

# Rating The Packers : Week 7 vs Raiders

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By Bob McGinn Posted 10/22/2019

It was an onslaught of epic proportion. As Jon Gruden suggested, it might have been worse, too.

“They’re missing Davante Adams, you know?” the coach said Sunday after the Packers overwhelmed his Raiders, 42-24, at Lambeau Field.

On Monday, Gruden once more paid tribute to Aaron Rodgers, who became the first quarterback in Packers’ history to reach the maximum passer rating of 158.3.

“These great quarterbacks, they’re not forgiving people,” Gruden said. “You make a mistake, they make you pay. I credit Rodgers. He did a great job.”

Even without Adams, their Pro Bowl wide receiver, the Packers still completed nine passes for 20 yards or more to six different receivers after averaging 3.7 in the first six games. Everything clicked in coach Matt LaFleur’s creative, deceptive and unpredictably aggressive attack.

Paul Guenther, the Raiders defensive coordinator, is a disciple of Mike Zimmer, who has battled the Packers tooth and nail for a decade in Cincinnati and Minnesota. In this game, the Raiders were kept almost completely off balance.

Cornerback Gareon Conley, who not only covered and tackled poorly but also didn’t seem to play with much effort, was traded to the Texans on Monday for a third-round draft choice. The Raiders selected Conley with the 24th selection in the 2017 draft.

The Packers were able to average 8.7 yards per play on 481 yards in 55 snaps. Take away three kneels for minus-3 at the end and their average would have been 9.3.

Nevertheless, the 8.7 average was the best for Green Bay in 22 years, or since the Packers averaged 10.0 (44-441) on Nov. 16, 1997, in a 41-38 loss to the winless Colts at the RCA Dome. In that game, Brett Favre had a passer rating of 120.4.

Until Sunday the Packers’ best in the last 22 years had been 8.3, twice. The first was on Thanksgiving Day 2007 at Ford Field in a 37-26 victory over the Lions; Favre’s passer rating was 128.2. The second came in September 2013 against the Redskins at Lambeau Field in a 38-20 victory; Rodgers’ passer rating was 146.0.

Entering the Oakland game the Packers were averaging 5.5 per play. They averaged 5.8 in 2018 and 4.9 in 2017.

On the other hand, the Raiders averaged 7.8 yards (62-484), which was the most against the Packers since the Redskins averaged 8.3 (62-515) in November 2016 during their 42-24 victory at FedEx Field. The Raiders also had three passes for 64 yards wiped out by penalty.

"We're excited," Gruden said Monday. "You're on the road and have almost 500 yards of total offense and about 100 called back. It's an impressive film."

The lopsided defeat was nothing new for the Raiders in Green Bay. In their four previous visits to Lambeau Field, all losses (1993, '99, '07 and '11), they were outscored, 140-47.

Here is a rating of the Packers against the Raiders. Five footballs are the maximum, one-half football is the minimum. As a team, the Packers received 3 ½ footballs.

The three stars of the game were: 1. Aaron Rodgers. 2. Marquez Valdes-Scantling. 3. Bryan Bulaga.

### **Receivers (4 ½)**

Other than the drop by Allen Lazard on a 27-yard, Cover 2-beater tight to the sideline, it's hard to find fault with anything done by this corps of no-name wide receivers. Marquez Valdes-Scantling (played 20 of the possible 60 snaps on offense) looked like a no-go late in the week because of ankle and knee injuries. Targeted just three times, he destroyed Gareon Conley on a 59-yard bomb into the middle of the field and then skipped away from Conley in the flat, turning a 5-yard out into a 74-yard touchdown. He now has five receptions of 40 yards or more in seven games this season after catching four in 16 games last year. Another jumbo wide receiver of the past, Jordy Nelson, often made his biggest plays on play-action passes with maximum protection not unlike the one MVS beat Conley. Counting playoffs, Nelson had 29 40-plus receptions in nine seasons for the Packers. His high-water mark was eight in 2014. Nelson's 40-plus percentage of .195 (29 in 149 games) for Green Bay is half of MVS' .391 (nine in 23 games). The fact that MVS, who unquestionably is on the spindly side, decided to play no doubt thrilled the coaches and front office. Geronimo Allison (34) didn't practice all week after suffering a concussion and chest injuries against Detroit. He was flying across the field on crossers but his big catch, 35 yards on a 50-50 ball against Conley, was wiped out when officials denied the free play. Lazard, who was cut Aug. 31 before being brought back from the practice squad four days later, led the group with 51 snaps, or 12 more than he had in his career. After Lazard's bad drop, it was a smart move by Matt LaFleur and his staff not to bench him. He returned their confidence by making an acrobatic sideline catch against CB Daryl Worley and SS Erik Harris for 26. Jake Kumerow, another former free agent, ran an exquisite take-off route against a blown coverage before tight-ropeing the boundary for a 37-yard TD. Darrius Shepherd (three) got in for the last series. Jimmy Graham (33) didn't get on the field until the fifth snap with LaFleur in run-the-ball mode. Mercedes Lewis (24) started, and Evan Baylis (eight) played late for injured Robert Tonyan (hip). Graham made his presence felt, dipping low for a 3-yard TD pass, breaking two tackles on a checkdown for 25 and drawing a 22-yard interference penalty on Harris inside the 5. His long gain of 29 came on a crosser when SLB Tahir Whitehead just let him go to fall in front of another receiver. Even though Graham lacks the speed to separate deep, his size makes him a pass-interference threat.

## **Offensive Line (4 ½)**

Defensive coordinator Paul Guenther sat on his hands much of the afternoon. He didn't want to hang his suspect secondary out to dry, but with the Packers stoning his four-man rushes, he ended up pressuring on 27 percent of dropbacks. The Packers' first five opponents all had at least one Pro Bowl-caliber rusher. The Raiders don't have a threat, so this unit was able to show it could be relatively dominant against mediocre people. Bryan Bulaga allowed one pressure after walling off base end Josh Mauro and journeyman Benson Mayowa without incident. Keeping the 30-year-old Bulaga, who is in the midst of possibly his finest season, on the field is a key to the season. Rookie DE Clelin Ferrell, the fourth choice in the draft, worked primarily against David Bakhtiari on base downs before moving inside over Elgton Jenkins on passing downs. He never got a sniff. The game's only sack could be charged evenly against Bakhtiari and Jenkins. That was their only blemish. Jenkins showed excellent acceleration in front of a screen. Corey Linsley didn't have much trouble against the wave of defensive tackles (Johnathan Hankins, 38 snaps; P.J. Hall, 35; Maurice Hurst, 22; Corey Liuget, 17). After leading the charge against Detroit, Billy Turner was the weak link this time with team-high totals of two pressures and 1 ½ "bad" runs.

## **Quarterbacks (5)**

Matt LaFleur's system of checkdowns is much different than Mike McCarthy's. LaFleur stretches the field horizontally as much as vertically. With safety-valve receivers moving toward or near the boundary, Aaron Rodgers' arm strength gets the ball outside in a hurry. Thus, you're seeing the running backs and Jimmy Graham get all this yardage after the catch whereas checkdown receivers just past the line in the middle of the field generally get less. It's only one area in which Rodgers' level of comfort and confidence in the offense continues to expand. With the entire width of the field (53 1/3 yards) in play, it was an impossible assignment for an opponent such as the Raiders with little or no pass rush. Given the luxury of such ample time, Rodgers was looking off safeties and delivering accurate passes all over the place. On Paul Guenther's only six-man blitz, Rodgers got the ball out to Marquez Valdes-Scantling on a third-and-4 play that ruptured into a TD. The Raiders knocked Rodgers down only four times. Two of them were stiff frontal shots (SS Karl Joseph, WLB Nicholas Morrow), but Rodgers stood in and courageously made sound throws. Just before the smackdown by Morrow, Rodgers made sure to throw in the vicinity of a receiver (Geronimo Allison) to avoid a safety for intentional grounding (he was in the end zone). His hard count caught the Raiders once and Billy Turner once. Because LaFleur was getting the plays in so promptly, Rodgers often had at least 15 seconds to try and confuse the Raiders with pre-snap mechanisms. Tim Boyle made his regular-season debut with three handoffs and three kneels.

## **Running Backs (4 ½)**

Danny Vitale (17) might seem a little out of place amid the bells and whistles, but Matt LaFleur wants a fullback and this is his guy. He's a good athlete (4.59 seconds in 40, 38 ½-inch vertical jump) but little more than a get-in-the-way blocker despite excellent strength (30 reps on the bench press). So the coach plays to what he does best. Vitale, who scored 24 on the Wonderlic intelligence test, is smart enough to shift all over the formation. When Vitale innocuously lined up just outside Bryan Bulaga, he became DE Benson Mayowa's man. When the Raiders blitzed, Vitale angled straight to the open right side of the field and Mayowa trailed hopelessly until the gain was for 21. Previously, Vitale inserted toward MLB Justin Phillips as if to block but kept going into the open middle for a 22-yard reception. As a blocker, he stops his feet on contact at times and isn't the least bit explosive. That's OK, however, because the Packers aren't a lead iso team. Aaron Jones

(34) accounted for 83 yards from scrimmage after gaining just 60 and dropping a 33-yard TD pass against the Lions. He earned redemption on almost the same route for a 21-yard TD catch behind WLB Nicholas Morrow. Jones surprised Morrow, who runs 4.54, with his burst and the route. As Jones broke into the clear, he looked over his right shoulder. With the passing already flying inside the 5, Jones fast-flipped his head back to the left and there was the football, which he clutched five yards deep in the end zone. Also, he put his head down and crashed through SLB Tahir Whitehead in the hole for 2 on third and 1. When an inside zone was headed for no gain he bounced wide right for 15. He sustained his block forever on SS Karl Joseph so Marquez Valdes-Scantling could proceed unimpeded 69 yards down the sideline to the end zone. He picked up blitzers twice. Jamaal Williams (24) does what he always does. Any opposing player would be a fool if he studied Williams and then wasn't ready to meet fire with fire. Williams brings it every Sunday.

## **Defensive Line (1)**

If the Raiders hadn't fallen so far behind there's no telling what their rushing total would have been. As it was, they gained 155 and averaged 5.0. All three levels of the defense are having problems getting the run stopped. Kenny Clark played a role in three of Oakland's nine "bad" runs. Matched against an excellent center in Rodney Hudson and 330-pound veteran guards Richie Incognito and Gabe Jackson, Clark made a few plays and also was moved back four or five yards at least twice. Josh Jacobs' 27-yard run broke out when Clark disengaged only to miss the tackle. Clark played 46 of the possible 66 defensive snaps. The Packers would be lost without him, but to this point, he hasn't performed at an elite level. Dean Lowry (48) drew a pair of holding penalties on RT David Sharpe, who replaced Trent Brown (calf), to erase 44 yards in gains. Lowry and Clark each had one pressure. Tyler Lancaster (33) was OK; he stuffed blockers at the point of attack on two 2-yard gains but didn't play across the line of scrimmage. In his third season, Montravius Adams (27) remains an interesting prospect. He does flash exceptional get-off, is using his hands better all the time and has improved his arsenal of pass-rush moves. Although he will get penetration, he isn't an aware player and doesn't find the ball readily. Where Adams has made sizeable gains is his effort. There were at least three instances where he hustled downfield past other teammates and either participated in the tackle or would have been there in event of a fumble. Kingsley Keke (seven) didn't get in until 6 minutes were left. One play he was driven five yards off the ball, the next he hopped over a cut block and made the tackle.

## **Linebackers (1)**

Backup Raiders RT David Sharpe, a fourth-round draft choice in 2017 who already has been released twice, made the second start of his career and was deserving of a game ball, according to coach Jon Gruden, That's because Za'Darius Smith (49) failed to beat him for a pressure and Preston Smith (44) beat him for only one. Raiders offensive coordinator Greg Olson started out double-teaming Za'Darius on almost every pass. Once Sharpe and LT Kolton Miller, the 15th pick in the 2018 draft, demonstrated they could handle him, Olson backed off. The final double-team count on Za'Darius was 36.8 percent. I can't recall another game in which the opposing quarterback wasn't knocked down at least once by the Packers. Derek Carr was never down in 29 pass plays. Za'Darius had a hand in two "bad" runs. Preston had a blah performance as well. He lost the edge on a 9-yard run, was lackadaisical squeezing the cutback line on the backside and was still trying to flip sides with Za'Darius as the ball was snapped on a TD pass. Rashan Gary (18) continues to lunge ahead and gets covered up on the vast majority of his rushes. Kyler Fackrell (28) is less effective at the point of attack than Gary but has more of a rush repertoire. He made a clutch open-field tackle of Josh Jacobs inside the 5. Once again, Mike Pettine didn't blitz much (17.7 percent). It was more of the same for Blake Martinez (62):

make a series of tackles downfield but almost no explosive plays. When Jacobs blew through the defense for 42 yards the gain would have been 2 if Martinez had made what should have been a routine tackle. On DeAndre Washington's long rush (8 yards), Martinez popped him from the side but the 5-8, 210 back kept on moving for four additional yards. Martinez missed a team-high total of three tackles. He overpursued on Jacobs' 27-yard run and continued to have problems covering, both against play-action and with his limitations in range. His best play was hustling to the sideline and prompting Carr to stretch for the pylon and fumble into the end zone. B.J. Goodson (40) and Oren Burks (14) shared the other ILB berth. Goodson is better against the run than the pass. Burks seems mildly improved taking on and shedding blocks in the interior.

## **Defensive Backs (1)**

Edgar Bennett, in his second year as the Raiders wide receivers coach, expected his starters to be Antonio Brown and Tyrell Williams this season. Brown self-destructed and Williams is hurt (foot). Thus, Bennett had to play ex-Packer Trevor Davis (50), rookie slot Hunter Renfrow (30), rookie free agent Keelan Doss (29) and late pick Marcell Ateman (23). That might be the league's least-talented group. Thus, coach Jon Gruden drummed up sets interspersed with tight ends: ex-WR Darren Waller (61), Foster Moreau (32) and Derek Carrier (21). With receivers running here, there and everywhere, Derek Carr completed 78.6 percent of 28 passes for 293 yards and a passer rating of 119.2. If Carr hadn't been wild high early he probably would have had 24 or 25 completions. The tight ends hauled in 11 for 172 and three TDs whereas the wideouts caught eight for 130. When the pass rush finally rested for the first time this season, the weaknesses of this secondary was exposed. Jaire Alexander (62) and Kevin King (58) each missed two tackles. Alexander got caught inside, enabling Josh Jacobs to get down the sideline for a gain of 42. King missed on Jacobs' 27-yard burst. King isn't afraid to support and tackle as long as he can lead with his left shoulder. Ateman's first catch of the season went for 36 on a 50-50 ball over King. Alexander kept getting beat inside. His best moment came on fourth down from the 1 when he cut Jacobs' feet out as he went airborne unsuccessfully. Once again, nickel back Tramon Williams (37) went without a blemish. Josh Jackson (five) and Ka'dar Hollman (four) played at the end. It's getting to the point where Jackson's roster berth might be in jeopardy. Doss beat him on an out for 19 before Waller took advantage of his soft coverage and attempted tackle to tack on a 17-yard TD. He looks like a lost cause in coverage. Safeties Adrian Amos (62) and Will Redmond (62) were victimized frequently. Redmond's aggressiveness works for and against him. He delivered three stinging hits but was out of position deep at times. His lack of size is hard to overcome against tight ends. After getting knocked on his rear end by Jacobs on the first play, Amos made two stiff tackles. Later, he made a nice sideline breakup and then pulled off coverage of Moreau to make a leaping deflection that went to King for an interception. Chandon Sullivan (19) was the dime back.

## **Kickers (4)**

Five of Mason Crosby's seven kickoffs were touchbacks. Of the six that he booted from the 35, his averages were 69.0 (yards) and 4.04 (hang time). JK Scott's three-punt averages were 55.3 (gross), 39.7 (net) and 4.73 (hang time).

## **Special Teams (1)**

Matched on the same field, there was no comparison between ex-Packer Trevor Davis and Darrius Shepherd. After a terrible game against Detroit, Shepherd was concerned with ball security and didn't attack the four kickoffs he returned for a 15-yard average. Once again, however, the opponent swarmed Shepherd almost as if coordinator Shawn Mennenga wasn't employing blockers. On the first return, RB Dexter Williams did little more than play patty-cake and let Curtis Riley just go and drill Shepherd. Given room due in part to inferior gunner work by Josh Jackson, Tony Brown and Ka'dar Hollman, Davis returned one punt for 32 yards and another for 20 that was shortened by penalty. Back after a two-game absence (hamstring), Brown did his usual shoving and woofing. The velocity and accuracy of long snapper Hunter Bradley were somewhat off.