover 2. Missed only 4.2 percent of tackles. **Grade: B-**

Ha Ha Clinton-Dix: It was a forgettable season in virtually every aspect for Clinton-Dix. Despite remarkable durability (99.6 percent playing time), there was nothing reliable about his performance from week to week. There were games in which he lacked explosiveness and appeared incapable of changing direction. There were others in which he shied away from contact or gambled at inopportune moments. He floundered while wearing the communication helmet against the New Orleans Saints. He missed 11.2 percent of tackles, nearly triple the rate of Burnett. Perhaps most egregiously, Clinton-Dix seemed to quit on his teammates in the season finale in Detroit by exerting minimal effort on some plays. Wants to be a leader but lacks accountability. Finished second on the team in tackles (79) and interceptions (3). **Grade: D**

Marwin Evans: Played 331 snaps on special teams, second only to outside linebacker Kyler Fackrell (354). Evans led the Packers in special-teams tackles with 9; nobody else had more than 5. Had 3 special-teams tackles in the season finale. Buried on the depth chart at safety, he played 10 or fewer snaps from scrimmage in 11 of 16 games. Earned a start in Week 3 against the Cincinnati Bengals with Brice on the inactive list and made 4 tackles in 54 snaps. Good athlete but looked lost at times defensively. **Grade: D+**

Josh Jones: Inherited the title of offseason poster child from inside linebacker Blake Martinez. Jones is a physical specimen whose combination of size and athleticism was breathtaking during training camp. Coaches asked him to play strong safety, inside linebacker and slot corner at various times throughout the season. Jones was most impactful near the line of scrimmage, where he sliced into the backfield for 3 tackles for loss and 2 sacks. However, Jones imploded the further back he went. Mental mistakes were a major issue in coverage, and Jones led the team in explosive gains allowed. He often was caught peeking into the backfield rather than keeping his eyes on receivers, especially in zone calls. Generally struggled in coverage. Most penalized player on the team with eight (seven accepted). Missed 7.8 percent of tackles, same as cornerback Damarious Randall. Erratic play on special teams forced the coaches to bench him. **Grade: D-**

Jermaine Whitehead: Promoted to the active roster in late October and became a regular contributor in small doses. When injuries struck, Whitehead played as a slot corner in the dime defense with Burnett as the nickel on the opposite side. Averaged 19 snaps from scrimmage over the final five weeks. Not overly fast, but he plays with toughness and a good motor. Coaches trusted him to run a fake punt against the Cleveland Browns, and he was successful. Recovered an onside kick against the Lions in Week 17. Whitehead played 190 snaps on special teams (seventh-most on the team) and made 5 special-teams tackles (tied for second) despite appearing in only 10 games. **Grade: D+**