



APPEASING NO. 12

Have the Packers shifted their ways to keep Rodgers around?

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Green Bay Packers coach Matt LaFleur, center, talks with quarterbacks Aaron Rodgers, right, and Jordan Love during a timeout in a game against the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

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Pack's roster moves a change from the norm

The big story surrounding the Green Bay Packers coming into the season was how quarterback Aaron Rodgers felt neglected by the organization.



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When Rodgers returned to Green Bay for the team's training camp in late July, Rodgers spoke about wanting to be part of the conversation regarding potential free agent signings and felt he could be used as a recruiter.

"I think we can all understand, you know, Green Bay isn't a huge

vacation destination, people are coming here to play with me, to play with our team and knowing that they can win a championship here," said Rodgers at the time.

The quarterback went on to say that he thought he'd earned that right after playing with the organization for 16 years.

While there's been rumblings from time to time on potential landing spots for Rodgers should he leave Green Bay, most of the conversation has subsided, for now.

Winning can definitely cure any issues, but Rodgers also mentioned back in that July press conference that he was locked in and ready to help the team chase its big goals this season.

So is everyone inside the organi-

zation putting on a happy face for now, and then will show their true emotions once the season is over?

Only time will tell, but one thing you can say for certain right now is that Rodgers has been happy with how the team has constructed its roster to this point in the season.

Green Bay, like many teams around the NFL, was dealing with salary cap issues after last season ended, so not many names on the roster changed going into this year.

In the past, Green Bay has primarily built through the draft, while also priding itself on turning undrafted guys into key contributors to teams. I've seen a switch in their approach, with more veteran players and well-known names being brought in.

That could be a product of the possible impending departure of Rodgers and other key players and the organization wanting to go all in for this season before rebuilding after it. It could be that several key players — cornerback Jaire Alexander and outside linebacker Za'Darius Smith to name a couple — got injured, but in most cases in the past, those kind of impact players had been replaced by draft picks or players still trying to make a name for themselves.

Lastly, I think it could be a product of the organization trying to appease Rodgers, just like when it traded for wide receiver Randall Cobb. "Obviously without Aaron, I don't think we would probably be pursuing that, but he's still a really



Green Bay Packers outside linebacker Whitney Mercilus, right, sprints to catch Washington Football Team receiver DeAndre Carter during the team's matchup on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Mercilus was the team's latest veteran free agent addition, something Rodgers was pleased with and something the organization hasn't done often in the past.

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good player,” said Packers General Manager Brian Gutekunst after making the trade.

Whatever the case might be, Rodgers has gone out of his way several times to talk about some of the newest additions to the team.

The Packers brought in middle linebacker De’Vondre Campbell during free agency. It wasn’t a splashy move, but it was an unusual one in that Campbell was an established veteran and had a proven track record in the NFL prior to being signed.

According to nfl.com, before the Packers signed him, Campbell had played in 75 games in his five-year career, including all 16 the previous four seasons. He’d racked up at least 88 total tackles in his 16-game seasons, with a high mark of 122 with the Atlanta Falcons in 2019.

He’s been a blessing for the Packers’ defense this season, and he led the team with 68 total tackles after seven weeks.

“You’ve got to look at De’Vondre and the production he’s had is just incredible,” said Rodgers after the win over Washington. “For a guy to not get a big deal, to not be a priority free agent and to step in and start and be the play caller on defense, and be so productive for us, it’s fantastic.”

After Alexander went on injured reserve a couple weeks ago, the Packers signed a couple of veteran cornerbacks instead of turning things over to some late-round draft picks or undrafted guys of their own.

Rasul Douglas was one of the pickups. The 26-year old is in his fifth NFL season and had 172 total tackles and five interceptions to his name before signing in Green Bay.

In his first two games, Douglas had nine total tackles, a pass breakup and a forced fumble.

“I thought Rasul did a nice job today, came back from getting banged up, and I thought he covered well,” said Rodgers after the Washington game.

With Za’Darius Smith out indefinitely, and fellow outside linebacker Preston Smith banged up too, Green Bay signed veteran OLB Whitney Mercilus.

The 31-year old Mercilus is playing in his 10th NFL season this year. In his career, he’s amassed 57 sacks and 335 total tackles.

“I’m a big fan of the Mercilus signing for a number of different reasons, but the way that Preston has played this year and his leadership and, obviously, the way that Rashan (Gary) has played, and then



Green Bay Packers linebacker De’Vondre Campbell, right, tackles Washington Football Team running back J.D. McKissic during the team’s matchup on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Campbell was a veteran free agent pickup last offseason, and the move has sparked the Packers’ defense and caught the attention of quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

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bringing in a stud like Whitney, who’s motivated and can still play, I love him. I really like that signing,” said Rodgers.

What makes Rodgers comments on the team’s recent transactions even more meaningful is that he wasn’t asked about any of those guys, instead going on tangents to bring them up.

If the organization was making those moves to appease Rodgers, they best keep it up if they want him to be in Green Bay past this season. If the moves weren’t made in efforts to keep Rodgers in town, it appears the franchise has taken a different approach to constructing its roster.

In either case, the Packers are a better team because of the moves that have been made. It’s kept the pressure off many young players and put veteran players in the spotlight instead, and so far they’ve delivered.

At a recent press conference,

Rodgers mentioned how this season has reminded him of the team’s Super Bowl season in 2010. The 2010 season was marred with injuries, but the Packers brought in several key pieces and were somehow able to win the Super Bowl.

Obviously, Rodgers hates seeing his teammate go down with inju-

ries, but he won’t make excuses because of it. His expectation is still to win this year’s Super Bowl.

Like like his future in Green Bay, only time will tell what happens next.

Morgan Rode is the sports editor for NEW Media. Readers can contact him at sports@newmedia-wi.com.

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PACKERS ROSTER

Active

#	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	AGE	EXP.	COLLEGE
2	Mason Crosby	K	6-1	207	37	15	Colorado
7	Corey Bojorquez	P	6-0	217	25	4	New Mexico
8	Amari Rodgers	WR	5-9	212	22	R	Clemson
9	Jaylon Smith	LB	6-2	235	26	5	Notre Dame
10	Jordan Love	QB	6-4	219	22	2	Utah State
12	Aaron Rodgers	QB	6-2	225	37	17	California
13	Allen Lazard	WR	6-5	227	25	3	Iowa State
18	Randall Cobb	WR	5-10	195	31	11	Kentucky
19	Equanimeous St. Brown	WR	6-5	214	25	4	Notre Dame
20	Kevin King	CB	6-3	200	26	5	Washington
21	Eric Stokes	CB	6-0	194	22	R	Georgia
22	Shemar Jean-Charles	CB	5-10	184	23	R	Appalachian State
24	Isaac Yiadom	CB	6-1	190	25	4	Boston College
26	Darnell Savage	S	5-11	198	24	3	Maryland
28	AJ Dillon	RB	6-0	247	23	2	Boston College
29	Rasul Douglas	CB	6-2	209	26	5	West Virginia
31	Adrian Amos	S	6-0	214	28	7	Penn State
32	Kylin Hill	RB	5-10	214	23	R	Mississippi State
33	Aaron Jones	RB	5-9	208	26	5	Texas-El Paso
36	Vernon Scott	S	6-2	202	24	2	TCU
39	Chandon Sullivan	CB	5-11	189	25	4	Georgia State
41	Henry Black	S	6-0	204	24	2	Baylor
42	Oren Burks	LB	6-3	233	26	4	Vanderbilt
43	Hunter Bradley	LS	6-3	241	27	4	Mississippi State
44	Ty Summers	LB	6-1	241	25	3	TCU
50	Whitney Mercilus	LB	6-4	261	31	10	Illinois
51	Krys Barnes	LB	6-2	229	23	2	UCLA
52	Rashan Gary	LB	6-5	277	23	3	Michigan
53	Jonathan Garvin	LB	6-4	257	22	2	Miami
54	La'Darius Hamilton	LB	6-2	261	23	1	North Texas
58	Isaiah McDuffie	LB	6-1	227	22	R	Boston College
59	De'Vondre Campbell	LB	6-3	232	28	6	Minnesota
62	Lucas Patrick	G	6-3	313	28	5	Duke
67	Jake Hanson	C	6-4	296	24	1	Oregon
70	Royce Newman	T/G	6-5	310	24	R	Mississippi
73	Yosh Nijman	T	6-7	314	25	2	Virginia Tech
74	Elgton Jenkins	G	6-5	311	25	3	Mississippi State
76	Jon Runyan	G	6-4	307	24	2	Michigan
77	Billy Turner	G/T	6-5	310	30	8	North Dakota State
79	Dennis Kelly	T	6-8	321	31	10	Purdue

81	Josiah Deguara	TE	6-2	238	24	2	Cincinnati
84	Tyler Davis	TE	6-4	252	24	2	Georgia Tech
85	Robert Tonyan	TE	6-5	237	27	4	Indiana State
89	Mercedes Lewis	TE	6-6	267	37	16	UCLA
90	Jack Heflin	DL	6-3	304	23	R	Iowa
91	Preston Smith	LB	6-5	265	28	7	Mississippi State
93	T.J. Slaton	DL	6-4	330	24	R	Florida
94	Dean Lowry	DL	6-6	296	27	6	Northwestern
95	Tyler Lancaster	DL	6-3	313	26	4	Northwestern
96	Kingsley Keke	DL	6-3	288	25	3	Texas A&M
97	Kenny Clark	DL	6-3	314	26	6	UCLA
Reserve/Injured							
23	Jaire Alexander	CB	5-10	196	24	4	Louisville
25	Will Redmond	S	5-11	186	27	6	Mississippi State
47	Chauncey Rivers	LB	6-2	259	24	1	Mississippi State
49	Dominique Dafney	TE	6-2	243	24	1	Indiana State
55	Za'Darius Smith	LB	6-4	272	29	7	Kentucky
56	Randy Ramsey	LB	6-3	238	26	2	Arkansas
71	Josh Myers	C/G	6-5	310	23	R	Ohio State
83	Marquez Valdes-Scantling	WR	6-4	206	27	4	South Florida
Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform							
69	David Bakhtiari	T	6-4	310	30	9	Colorado
Practice Squad							
6	Kurt Benkert	QB	6-3	218	26	2	Virginia
11	J.J. Molson	K	5-11	180	24	1	UCLA
16	Chris Blair	WR	6-2	198	24	R	Alcorn State
27	Patrick Taylor	RB	6-2	217	23	1	Memphis
30	Shawn Davis	S	5-11	202	23	R	Florida
38	Innis Gaines	S	6-1	202	23	R	TCU
40	Tipa Galeai	LB	6-5	229	24	1	Utah State
45	Bronson Kaufusi	TE	6-6	270	30	3	Brigham Young
46	Steven Wirtel	LS	6-4	228	24	1	Iowa State
48	Kabion Ento	CB	6-1	187	25	2	Colorado
57	Ray Wilborn	LB	6-3	230	24	1	Ball State
64	Ben Braden	G	6-6	329	27	2	Michigan
78	Cole Van Lanen	T/G	6-4	305	23	R	Wisconsin
88	Juwann Winfree	WR	6-1	210	25	2	Colorado
98	Aaron Adeoye	LB	6-6	260	28	1	Southeast Missouri State
99	R.J. McIntosh	DL	6-5	286	25	4	Miami
Reserve/COVID-19 list							
17	Davante Adams	WR	6-1	215	28	8	Fresno State
86	Malik Taylor	WR	6-1	220	25	2	Ferris State

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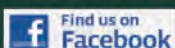
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PACKERS DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE



WR
Davante Adams
Equanimeous St. Brown



TE
Robert Tonyan
Tyler Davis



RT
Billy Turner
Dennis Kelly



RG
Royce Newman
Lucas Patrick



C
Lucas Patrick
Jake Hanson



LG
Jon Runyan
Lucas Patrick



LT
Elgton Jenkins
Yosh Nijman



TE
Mercedes Lewis
Josiah Deguara



QB
Aaron Rodgers
Jordan Love



RB
Aaron Jones
A.J. Dillon



WR
Allen Lazard
Randall Cobb

FYI
Rosters and depth charts are accurate as of Oct. 25, 7 p.m.

DEFENSE



CB
Kevin King
Chandon Sullivan



DE
Dean Lowry
Tyler Lancaster



NT
Kenny Clark
T.J. Slaton



DE
Kingsley Keke
Jack Heflin



CB
Eric Stokes
Rasul Douglas



OLB
Preston Smith
La'Darius Hamilton



ILB
Krys Barnes
Oren Burks



ILB
De'Vondre Campbell
Jaylon Smith



OLB
Rashan Gary
Jonathan Garvin



S
Adrian Amos
Vernon Scott



S
Darnell Savage
Henry Black

SCHEDULE

Sunday's Games
Cincinnati at N.Y. Jets, noon
Tennessee at Indianapolis, noon
L.A. Rams at Houston, noon
Pittsburgh at Cleveland, noon
Philadelphia at Detroit, noon
San Francisco at Chicago, noon
Carolina at Atlanta, noon
Miami at Buffalo, noon
New England at L.A. Chargers, 3:05 p.m.
Jacksonville at Seattle, 3:05 p.m.
Washington at Denver, 3:25 p.m.
Tampa Bay at New Orleans, 3:25 p.m.
Dallas at Minnesota, 7:20 p.m.

Monday's Game
N.Y. Giants at Kansas City, 7:15 p.m.

Teams on bye: Baltimore, Las Vegas.

Thursday's Game
N.Y. Jets at Indianapolis, 7:20 p.m.

STANDINGS

NFC East				AFC East			
Team	W	L	T	Team	W	L	T
Dallas	5	1	0	Buffalo	4	2	0
Washington	2	5	0	New England	3	4	0
Philadelphia	2	5	0	N.Y. Jets	1	5	0
N.Y. Giants	2	5	0	Miami	1	6	0
North				North			
Team	W	L	T	Team	W	L	T
Green Bay	6	1	0	Cincinnati	5	2	0
Minnesota	3	3	0	Baltimore	5	2	0
Chicago	3	4	0	Cleveland	4	3	0
Detroit	0	7	0	Pittsburgh	3	3	0
South				South			
Team	W	L	T	Team	W	L	T
Tampa Bay	6	1	0	Tennessee	5	2	0
New Orleans	4	2	0	Indianapolis	3	4	0
Atlanta	3	3	0	Jacksonville	1	5	0
Carolina	3	4	0	Houston	1	6	0
West				West			
Team	W	L	T	Team	W	L	T
Arizona	7	0	0	Las Vegas	5	2	0
L.A. Rams	6	1	0	L.A. Chargers	4	2	0
San Francisco	2	4	0	Kansas City	3	4	0
Seattle	2	5	0	Denver	3	4	0

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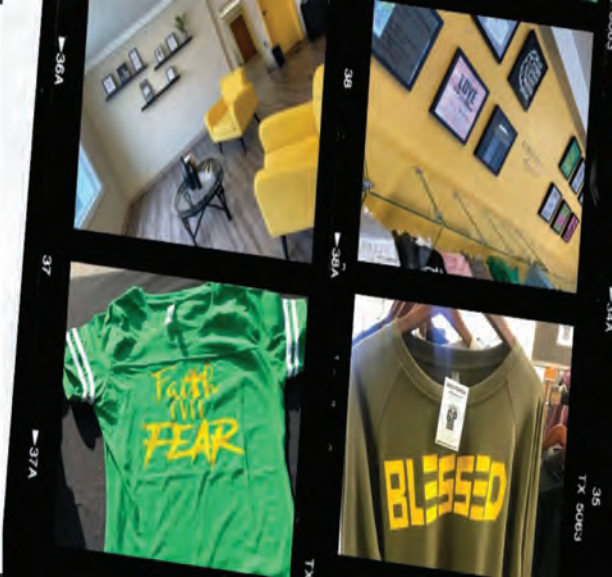
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REPORT CARD: OFFENSE

By **BILL HUBER**
Correspondent

That the Green Bay Packers are off to a strong start shouldn't be a surprise. After all, during the first two seasons under coach Matt LaFleur, they went 26-6 in the regular season and advanced to two NFC Championship Games.

Nonetheless, to be in such a strong position following a lopsided loss to the New Orleans Saints in week one has been incredibly impressive.

All-Pro left tackle David Bakhtiari, All-Pro cornerback Jaire Alexander, Pro Bowl pass rusher Za'Darius Smith and Pro Bowl guard Elton Jenkins have been sidelined for significant periods of the season, as were big-play receiver Marquez Valdes-Scantling, rookie center Josh Myers and veteran cornerback Kevin King. Even outside linebacker Preston Smith's 102-game ironman streak came to an end.

"I feel good about where we're at," quarterback Aaron Rodgers said. "Not many people would have expected this, maybe looking at our schedule starting the season – definitely not after week one. So, I'm proud of our guys, the way we're playing, getting contributions from a lot of different guys who weren't necessarily on the roster maybe to start the season or were add-ons this year."

With that as a backdrop, here is our midterm report card for the Packers offense.

Quarterbacks

After a tumultuous offseason, it's been standard operating procedure for the three-time MVP. Rodgers



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, left, looks for an open receiver as offensive lineman Lucas Patrick (62) blocks for him during the team's win over the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. The Packers' offense hasn't hit its stride yet, but has done enough to rack up wins.

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has performed with his typical efficiency.

If you were wondering whether he was invested in the team, you got your answer in week three at San Francisco with an emphatic fist pump after connecting with Davante Adams to set up the game-winning field goal.

If you still weren't convinced, there was a similar reaction after Rodgers connected with Adams to set up another game-winning field-goal attempt at Cincinnati. Or, there was the iconic "I still own you!" celebration after clinching yet

another win at Chicago.

If anything, given his still-uncertain future, Rodgers is more invested in winning this season.

Rodgers hasn't been as dominating as he was last season. In 2020, he led the NFL in completion%age, touchdown%age, interception%age and passer rating.

This year, he's merely in the top 10 in each of those categories. With a revolving door of offensive linemen, he hasn't been as sensational but he's still the winning factor in most games.

There are two trouble spots that

must improve if this team is finally going to get back to the Super Bowl. First, his long-ball accuracy is hovering toward the bottom third of the league. The return of his offensive linemen and Valdes-Scantling should help. Second, when pressured, only rookies Trey Lance and Zach Wilson have been less accurate, according to Pro Football Focus.

Grade: A-

Running Backs

The tandem of Aaron Jones and A.J. Dillon have been as-advertised. They're on pace to rush for more than 1,500 yards and top 2,200 yards from scrimmage.

In a surprise, the Packers were able to retain Jones in free agency. He's just so elusive. He ranks 13th in carries but seventh in missed tackles.

Maybe Jones will fall short of a third consecutive 1,000-yard rushing season but he's an elite receiving threat. He started the season catching 26-of-28 targets with four touchdowns in the first seven games.

Dillon is just so big and strong that he's getting yards even when it looks like he's been stalled. Rarely asked to catch the ball at Boston College or as a rookie, he caught four passes for 45 yards and one touchdown at Cincinnati.

Of the top 45 in carries, Dillon is 12th in average yards after contact on rushes and 11th in yards per pass route. Jones is 19th in yards after contact and 16th in yards per pass route. Both have fumbled twice. That problem has to be resolved ASAP.

Grade: B-



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Receivers

It's been The Davante Adams Show. The All-Pro receiver continues to dominate. Before being put on the COVID-19 list after the week seven victory over Washington, Adams had 52 of the 92 receptions (56.5%), 72 of the 133 targets (54.1%), 744 of the 1,230 yards (60.5%) and three of the eight touchdowns (37.5%).

Adams is unstoppable. Throw it short, he'll make the first defender miss. Throw it deep, he'll track it down. Throw it anywhere in the vicinity, he'll catch it.

Through week seven, he was tied for second in receptions and third in yards. He had only one drop; of the 10 players with 40-plus catches, he was the only player with less than two drops.

There hasn't been a consistent No. 2 receiver, much to the chagrin of fantasy football players, but there's generally been someone to step up alongside Adams.

Allen Lazard, LaFleur's "goon," relishes doing the dirty work. More than just a blocker, he caught five passes for 60 yards and one touchdown on one series against Washington.

Randall Cobb caught five passes for 69 yards and two touchdowns

against Pittsburgh.

Valdes-Scantling missed a big chunk of time with an injured hamstring after catching three passes for 59 yards and one touchdown vs. San Francisco.

Through seven games, the entire group had dropped only two passes (Adams and Cobb).

Grade: B+

Tight Ends

There were enormous expectations on Robert Tonyan following last year's breakout season.

In 2020, he caught 52 passes, scored 11 touchdowns, failed to catch only seven passes and had zero drops. In the first six games of this season, he caught 11 passes, scored one touchdown, failed to catch nine passes and had one drop.

Perhaps a 25-yard touchdown vs. Washington will get him going. A healthy offensive line would help, too, so he wouldn't have to help so much as a blocker.

Ageless Mercedes Lewis continues to block in the run game and run through defenders as a receiver. Amazingly, of the 47 tight ends with at least nine catches, Lewis is fourth in yards after the catch per catch. Defenders bounce off the 37-year-old like he's a 27-year-old.

More than the production, he is a wildly popular and respected team leader who is a model for everyone on the roster on how to do things the right way.

Josiah Deguara, a third-round pick last year, and Dominique Dafney, a former bouncer, need to stay healthy for this offense to hit its peak.

Grade: C+

Offensive Line

The best offensive lines are the ones that practice together and play together. That hasn't been the case with his unit. In the first seven games, Green Bay lined up with five starting quintets.

At times, it was the double whammy of little continuity and little experience. For week three against San Francisco, this was the line: left tackle Yosh Nijman (zero starts), left guard Jon Runyan Jr. (one start), rookie center Josh Myers (two starts), rookie right guard Royce Newman (two starts) and veteran right tackle Billy Turner.

Bakhtiari is one of the great offensive linemen in the NFL. Rodgers has called him a future Hall of Famer. And yet the Packers have won with Jenkins and even Nijman at left tackle.

FYI

A report card on the packers' defense, special teams and coaching staff can be found on pages 8-9.

Patrick won the starting job at left guard, only to suffer a concussion in the opener and be replaced by Runyan.

When Meyers went down, Patrick moved in at center. At least the right side of the line played together, though it's been a school-of-hard-knocks rookie year for Newman.

Generally, the group has been up to the task. Washington's defensive line, with four first-round picks, dominated the first half before Green Bay's blockers seized control.

Offensive line coach Adam Stenavich had big shoes to fill when he replaced James Campen and he's done it. The good news is Bakhtiari will be back at left tackle and Jenkins will return at left guard. That will solidify that side of the line and, in turn, should mean more opportunities in the passing game.

Grade: C+

First-Half MVP on Offense:

Rodgers

First-Half Surprise: Nijman

Second-Half Key on Offense:

Bakhtiari



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REPORT CARD: DEFENSE, SPECIALISTS, COACHING

By **BILL HUBER**
Correspondent

Here is our midterm report card for the Packers defense, special teams and coaching staff.

Defensive Line

After dominating the 2019 season, Kenny Clark suffered a groin injury in the 2020 opener at Minnesota. It took him three months to round into form. Healthy in 2021, he's returned to elite status.

Of the 70 interior defensive linemen with at least 100 pass-rushing snaps, he was eighth in ProFootball-Focus.com's pass-rushing productivity, which measures sacks, hits and hurries per pass-rushing snap. Of the 47 interior defensive linemen with at least 100 run-defending snaps, Clark was sixth in PFF's run-stop percentage, a metric that essentially measures impact tackles.

Only Clark, Pittsburgh's Cameron Heyward and Tennessee's Jeffery Simmons were in the top 10 in both metrics.

Dean Lowry, who many fans wanted to dump during the offseason to save some money against the cap, has had a quality season.

The key for the second half of the year will be third-year player Kingsley Keke, who had done almost nothing to start the season but had 1½ sacks against Washington. He's the player who has the largest potential for growth.

It will be interesting to see if fifth-round rookie TJ Slaton will eventually take run-defending snaps from veteran Tyler Lancaster.

Grade: C+

Outside Linebackers

The Smith Bros. – Za'Darius Smith and Preston Smith – were the driving forces behind the Packers' surprise run to the 2019 NFC Championship Game. The Packers returned to the title game in 2020, even though Za'Darius Smith wasn't quite as dominant and Preston Smith fell off the face of a cliff.

All offseason, the speculation was the Packers would release Preston Smith in a cost-cutting move. Good thing they didn't. Za'Darius Smith practiced only once in training camp and played only a little in week one before going on injured reserve and having back surgery. His season might be over.

While the stats might not show it, Preston Smith has had a strong bounce-back season. He's so good against the run.

The key, however, has been Rashan



Green Bay Packers punter Corey Bojorquez prepares to kick the ball during the team's win over the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Bojorquez has improved the team's special team's unit, but it's still made far too many errors so far this season.

MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA

Gary. The 2019 first-round pick has become an every-down force. Of the 73 edge defenders with at least 100 pass-rushing snaps, Gary was sixth in PFF's pass-rushing productivity and pressures.

The Packers were in trouble against lowly Washington before his sack/strip to start the second half. He's powerful and relentless, and he's not just focused on sacks.

With Za'Darius Smith, Chauncey Rivers and Randy Ramsey on injured reserve, Jonathan Garvin has emerged as a key role player after barely playing as a seventh-round rookie last year. Position coach Mike Smith raves about his intelligence and toughness.

Obviously, this unit would be better if Za'Darius Smith returns but the recent addition of 31-year-old Whitney Mercilus will provide some critical insurance.

Grade: B-

Inside Linebackers

Through seven games, De'Vondre Campbell and Colts All-Pro Darius

Leonard were the only players in the NFL with three-plus passes defended, two-plus interceptions and two-plus forced fumbles. He had that stat line along with ranking fifth in the league with 67 tackles (15 more than Leonard).

To think he was unemployed until deep into June is amazing. He's been the Packers' best defensive player this season and the best inside linebacker in a decade.

Campbell is a big, physical tackler. It might go unnoticed but when Campbell hits the man with the ball, he generally drops him on the spot rather than allowing him to fall forward for another yard or two. Those hidden yards add up.

In coverage, he might not be the most fleet of foot but he's got excellent instincts and length.

It's been a revolving door of mediocrity next to him with Krys Barnes, Oren Burks and veteran addition Jaylon Smith. To get around it, the Packers often line up with three defensive linemen, two outside linebackers, one inside linebacker and five defensive

backs.

Grade: B

Cornerbacks

An elite cover man, Jaire Alexander is one of the more irreplaceable players on the roster. When he suffered a shoulder injury on his fourth-down stick of 230-pound Steelers running back Najee Harris in week four, the entire season took a turn.

A string of top quarterbacks began on Thursday against Arizona and will continue with Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes, Seattle's Russell Wilson (depending on his injured finger), Minnesota's Kirk Cousins and the Rams' Matthew Stafford before the bye, then Baltimore's Lamar Jackson, Cleveland's Baker Mayfield and Cousins again during the final quarter of the season.

Can Green Bay's defense survive without one of the top defenders in the NFL?

Kevin King missed time with a shoulder injury, too, though that's hardly news. Injuries have been the theme of his career. The good news is first-round pick Eric Stokes was forced into a sink-or-swim role as the primary defender against the opponents' top receiver and hasn't sunk. There's been more good than bad.

If Alexander returns and Stokes continues to grow, this defense could be dangerous in January.

Chandon Sullivan got off to a slow start in the slot but has picked up the pace. Veteran Rasul Douglas, who was grabbed off Arizona's practice squad, has been a helpful addition.

Grade: C-

Safeties

One of the driving forces behind last year's run to the NFC Championship Game was the play of Adrian Amos and Darnell Savage during the second half of the season. They were superb down the stretch, eliminating big plays while creating big plays of their own. By season's end, they had combined for six interceptions and 21 passes defended.

In the first seven games of this season, they had one interception and six passes defended. If they can kick their play into high gear again, it would be a huge development.

At this point, Savage – a first-round pick in 2019 – remains an enigma. There are enough splash plays that he looks like a potential star. But there is so much mediocre in his play. Maybe that's just who he is – a decent starter but a disappointment in terms of draft status.

While Savage and No. 3 safety

Henry Black have missed too many tackles, Amos is Mr. Reliable in that regard. He's just so steady.

Grade: C

Specialists

At the end of training camp, general manager Brian Gutekunst acquired punter Corey Bojorquez and released JK Scott. From a punting standard, this was a home run of a transaction. Aside from one bad game against Cincinnati, Bojorquez has been tremendous.

One week, he had an 81-yard punt at Chicago. The next week, he deftly landed a pooch punt just inches from the goal line so it could be downed at the 3 against Washington. At risk of hyperbole, he's probably the best punter in franchise history.

On the other hand, the field-goal unit has been in a bit of disarray. While Scott wasn't a great punter, he was a tremendous holder. The change in the operation, along with some early protection issues, is a reason why Mason Crosby missed four field goals to start this season after missing just two the past two seasons combined.

On the block against Washington, the protection wasn't great but Crosby's kick barely got off the ground. The season could depend on getting the snap-hold-kick combination squared away.

Rookie Amari Rodgers already has two punt returns longer than Green Bay's best from last year. Fellow rookie Kylin Hill had a 41-yard kickoff return vs. Detroit but otherwise hasn't found any room.

Fourth-year long snapper Hunter Bradley was lucky to survive training camp but has been OK to start the season.

Grade: C

Coaching and Personnel

By the end of the Bears game in week six, the Packers had eight starters out with injuries. And yet they won that game, like they won almost every game during the first half of the season. So, while victories over Chicago and Washington lacked style points, the fact they won those games with so much firepower on the bench shouldn't be swept aside simply because of the mediocre competition.

Credit for that belongs to LaFleur and his coaching staff – specifically position coaches Stenavich, Mike Smith and Jerry Gray (defensive backs), whose groups have been hit hardest.

Meanwhile, general manager Brian Gutekunst has continued to supplement the roster with veterans. Against Washington, Douglas, Mercilus and Jaylon Smith combined to play 99 snaps on defense. They weren't even



Green Bay Packers defensive lineman Kingsley Keke, center, sacks Washington Football Team quarterback Taylor Heinicke during the team's matchup on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. Keke could help the Packers' defense take another step forward in the second half of the season. MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA

on the team at the start of October. The acquisitions of those three and Cobb are moves this team simply hasn't made over the years.

If you want to know what "all in" means, this season is the definition. Entering the offseason, the Packers were more than \$25 million over the salary cap. Gutekunst mostly kept the gang together for one more run by restructuring the contract of literally every veteran on the roster. Win or lose this year, they'll pay the piper for

that aggressive approach next year, when they're a projected \$46 million over the cap.

Grade: A

First-Half MVP on Defense:

Campbell

First-Half Disappointment:

Za'Darius Smith

Second-Half Key on Defense:

Keke

Rookie of the Half-Year: Stokes

Coach of the Half-Year:

Stenavich



Home-field advantage.

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Morgan Rode
NEW Media Sports Editor

Week 8 Games: Sunday, Oct. 31

Teams on bye: Baltimore & Las Vegas
 Green Bay @ Arizona Thurs., Oct. 28
 Carolina @ Atlanta
 Miami @ Buffalo
 San Francisco @ Chicago
 Pittsburgh @ Cleveland
 Philadelphia @ Detroit
 LA Rams @ Houston
 Tennessee @ Indianapolis
 Cincinnati @ NY Jets
 Jacksonville @ Seattle
 Washington @ Denver
 Tampa Bay @ New Orleans
 Dallas @ Minnesota
 NY Giants @ Kansas City Mon., Nov. 1

Tie Breaker Game: New England @ LA Chargers

Weekly Standings

Weekly Record Overall Record

God's Purpose Apparel	10-3.....	75-32
Tower Clock Eye Center	9-4	73-34
Buss Automotive.....	9-4	72-35
Shawano Seasons Restaurant	10-3.....	72-35
Dennis Brei.....	9-4	71-36
Hawkeye Hearth & Home	9-4	71-36
Tim Murphy	9-4	71-36
22 Shell.....	9-4	70-37
Morgan Rode	9-4	70-37

Weekly Standings

Weekly Record Overall Record

Shawano Place Assisted Living.....	8-5	70-37
Smokey Joe's	10-3.....	68-39
B & C Auto Recycling.....	7-6	66-41
P & D Sales & Service	9-4	66-41
Idell Johnston, State Farm Ins. Agent.....	8-5	66-41
Cirrinity/Wittenberg Telephone	9-4	61-46
Gehm's Club 117	9-4	61-46
Iverson's Piggly Wiggly	7-6	60-47
Senn Insurance	9-4	60-47



This Week's Winner: Shawano Seasons Restaruant



Morgan Rode
Shawano
Leader

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Minnesota
Carolina	Indianapolis	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Detroit	New Orleans	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score : New England 20 @ LA Chargers 31



Tim Murphy
Shawano
Leader

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 27



Dennis Brei
Oconto County
Times Herald

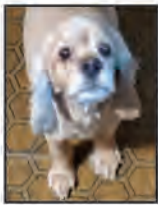
This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Cleveland	Washington	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 31

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Toby
B&C Auto
Recycling

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Denver	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 24 @ LA Chargers 31



Iverson's Staff
Iverson's
Piggly Wiggly

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	Houston	Minnesota
Carolina	Tennessee	NY Giants
Miami	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Washington	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 24 @ LA Chargers 14



Amber
Smokey Joe's
& JDoggs

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Denver	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 23



Robert Buss
Buss
Automotive

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Washington	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 21 @ LA Chargers 38



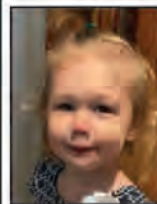
Dena
P&D Sales
& Service

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 30



Caroline
Idell Johnston
State Farm Agent

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Dallas
Carolina	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 35



Scott Nyman
Cirinity

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Minnesota
Atlanta	Indianapolis	NY Giants
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 28 @ LA Chargers 14



In Memory of
Patty Lasher
Shawano Seasons
Restaurant

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Carolina	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Denver	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 31



Jim Wiegand
Tower Clock
Eye Center

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Denver	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England @ 13 LA Chargers 24



Russ
Gehm's
Club 117

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	Houston	Dallas
Atlanta	Indianapolis	Kansas City
Buffalo	NY Jets	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Pittsburgh	Washington	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 28 @ LA Chargers 21



Shane Senn
Senn
Insurance

This Week's Picks:

Arizona	LA Rams	Minnesota
Atlanta	Indianapolis	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
Chicago	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 28



Brenda
22 Shell

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Carolina	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Washington	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 27 @ LA Chargers 31



Chris
God's Purpose
Apparel

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Carolina	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Washington	
Philadelphia	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 20 @ LA Chargers 31



Aaron
Shawano
Place

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Minnesota
Carolina	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Jacksonville	
Cleveland	Washington	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 27



Dale
Hawkeye
Hearth & Home

This Week's Picks:

Green Bay	LA Rams	Dallas
Atlanta	Tennessee	Kansas City
Buffalo	Cincinnati	
San Francisco	Seattle	
Cleveland	Denver	
Detroit	Tampa Bay	

Tie Breaker Game:

Final Score: New England 17 @ LA Chargers 21

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Green Bay Football 2021 Season				
SEPTEMBER - REGULAR SEASON				
Sunday, September 12	3:25 pm	@ New Orleans Saints	FOX	
Monday, September 20	7:55 pm	DETROIT LIONS	ESPN	
Sunday, September 26	3:20 pm	@ San Francisco 49ers	NBC	
OCTOBER				
Sunday, October 03	3:25 pm	Pittsburgh Steelers (GOLD)	CBS	
Sunday, October 10	NOON*	@ Cincinnati Bengals	FOX	
Sunday, October 17	NOON*	@ Chicago Bears	FOX	
Sunday, October 24	NOON*	WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM	FOX	
Thursday, October 28	7:30 pm	@ Arizona Cardinals	FOX	
NOVEMBER				
Sunday, November 07	3:25 pm*	@ Kansas City Chiefs	FOX	
Sunday, November 14	3:25 pm*	SEATTLE SEAHAWKS	CBS	
Sunday, November 21	NOON*	@ Minnesota Vikings	FOX	
Sunday, November 28	3:25 pm*	LOS ANGELES DOLPHINS (GOLD)	FOX	
DECEMBER				
BYE WEEK				
Sunday, December 12	7:20 pm*	CHICAGO BEARS	NBC	
Sunday, December 19	NOON*	@ Baltimore Ravens	FOX	
Saturday, December 25	3:30 pm	CLEVELAND BROWNS	FOX	
JANUARY				
Sunday, January 02	7:20 pm*	MINNESOTA VIKINGS	NBC	
Sunday, January 09	NOON*	@ Detroit Lions	FOX	

Packers win 6th game in a row

Defense stout in red zone

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

The Green Bay Packers bumped their win streak to six after a 24-10 win over the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

It wasn't the prettiest of wins for the Pack, but all three phases made key plays in the victory.

With the Packers' running game struggling on the day, quarterback Aaron Rodgers completed 27 of his 35 attempts for 274 yards and three touchdowns. Receivers Davante Adams and Allen Lazard and tight end Robert Tonyan caught the touchdown passes.

Kicker Mason Crosby knocked in a 39-yard field goal in the fourth quarter after having a kick blocked earlier in the contest. Corey Bojorquez averaged 46.3 yards per punt, including one that pinned Washington inside its own 5-yard line. Green Bay also blocked a field goal attempt.

The visitors racked up 430 total yards of offense, but the Packers' defense held Washington out of the end zone in four red zone trips to help the team to victory.

Coach Matt LaFleur called it "another good team win" and added "there's still a lot for us to improve upon moving forward, but it sure does feel good to be 6-1."

Green Bay opened the contest on offense and marched 75 yards in 13 plays to grab the early advantage.

The 37-year-old Rodgers showed off his athleticism on the first drive, converting a third-and-11 with a 15-yard run up the middle of the field. He then avoided pressure and scrambled out of the pocket on a fourth-and-3 play before throwing back across his body to Adams, who made his way into the end zone for a 17-yard score.

Rodgers said he briefly thought about trying to pick up the first down by running, but realized he'd probably be short, so his attention turned back to Adams, who he'd wanted to go to the entire play. "I saw Davante kind of slide back inside and threw a good ball."

Washington answered with a quick touchdown drive, beating rookie cornerback Eric Stokes for a

40-yard touchdown to end the drive.

After forcing a three-and-out, Washington again was able to drive down the field. This time, the Packers defense was able to get off the field, setting up a 42-yard field goal attempt.

Rookie defensive lineman T.J. Slaton was able to block a low kick attempt, flipping the momentum back to the Packers.

"I thought that Slaton did a heck of a job getting the block on the field goal. That was a big play in the game," said LaFleur.

Washington was able to return the favor a few minutes later after the Packers got the ball to the opposing 16-yard line, as Crosby's 34-yard attempt was blocked.

The Football Team kept the momentum going when quarterback Taylor Heinicke ripped off a 38-yard run on the first play of the ensuing drive. The visitors gained seven yards on the next two plays, but back-to-back incompletions ended the drive.

The Packers regained control of the disjointed contest with a nine-play, 72-yard touchdown drive before the first half clock expired. The drive was all about Lazard, who made all five of his receptions across

those nine plays.

Lazard had an 11-yard reception to get the drive going before 7- and 13-yard receptions on back-to-back plays to help the team move the chains. He later hauled in a 19-yard pass to get the ball down to the 15-yard line. Lazard capped the drive with a 10-yard touchdown grab.

"Opportunities presented themselves and I was able to capitalize, so just thankful for those moments," said Lazard of the drive.

Green Bay's defense kept the momentum on the team's side when pass rusher Rashan Gary sacked and stripped Heinicke on the second play of the third quarter. Defensive lineman Dean Lowry fell on the loose ball to set the Packers' offense up at the Washington 27.

Three plays later, Rodgers hit Tonyan for a 20-yard touchdown pass to make it 21-7.

Tonyan expected Washington's safety to provide help to the linebacker across from him, but it never came.

"I saw the linebacker attached to me inside and I was like, 'This is the perfect look.' So I was hoping the ball was going to be there when I turned and it was," said Tonyan. "Good throw."



Green Bay Packers receiver Allen Lazard, second from right, carries the ball as tight end Robert Tonyan, second from left, blocks for him during a game on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

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The next few possessions of the game were about as wacky as you might see in the NFL.

Washington had a strong drive going and appeared to have scored on a 3-yard run from Heinicke, who dove into the end zone despite not really needing to. After a replay review, it was determined that Heinicke gave himself up, and when quarterbacks do that, they don't need to be touched down and the ball is instead marked down when a knee hits the ground.

So instead of a touchdown and one-score game, Washington's offense had to come back on the field and attempt to punch the ball into the end zone from inside the 1-yard line. The Packers' defense was up to the task, stopping Heinicke on a quarterback sneak play — it was the first red zone stop of the season for the Green Bay defense.

Middle linebacker De'Vondre Campbell was credited with a forced fumble of Heinicke on the play, and Gary recovered the ball.

After a 53-boot from Bojorquez, Washington's offense moved the ball inside the Green Bay 10. Again, the Green Bay defense was able to make a stop, forcing an incomplete pass on fourth down.



Green Bay Packers outside linebacker Rashan Gary, middle, tries to get in the passing lane of Washington Football Team quarterback Taylor Heinicke, right, as offensive lineman Cornelius Lucas blocks him during a game on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA

The Packers' offense then put together its final scoring drive, working 75 yards in nine plays before

Crosby's 39-yard field goal.

The big play of the drive was a 26-yard pass up the left sideline to

ONLINE

More Packers news can be found at www.newmedia-wi.com.

Adams, who reached up at the last second to pull in the throw from Rodgers.

Washington had two more drives reach the red zone, and in each case, Green Bay kept the visitors out of the end zone.

Cornerback Chandon Sullivan intercepted a Heinicke pass on third down on one drive before the Packers' defense got sacks from Gary and defensive lineman Kingsley Keke to force a 45-yard field goal on the other possession.

"Just locked in, concentrated. Understanding things they like to do in the red zone and just trying to take it away from them," said Gary on the team's red zone defense.

"Series by series, we got better throughout the whole game."

Gary finished the contest with two sacks, four quarterback hits, the forced fumble and seven combined tackles.

Campbell led the defense with 13 combined tackles and forced two fumbles.

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SAFE!



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers runs with the ball during the first quarter of the team's win over the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

Aaron Rodgers showed off his athleticism during the team's 24-10 win over the Washington Football Team. The 37-year-old quarterback rushed for 17 yards in the game, including this 15-yard run on the team's first drive, which ended in a touchdown pass to Davante Adams after Rodgers scrambled on fourth down.

PHOTOS BY MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers slides to the ground after picking up a first down on his first quarter run against the Washington Football Team on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.



Green Bay Packers receiver Davante Adams, center, beats a pair of Washington Football Team defenders to the end zone for a touchdown in a game on Oct. 24 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

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