

Rating The Packers : Week 12 vs Bears

By Bob McGinn Posted: Nov 30, 2020

Every now and then, somebody in the buttoned-up world that is the NFL speaks from the heart. Bears coach Matt Nagy was that somebody Monday.

Nagy's words regarding his team's 41-25 loss in Green Bay on Sunday night said almost as much about the Packers as it did the Bears. The inability of Nagy's defense, which ranked sixth in points and ninth in yards allowed, even to compete against Matt LaFleur's offense left the third-year coach in an emotional, angry mood.

"Yesterday was flat-out embarrassing, and our guys know it," Nagy said. "That performance yesterday is ridiculous and can't happen, and obviously that starts with me."

Amid a five-game losing streak that has all but ended the Bears' playoff chances, it should be noted that the contracts for Nagy and general manager Ryan Pace extend through the 2022 season.

Watching the Packers open the game with touchdown drives of 77, 75 and 80 yards put Nagy over the top.

"They had basically three drives and around 36 plays, and 22 of those 36 were for 5-plus yards," Nagy said. "That can't happen. That's not who we are as a defense. They've done a hell of a job all year long but yesterday was not where we need to be."

He added: "We better wake our tails up. Every freaking coach on the staff, every player better start understanding where we're at. Have some personal pride. Have a freaking sense of urgency."

The defeat dropped Nagy's record against the Packers to 1-4, which is about on a par with the six other coaches that have been at the helm in Chicago since the rivalry took a 180-degree turn 28 years ago.

When the border rivals lined up against each other in November 1992 at Soldier Field, the Bears had won 15 of the last 18 meetings to take a seemingly insurmountable lead in the series, 81-57-6. But, starting with their 17-3 victory in 1992, the Packers have gone on a 43-14 tear against the Bears that shows no signs of ending.

The explanation is rather obvious. The 1992 season marked the last in Chicago for coach Mike Ditka just as it was the first in Green Bay for GM Ron Wolf, coach Mike Holmgren and quarterback Brett Favre. In his 16 seasons, Favre went 22-10 against the Bears. His successor, Aaron Rodgers, is 20-5.

The Packers have won three games in a row, eight of the nine, 12 of the last 14 and 18 of the last 21. The series, which began in 1921, favored the Packers until 1933. The Bears held the lead for 84 years before the Packers regained it in September 2017. Sunday night marked the 100th victory for the Packers compared to 95 for the Bears. There have been six ties.

"That's a good football team, you know?" LaFleur said of the Bears on Sunday. "I thought we were physical. I thought we brought a lot of energy. That was a great team win."

The margin Sunday night could have been much worse. Entering the fourth quarter it was, 41-10, before the Bears scored two consolation touchdowns.

Since 1992, only eight of the Packers' victories in the series have been by 20 points or more. Few of the Bears ever spoke as candidly as Nagy did on Monday, but here's a look at what they did say after those equally galling defeats.

October 31, 1994: Packers 33, Bears 6 at Soldier Field

Just 47,381 fans showed up on Halloween night in howling wind and driving rain. By the end of the game perhaps 2,500 remained. It was the Packers' largest margin of victory over the Bears since 1962.

Coach Dave Wannstedt: "I thought our guys were ready to play tonight. But the bottom line, whether it was Green Bay or whoever we were playing ... five turnovers to none."

Wide receiver Curtis Conway: "We've got to go and try to put things back together and try to see what went wrong."

December 11, 1994: Packers 40, Bears 3 at Lambeau Field

Dismissed as underachievers after a 6-7 start, the Packers gained more yards (516) than they had in any game since 1983. Their rushing total of 257 was the club's highest since '85.

Wannstedt: "They rose and played at a higher level than we did in all areas. They controlled the line of scrimmage on both sides. The worst scenario happened."

Linebacker Joe Cain: "This is the oldest rivalry in the NFL. You've got to get jacked up for that. It's hard to be a Bear. Everybody wants to beat us any damn way."

October 6, 1996: Packers 37, Bears 6 at Soldier Field

En route to the Super Bowl, the Packers matched their largest margin of victory ever in Chicago. It also was their fifth straight win in the series, something they hadn't done since 1960-62. The Bears had eight starters out because of injury whereas the Packers were in the pink of health.

Wannstedt: "We've got to play better. I'm not talking about any one guy ... we have to rush better, tackle better, cover better, catch better and block better."

Linebacker Brian Cox: "I think we need to make a visit to Oz. You know, like the lion (actually the tin woodsman). We don't have a lot of heart on this team. There are some guys who don't want to play, and they'd better get their ass out of here. Search the waiver wires. This ain't college ... Heart! Heart! Heart! Heart! What is it you don't understand about that?"

December 3, 2000: Packers 28, Bears 6 at Soldier Field

The Packers won for the seventh straight time in Chicago, at that point the longest winning streak for either side on the other's turf. Shane Matthews, subbing for injured Cade McNown, was numbingly ineffective.

Coach Dick Jauron: "I was very disappointed. Our defense stops them, and our offense goes down the field and then backs up. From that point on, not a whole lot went well."

Wide receiver Marty Booker: "Didn't nothing go right, really. They didn't do nothing we hadn't seen all year, nothing we hadn't prepared for."

November 16, 2008: Packers 37, Bears 3 at Lambeau Field

Running on the first three second-and-long situations, unpredictable play-caller Mike McCarthy watched Ryan Grant produce gains of 35, 7 and 7 yards. Quarterbacked by Kyle Orton, the Bears generated just nine first downs.

Coach Lovie Smith: "We have veterans in the locker room. We have been down before. Now it is a critical stage so we will step up, get some things corrected and go from there."

Orton: "I'm surprised. I certainly didn't expect to come up here and lose by 30 points. But that's what happened. I stunk it up."

September 28, 2014: Packers 38, Bears 17 at Soldier Field

Minus seven starters due to injury, the Bears surprisingly still were in it until late in the third quarter. The Matt Forte-led rushing attack amassed 235 yards on the ground. Jay Cutler's record against the Packers dipped to 1-9.

Coach Marc Trestman: "It was evident today that Aaron Rodgers was at his best and the Green Bay passing game was at its best. We weren't able to get enough of a rush to hurry him enough and when we did, he got outside and made plays."

Cutler, on his pass intended for wide receiver Brandon Marshall that was intercepted: "Sometimes, miscommunication in this game can be pricey."

November 9, 2014: Packers 55, Bears 14 at Lambeau Field

This was the second-largest margin in the series for Green Bay aside from a 49-0 triumph in 1962. Rodgers had six touchdown passes in the first half before taking a seat after the first series of the third quarter.

Trestman: "I told our team at halftime and after the game that we are not a very good football team. We have descended over the past three weeks. That starts with me."

September 28, 2017: Packers 35, Bears 14 at Lambeau Field

Even without starting tackles David Bakhtiari and Bryan Bulaga due to injury, the Packers went right down the field for an opening TD. Rookie Aaron Jones played for the first time, carrying 13 times for 49 yards. The game was delayed for almost two hours in the first half because of rain and lightning.

Coach John Fox: "I think it starts at the top. We got outcoached. We got outplayed in every area."

Tight end Zach Miller: "Stupid turnovers, stupid penalties. We just didn't execute at all, especially in this environment with this team at this stage. That is embarrassing."

With two more victories, LaFleur would own the best winning percentage of any coach in the rivalry that has coached five or more games. The top six are Mike Holmgren (12-2, .857), Jack Pardee (5-1, .833), Dan Devine (6-2, .750), Mike Ditka (15-5, .750), Mike McCarthy (19-7, .731) and Vince Lombardi (13-5, .722).

George Halas went 43-30-4 (.584) whereas Curly Lambeau went 21-35-5 (.385).

Here is a rating of the Packers (8-3) against the Bears (5-6). Five footballs are the maximum, one-half football is the minimum.

The three stars of the game were: **1. Darnell Savage. 2. Aaron Rodgers. 3. Jon Runyan.** As a team, the Packers received four footballs.

Receivers (3)

Davante Adams had a chance for a much bigger day than his six catches for 61 yards. On the opening drive, he slipped on an in-breaking route that might have been a 12-yard touchdown. In the second quarter, FS Eddie Jackson won a one-on-one duel with Adams far downfield. On that same possession, he dropped a ball on a free play that figured to be about 20 yards. In the fourth quarter, he couldn't come up with a 45-yard bomb with nickel back Buster Skrine in coverage. It was the second disappointing performance in three weeks for Adams, who is tied for fifth in the NFL in receptions with 74 and ninth in receiving yards with 908. Adams played 63 of the 71 possible snaps on offense. Next was Marquez Valdes-Scantling (56), who remarkably never even saw the ball in the wake of his game-costing fumble in Indianapolis. A surprising third in playing time was Equanimeous St. Brown with 38. He's slimmed down and moving well. He also looks comfortable regardless of alignment or assignment. He broke a tackle by DE Robert Quinn on a crossing route for 15 but wasn't quite as dynamic on a jet sweep for 7. Allen Lazard (33) took a ferocious pop from CB Jaylon Johnson, needed medical attention and didn't return. Matt LaFleur used Lazard inside the tight end for heavier-duty blocking chores. Lazard left his feet and lunged twice in the open field, missing his block. Darrius Shepherd and Malik Taylor each logged two snaps at the end. The game's longest reception was made by Robert Tonyan (41) on a 39-yard TD with Jackson in coverage. It was a great route. Tonyan is one of those guys with a feel for voids in zone coverage and the craftiness to slip away against man. Opponents keep challenging him. This week it was ILB Danny Trevathan and CB Kyle Fuller. Tonyan jaws right back, points on his first downs and likes a good guttural scream. His holding penalty short-circuited the opening possession of the second half. Mercedes Lewis (33) equaled his season-high for playing time. Defenses continue paying Lewis no heed on the goal line, and this time Johnson was the victim on his 5-yard TD. On the downside, he was at least partially responsible on three "bad" runs and dropped a pass. The blocking by Jace Sternberger (16) remains highly inconsistent.

Offensive Line (4 ½)

Rookie Jon Runyan, the sixth-round draft choice from Michigan, was waved in from the bench for the third time in four games because of injury. This might have been his best outing. Playing the final 50 snaps at LG, he wasn't charged with a pressure and had just one-half "bad" run. On the only pull by an offensive lineman, Runyan looked athletic on the move and powerful pancaking ILB Danny Trevathan on a trap for 11 yards. When ILB Roquan Smith blitzed in the fourth quarter, Runyan reacted fast, covered him up and helped propel Jamaal Williams on his 13-yard TD run. His arm length (33 ¼ inches) hasn't been a problem. This was the third game that Corey Linsley was knocked out because of injury. He suffered a sprained knee on his 21st snap when David Bakhtiari bulldozed DE Robert Quinn into the back of his left leg. Linsley was responsible for a knockdown by NT Bilal Nichols, the only time Aaron Rodgers was down all night. Elgton Jenkins came to the rescue again, moving

seamlessly from LG to center. Losing a pivot of Linsley's caliber might be a serious setback for some lines. Jenkins, however, is like an old soul. Nothing seems to faze him. He played well again. Bakhtiari won his battle with Quinn, a real rushing threat. He has been on point since his return from injury in Game 9. Lucas Patrick's toe injury caused him to limp more and more as the game progressed. Finally, for the last 13 snaps, Patrick took a seat as Billy Turner shifted from RT to RG and Rick Wagner took over at RT. Patrick had a big day moving some of the Bears' behemoths in the run game. Turner allowed the most pressures (two) and "bad" runs (2 ½). Matt LaFleur offered Turner frequent double-team help against Khalil Mack, who beat him twice off the edge. The Bears played without Pro Bowl DE Akiem Hicks (hamstring) for the first time this season, DE Roy Robertson-Harris (shoulder) was lost for the year after Game 8 and NT Eddie Goldman opted out in summer because of COVID-19. The fact the Bears had to play with a bunch of retreads inside made the 182-yard rushing day less of an accomplishment.

Quarterbacks (4 ½)

Part of every quarterback's job is preventing the middle linebacker from dominating. Roquan Smith, an outstanding player, wasn't much of a factor. He just couldn't draw a bead on what Aaron Rodgers was thinking. The Packers rushed 39 times but he wasn't credited with a single solo tackle. Matt LaFleur contributed mightily with the myriad bootlegs and jet-sweep motion that slowed Smith. Twenty times one of the wide receivers broke across the formation just before the play clock struck zero. LaFleur also employed empty sets 11 times, the most since Game 2. Smith looked confused, just the way Rodgers hoped he would. Defensive coordinator Chuck Pagano was a step behind, too. If this had been a close game, there's no telling what the Packers' passing stats would have been. On the 12-yard TD to Davante Adams, Rodgers bided his time for 5.4 seconds even against a five-man rush and threw the ball to Adams, who has a 39 ½-inch vertical jump, in a tight window where only he could catch it. On an early incompleting, NT Bilal Nichols was penalized for lightly pushing Rodgers down. Rodgers also would have had to absorb hellacious hits from Smith on the long TD to Robert Tonyan and from Khalil Mack on a 24-yard pass to Equanimeous St. Brown. Each time, the rusher pulled up. With today's rules and emphasis from the league office, i.e. owners, quarterbacks have little to fear in the pocket. It's a much different game than even five years ago, and the exploding number of quarterbacks with 100-plus passer ratings is the result. As the two teams stood waiting for the final snap, the agitated Smith and other Bear defenders seemed to be expressing their anger about Tim Boyle's first kneel-down. Instead of kneeling in place, Boyle moved up before dropping down. For years, almost every kneel-down has been scored a rush for minus-1. Against Jacksonville, Rodgers moved ahead just enough on his first of two kneel-downs and it was scored no gain. Boyle followed suit Sunday. As Boyle moved up on kneel-down No. 2, Smith and some Bears slammed forward and hit some Packers. It had the makings of an ugly scene. The defense is allowing the offense a free pass if the kneel-down isn't moving forward. The offense should return the favor, give up this form of statistical gamesmanship and just accept that a kneel-down will knock a yard off the final rushing total. If not, it's guaranteed that there will be more altercations and hard feelings.

Running Backs (4 ½)

The tandem of Aaron Jones (38) and Jamaal Williams (33) could hardly have been more impressive. The coaches never have to worry about them on game day. They're as consistent as just about any player on the roster. Williams broke six tackles, including four on his late 13-yard TD that must have frosted Bears coach Matt Nagy and his defensive staff to no end. He jammed straight-ahead for 4 on third and 1, making him 6 for 7 in those situations this season. Jones, who played all 10 snaps to start the game, bowled over SS Tashaun Gipson on his first carry and the gain was 14. In all, he broke three tackles. On eight plays, Jones either lined up or shifted to wide receiver in empty formations. He was targeted a season-low two times, but with a lopsided score, the

Packers threw it just 29 times. Jones remains a mismatch piece on the perimeter, one Matt LaFleur just hasn't needed for a while. It's there when needed. Rookie AJ Dillon missed a fourth straight game because of COVID-19.

Defensive Line (2)

Already without LG James Daniels (pectoral) and RT Bobby Massie (knee), the Bears didn't feel good about RT Rashaad Coward (ankle) or LT Charles Leno (turf toe). Coward was in uniform but didn't play. Leno, who basically couldn't walk on Wednesday, sucked it up and went the distance. The Bears gave free agent Sam Mustipher his second NFL start at center, moved C Cody Whitehair to LG, put backup LG Alex Bars at RG and shifted RG Germain Ifedi to RT. In short, it was a mess, but the Bears still rushed for 122 yards in 16 carries (7.6) and protected Mitchell Trubisky as well as could be expected. "I thought our offensive line played their ass off," coach Matt Nagy said. "They handled that front four pretty well. They established the run game. They did it the second play of the game." In what looked like an alignment mistake, neither Kenny Clark nor Dean Lowry was in an A gap. Whitehair took care of Clark, the inside linebackers were too wide and David Montgomery pounded up the middle for 57 yards. Montgomery, an ordinary talent, finished with 103 yards in 11 carries. It would have been interesting to see what Montgomery might have produced if the score hadn't gotten out of hand so quickly. The unit played the pass better than the run. Of the six pressures, Clark had three. The snap counts were 44 for Clark, 30 for Lowry, 19 for Kingsley Keke, 17 for Tyler Lancaster and eight for Billy Winn. There were 68 possible snaps.

Linebackers (3)

Coaches like to deflect questions about the starting lineup. Be that as it may, Preston Smith was benched in favor of Rashan Gary for the first time in their 1 ½ seasons with the Packers. In the first three series of the first half and the first series of the second half, Gary and Za'Darius Smith were on the field and Preston was on the sidelines. It probably was a blow to Preston's pride, and the coaches surely discussed it with him during the week. Gary, however, was coming off two good games after not doing much all season, whereas Preston had been nearly invisible all season. Za'Darius led with 63 snaps followed by Preston with 45 and Gary with 43. Randy Ramsey (nine) and Oren Burks (five) also played. Considering that Mitchell Trubisky dropped back to pass 50 times in what became a pass fest, the pressure totals were disappointing: three for Za'Darius, two for Preston and one for Gary. However, Za'Darius bull-rushed Cody Whitehair for a strip-sack that Preston deftly scooped and scored on, Preston beat Charles Leno with power for another sack and Gary drew a holding penalty on Leno with a heavy charge. There's little doubt the staff is hoping his demotion inspires Preston to play harder. Za'Darius stands around and watches too much once his first move is stopped, but almost every game he does come through with a big play. The only missed tackles by a linebacker were two by Christian Kirksey (68). Kirksey is making little impact against run or pass. On the 57-yard run, he was late reacting. On a bubble screen to David Montgomery for the final TD, he wasn't fast enough to get there. He's late lining up at times, a sign that he isn't comfortable with the defense. He made a fine play breaking up what would have been a 9-yard TD pass to TE Cole Kmet. Later, he drew a pass-interference penalty in the end zone. His inconsistencies in the play-action game are evident. The Packers surely hoped Kirksey would provide more of a steadying, physical presence. Rookie Kamal Martin (nine) generally is used only in the base defense. On the 57-yard run, he took a step or two the wrong way and then was easily eliminated by a blocker.

Defensive Backs (3 ½)

All teams employ people that watch games all day long. On Sept. 13, Darnell Savage (39) was victimized by Minnesota's Adam Thielen for a 37-yard TD. Savage remembered, and so apparently did the Bears. "Stuff that worked, teams are going to find a way to get back to it," Savage said Sunday. "People always say it's a copycat league." Savage said he thought the Bears were trying to reprise Thielen's TD in the second quarter on a post-corner route to rookie Darnell Mooney. It might have been a 38-yard TD, too, if Savage hadn't learned his lesson about not peeking in the backfield. Although Savage turned completely around, which wasn't ideal, he redirected stride-for-stride with Mooney and then accelerated to the ball for the end-zone interception. It was an exceptional play. Later, Savage showed strong hands, speed and jumping ability with an interception of a wayward long pass by Mitchell Trubisky. When Savage departed with a back injury, Will Redmond (30) joined Adrian Amos (68) at safety. Despite marginal size, Redmond is a hitter. He caught a break on Mike Pettine's only all-out blitz when he let TE Cole Kmet get five yards behind him in man coverage, but Trubisky's throw was wild. Raven Greene (51) missed two tackles in the second quarter. On third and goal, Greene patiently read Allen Robinson's hands and ripped the ball loose to save a TD. As the nickel linebacker, Greene isn't the least bit timid among the big uglies. Jaire Alexander (68) stymied TE Jimmy Graham on a deep out-and-up route. On the 57-yard run, it took him 20 yards to get Montgomery down. Kevin King broke up two passes, allowed a bunch of short completions and dropped what should have been a routine interception in the end zone when he jumped unnecessarily. He had another chance to intercept the two-point conversion. Chandon Sullivan (64) was out of position on a 12-yard completion on fourth and 11 just before the Bears' second TD.

Kickers (3)

Mason Crosby still hasn't missed a field-goal attempt. He has had just four tries in the last six games. On Sunday, he missed his second extra point in 42 attempts. This one sailed wide right. His seven kickoffs were of critical importance in the containment of Cordarrelle Patterson. His two squibs were returned to the 32 and 35. Of his five boots for distance, three were touchbacks as he averaged 69.8 yards and 3.81 seconds of hang time. JK Scott bounced back from some off days with two booming punts that averaged 46 yards (gross, net) and 4.91 hang time.

Special Teams (3 ½)

Cordarrelle Patterson, the former Viking, Raider and Patriot, has hurt the Packers dearly in his eight-year career as one of the NFL's all-time kickoff returners. After being overrun last week in Indianapolis, Shawn Mennenga's unit played with more spirit and limited Patterson to 41 yards on two runbacks. Davante Adams recovered a late onside kick thanks to a strong block by Jamaal Williams and no thanks to a poor block by Jace Sternberger. With Tyler Ervin (wrist-ribs) out again, Mennenga stuck Malik Taylor deep on most kickoffs and Darrius Shepherd on punt returns. Shepherd made two successful fair catches. For the eighth time in 11 games, the Packers weren't assessed a penalty in the kicking game. That's a feat. Oren Burks and Ty Summers led in snaps with 19.