

2017 Packers Individual Report Card:Offense

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

QUARTERBACKS (3)

Aaron Rodgers: Led the Packers to a 4-1 record before going on injured reserve with a broken collarbone suffered in Week 6 at Minnesota. Rodgers entered that game with a league-leading 13 touchdown passes with only three interceptions and had the look of a quarterback on a mission. A week earlier, he'd led the Packers to a comeback victory at Dallas, completing a 12-yard, game-winning touchdown pass to Davante Adams with 11 seconds left. Rodgers' lone early-season loss came at Atlanta when the Packers started a pair of backup offensive tackles due to injury. Activated from injured reserve in Week 15, Rodgers threw for three touchdowns against the Carolina Panthers, but also showed rust by throwing three interceptions for only the fourth time in his career. He returned to IR after the loss to the Panthers eliminated the Packers from playoff contention, but said last week he is fully recovered. **Grade: B**

Brett Hundley: Underwhelming production in extensive preseason action (sacked 11 times, 88.8 passer rating) was a harbinger for his season. Hundley lost his first two starts and four of his first five. He often struggled to see the whole field and had a tendency to roll right and throw passes out of bounds. On the plus side, he made clutch throws to Adams in a victory at Chicago and showed poise late in close games, leading the Packers to consecutive overtime wins against Tampa Bay and Cleveland. Hundley had three games with a passer rating above 100 (at Chicago, at Pittsburgh, at Cleveland), but six games with a rating below 60. Among qualified quarterbacks, he finished 30th in passer rating (70.6), 31st in yards per pass (5.81) and 32nd in passing yards per game (167). He was one of four quarterbacks to start at least half the season and throw more interceptions (12) than touchdown passes (9). Hundley failed to throw a TD pass in his five starts at Lambeau Field, was shut out twice at home and finished 3-6 as a starter. **Grade: D**

Joe Callahan: Retained the Packers' interest for reasons that remain unclear. Callahan began the season on the practice squad and was promoted to the active roster after Rodgers' injury. He was carried on the 53-man roster for nine games, but didn't take a snap until late in the season finale in Detroit, where he completed 5 of 7 passes for 11 yards. It doesn't bode well that he couldn't see the field earlier despite Hundley's struggles. **Grade: Incomplete**

WIDE RECEIVERS (7)

Davante Adams: It would be hard to imagine the Packers' offense without Adams, who turned in the best season of his career under trying circumstances. His footwork and quickness at the line of scrimmage have become his best weapons, and opposing cornerbacks of all body types struggle to stop him within the first few yards. He finished tied for second in the league in touchdown receptions (10) and flashed an ability to make difficult catches in the red zone. His toughness cannot be questioned after he endured brutal hits from linebackers Danny Trevathan and Thomas Davis. **Grade: B+**

Geronimo Allison: More was expected from Allison after a strong rookie season in which he made the team as an undrafted free agent. But after sitting out the opener due to a suspension (marijuana) and returning to play sizable roles in Weeks 2 and 3, he did not top 20 snaps for the next 10 games. Exceeded 35 receiving yards just once, and a costly fumble in Week 15 against the Carolina Panthers will weigh on his mind for months. **Grade: D**

Michael Clark: He dazzled fans, teammates and coaches in training camp with wondrous acrobatic catches on a daily basis before sticking around on the practice squad. Thompson promoted him to the active roster Dec. 1, and Clark played 75 snaps in two games after the Packers were eliminated from playoff contention. He remains equal parts raw, unpolished and wildly intriguing. An offseason of dedicated work should be beneficial. **Grade: D**

Randall Cobb: Missed only one game and played 70.9 percent of snaps in what amounted to a decent season. He led the Packers in yards after the catch with 409, which ranked 21st in the league, but struggled to break away from defenders at the line of scrimmage and lacked top-end speed. Still finished second on the team in catches and remains tough as nails despite his slender build. Cobb, who excels on scramble plays, should be more valuable with Rodgers back on the field. **Grade: C+**

Trevor Davis: Though he endured bouts of questionable decision making, Davis flourished as a punt returner in his second season and finished second in the league in yards per return with 12. He is dynamic, fearless and wants to make things happen at every opportunity. Took the kick-return job from Janis midway through the season and finished eighth with 22.8 yards per return. Never fumbled. Played 103 snaps from scrimmage, more than half of which came in the final two games. Should receive more playing time at receiver next season. **Grade: B**

Jeff Janis: Played 50 snaps from scrimmage but 42 came after the Packers were knocked out of the playoff race, evidence that the coaches don't see his value as a receiver. To opponents, Janis is still the most feared special-teams player on the roster due to his speed, toughness and willingness to make tackles, the combination of which attracted frequent double teams. Finished tied for fourth on the team with 4 special-teams tackles. He becomes an unrestricted free agent in March. **Grade: C-**

Jordy Nelson: Endured the worst season of his career since becoming a significant contributor in 2010. Nelson failed to top 100 yards in any game and had three or fewer catches eight times. He turns 33 in May and appears to have lost most of his juice. Struggled to gain separation from cornerbacks all season and finished 153rd in yards after the catch with 2.5 per reception. It's doubtful the injury to Rodgers was the only factor in Nelson's massive decline. Scheduled to make \$9.25 million in base salary next season. **Grade: D**

TIGHT ENDS (3)

Emanuel Byrd: Signed to the practice squad Nov. 3 and promoted to the active roster Dec. 26 after an injury to Richard Rodgers. Byrd played 11 snaps in the season finale against Detroit and caught two passes for 31 yards, including a 29-yarder. Lacks ideal size for the position and doesn't have enough speed to offset his diminutive frame. **Grade: Incomplete**

Lance Kendricks: Led all tight ends in playing time with 467 snaps (44.6 percent) but watched his role erode as Richard Rodgers' snap count increased late in the year. Joined the Packers on a team-friendly contract worth \$4 million over two years with \$1.2 million guaranteed. Caught only 18 passes for 203 yards, including a 51-yard reception that accounted for 25 percent of his production. Poor but willing blocker. **Grade: D**

Richard Rodgers: Began the season as the third-string tight end behind Kendricks and Martellus Bennett but handled the demotion with class. Rodgers averaged 35 snaps per game from Week 9 through Week 15 in what amounted to a fairly even split with Kendricks. He caught 12 passes for 160 yards and one touchdown, all of which were the lowest numbers of his career. Like Kendricks, he is a poor but willing blocker. Rodgers will be a free agent in March. **Grade: D**

RUNNING BACKS (4)

Jamal Williams: Examine some of the NFL's best running games and you will discover dual-manned operations employing one back with power and one back with speed. Williams is the power back. He deserved a medal for playing 79.3 percent of the offensive snaps over the final seven weeks, including 87.4 percent over the final two games. Even in the blowout loss to Detroit, he returned to the lineup after going to the locker room with a finger injury. He easily could have called it a day. Williams was so good at protecting the ball, he had to be told not to always cover it with two arms so he could get more out of each run. He had 178 touches without the ball coming out. He did not punish teams for making mistakes, managing just one rush of 20 or more yards. His 3.6-yard per carry average isn't good enough. **Grade: C+**

Aaron Jones: Of all the backs in the NFL with 50 or more carries, none gained 20 or more yards at a better rate than Jones (every 13.5 carries). The next closest was Vikings first-round pick Dalvin Cook (18.5). The Saints' Alvin Kamara (24.0), the Chiefs' Kareem Hunt (23.5) and the Rams' Todd Gurley (35.0) weren't even close. The 5-9, 208-pound Jones was inactive Week 1 because of poor special teams play. When he finally played against Chicago in Week 4, the coaches recognized what he could do for the offense and in Dallas the following week he carried 19 times for 125 yards and a touchdown. After the loss at Minnesota, he rushed 17 times for 131 yards and a touchdown against New Orleans. Then came the knee injuries. Jones also had suffered a torn MCL at UTEP. Running backs coach Ben Sirmans said Jones' aim during the offseason will be strengthening his legs to help avoid the MCL tears, which don't require surgery. **Grade: C**

Devante Mays: The 5-10½, 230-pound Mays was the slowest to pick up pass protection and trailed the other two rookies on the depth chart all season. Compact and powerful, Mays took out his frustration in the weight room and was so ripped by year's end he looked like he could have played nose tackle. Mays' two fumbles against the Ravens made it hard to trust him and even with Jones out, the coaches never gave him the ball. On special teams, he played 12 percent of the snaps and did not make a tackle. He vowed in the offseason to work on improving his speed and pass-catching ability and said he had gained a lot watching the others. The coaches think there's something there; it will be on him to prove it. **Grade: F**

Ty Montgomery: After being anointed the No. 1 back, Montgomery was average at best and finished on injured reserve for the second time in three years. He averaged under 3 yards per carry in four of the eight games he played. He still has value as an athlete. The coaches need to find a role in which receiving is his primary function and running the ball is secondary. **Grade: D**

FULLBACKS (2)

Aaron Ripkowski: The third-year fullback played 17.3 percent of the snaps, down from 18.2 percent in 2016. His carries dropped from 34 to 5 as McCarthy passed or went with Williams or Jones in short-yardage situations. Ripkowski did not get a single carry on third- or fourth-and-1. He's better on the move than he is blocking on belly plays and needs to stay relevant on special teams. **Grade: C**

Joe Kerridge: He played only three snaps from scrimmage and was signed at midseason mostly for special-teams reasons (23 snaps). **Grade: Incomplete**

OFFENSIVE LINE (12)

David Bakhtiari: With Rodgers absent for half the season, Bakhtiari was the Packers' best player in 2017. In his fifth season, the former fourth-round pick established himself as one of the best blindside blockers in football. Named second-team All-Pro for the second straight season. Always had raw athleticism to excel at the position, but has come a long way with his technique. Makes very few mistakes. Excellent footwork and hands. Led all tackles in pass-blocking efficiency with 12 total pressures (one sack, two hits, nine hurries) in 455 pass-block snaps, according to Pro Football Focus. "I think he's a top five, six tackle," one scout said. Matured as a leader on the offensive line, a necessary role to fill with the recent departures of guards Josh Sitton and T.J. Lang. **Grade: A-**

Bryan Bulaga: His future is murky after a torn ACL in his right knee forced him to miss the season's final eight games. Made only five starts with preseason ankle injury knocking him out of the first two games. Turns 29 in March. "I expect him to bounce back from that," offensive line coach James Campen said during the season. Recovery won't be easy for Bulaga, who tore his left ACL in 2013. **Grade: C-**

Dillon Day: Signed to 53-man roster off the Denver Broncos practice squad Dec. 20, he gave the Packers a backup center by trade, something they lacked through the season's first 14 games. Originally signed with Broncos as an undrafted rookie in 2015, he spent time on the active roster in Denver and Indianapolis. He was coached by newly hired Packers offensive coordinator Joe Philbin with the Colts. **Grade: Incomplete**

Jahri Evans: Best addition from Ted Thompson's unprecedented free-agent spending spree. Thompson didn't sign a difference maker last offseason, but in Evans the Packers added the type of position-specific solution that makes free agency valuable. Signed days before the draft, Evans ensured right guard would not be a problem in the wake of Pro Bowler Lang's departure. Played every snap through first 14 games before a knee contusion forced him to miss the final two after the Packers were eliminated from playoff contention. "His body's beat up," one scout said. Evans said after the finale that he's considering retirement after 14 seasons. **Grade: C**

Ulrick John: Signed in late September off Arizona's practice squad to provide emergency depth when injuries decimated tackle depth chart early in season. First action came in Minnesota when he replaced the injured Bulaga at right tackle for the final 32 snaps. Played eight snaps combined as the third tight end in three games (at Pittsburgh, Tampa Bay, at Detroit). A seventh-round pick by the Colts in 2014, drafted out of Georgia State. Played two games with the Miami Dolphins in 2015. Started three games with the Cardinals in 2016. Will have to fight for a roster spot. **Grade: D-**

Corey Linsley: In the final season of his rookie contract, he showed enough to remain a big part of the Packers' future plans. Signed three-year, \$25.5 million extension, a deal announced one day before the season finale. New money ranks eighth among NFL centers in average yearly salary, according to Over the Cap. Earned the contract with not only solid play, but availability. After missing half of the 2016 season after hamstring surgery and three games in 2015 with an ankle injury that required surgery, he was the only player on the Packers' roster to not miss a snap last season. Good power in run game, athletic enough to hold up in pass protection. Smart, reliable communicator along interior. **Grade: B**

Justin McCray: Showed enough to establish himself as frontrunner for the Packers' starting right guard spot in 2018 if Evans doesn't return, but might be a better fit off the bench. "Great backup," a scout said. Showed versatility as an injury replacement in seven starts, with five coming at right tackle and two at left guard. He'd never played tackle before this past season. "Inclined to say backup," another scout said. "But wouldn't bet against the kid." **Grade: C**

Kyle Murphy: Ideal size for the tackle position, Murphy (6-6, 305) missed 13 games after being placed on injured reserve in late September following foot surgery. Started first three games because of other injuries at tackle and played well in the first two. Held up reasonably well at left tackle Week 2 at Atlanta but struggled mightily against Cincinnati Bengals rookie Carl Lawson in Week 3, allowing two sacks. Should enter this offseason ahead of Jason Spriggs on tackle depth chart. **Grade: D+**

Adam Pankey: Undrafted rookie from West Virginia was promoted from the practice squad when defensive lineman Ricky Jean Francois was released in surprising move. He was active for only five of his 15 games on the roster, and his only snap came on special teams in the finale at Detroit. Has a lot of work ahead of him to crack 53-man roster. **Grade: Incomplete**

Lucas Patrick: After spending 2016 on the Packers' practice squad, he cracked the 53-man roster out of training camp in 2017. Most impressive moment came in Week 16 when, one snap into the game against Minnesota, Spriggs was lost to a knee injury. Patrick played well the rest of the game at right guard, with McCray moving to right tackle. Has a nasty streak that serves him well. Packers also worked him at center. Figures to add depth as interior backup. **Grade: D+**

Jason Spriggs: Enters a career crossroads offseason in 2018. Drafted to be a third tackle, interchangeable on left or right side, but has yet to justify Packers' decision to trade up in 2016 second round for him. Missed nine games after tearing his hamstring blocking on an extra point in the season opener. Started four games at right tackle before a dislocated kneecap suffered on the first snap in Week 16 ended his season. Injury won't require surgery but could keep him out until training camp, which isn't ideal after a disastrous second season. **Grade: D-**

Lane Taylor: Signed a three-year, \$16.5 million extension six days before the season opener. A mainstay on the left side, he only missed one game and parts of two others. Showed versatility by making two starts at left tackle. His play at left guard has made the Packers' decision to release Sitton look much better in hindsight. Compensates for limited athletic ability with consistently solid play and didn't commit a penalty all season. **Grade: B-**