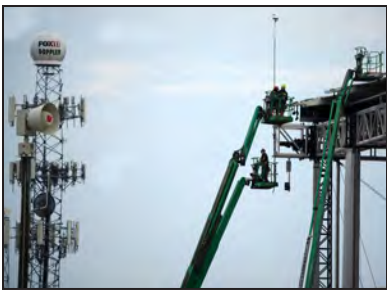


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Legendary Packers founder Curley Lambeau points fans to the home of the Green Bay Packers, 13-time NFL champion, and the site of the 2025 NFL draft. The 2025 event runs from noon April 24 through 6 p.m. April 26. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

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4-6 p.m. Friday, April 25. \$10 per person. Sun Drop Museum, 920 S. Franklin St., Shawano

DRAFT WEEKEND, 2025

LEGENDARY MOMENTS

1992-2025: Two Hall of Famers, three QB1s



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Brett Favre, 1992-2007, 3 MVPs, 1996 Super Bowl champion



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Aaron Rodgers, 2005-2023, 4 MVPs, 2010 Super Bowl champion



Jordan Love continues the Packers tradition, leading Green Bay to the playoffs in his first two seasons as a starter.

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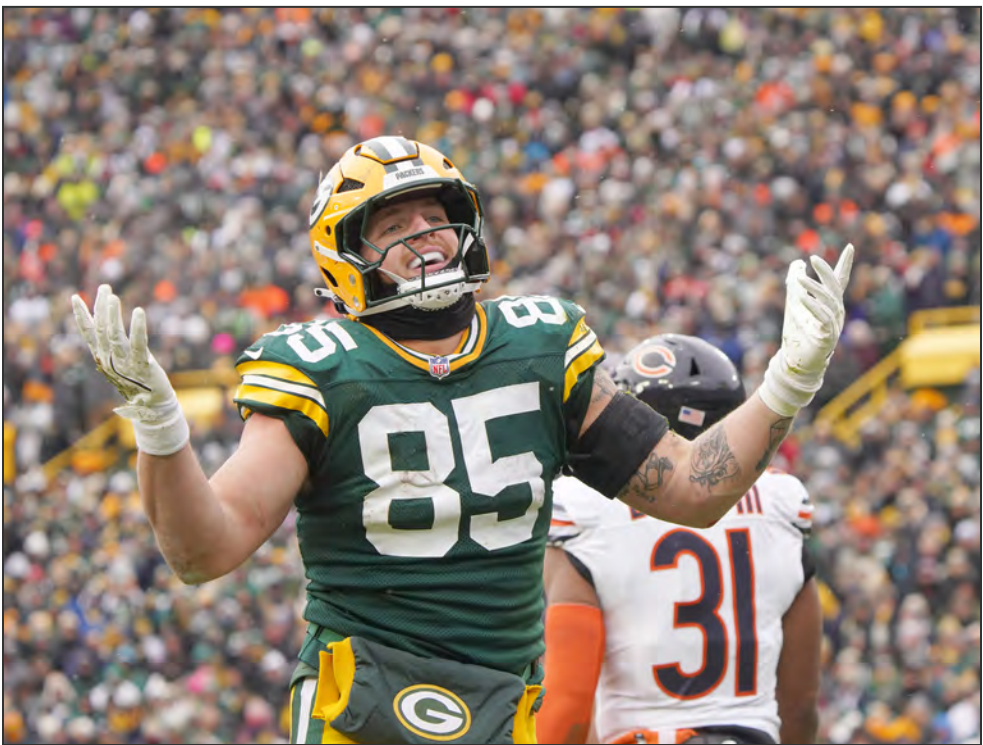
72 hours of exciting football choices await

The April 24-26 NFL draft in Green Bay has a slew of activities scheduled to keep everyone busy between picks. For the first time, Lambeau Field and Titledown will host this free event, bringing the next generation of NFL stars to the heart of one of football's most iconic cities, while celebrating local culture, food and entertainment.

On April 23, the NFL will host its annual Prospect Clinic on the Play Football Field within NFL Draft Experience, focusing primarily on connecting local youth football players and Special Olympics athletes with NFL draft prospects. During the clinic, USA Football coaches and draft prospects will coach participants through a series of basic football skills and drills activities.

Thursday, April 24
To kick off the celebrations, the prospects attending will walk the NFL draft red carpet on the iconic Lambeau Field, as fans watch from the stadium stands. The red carpet walk will begin at about 4 p.m. Live from the Draft stage, a Wisconsin based youth choir will perform the hymn "Lift Every Voice and Sing" directed by Grammy award recipient Jeffrey Redding. Singer-songwriter Stephen Wilson Jr., from Indiana, will follow with a rendition of the national anthem. Then, the Wisconsin Army National Guard will conduct the flyover with four Black Hawk helicopters over Lambeau Field and the Draft Theater. Packers legends and current players will join Commissioner Roger Goodell on stage to help kick off the night's festivities and welcome fans to Green Bay.

Friday, April 25
Throughout the night, 32 NFL legends and players from the 2000 draft class will announce selections to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the class. The evening will also spotlight legends and players with ties to Wisconsin, celebrating the state's deep football roots and local pride.



Tight end Tucker Kraft is ready for whatever comes next, including the NFL draft April 24-26 at Lambeau Field. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Notable participants include Hall of Famer Lynn Swann, Packers legend Jordy Nelson, Wisconsin greats Joe Thomas and Jonathan Taylor, and fan favorite Dante Hall. The action will culminate in a drone show lighting up the Green Bay sky at the end of the third round of selections. Throughout all three days of the draft, fans will enjoy a variety of in-venue fan engagement moments designed to keep the excitement high. These interactive experiences will include team roll calls, T-shirt tosses, live fan cams and trivia. Fans will also have the chance to win autographed footballs and helmets, participate in on-stage contests, and even enter to win Super Bowl LX tickets. Special guest appearances and player interviews will add to the excitement.

Saturday, April 26
Day 3 of the draft will be a celebration of Wisconsin's rich culture and community, offering a fun-filled day perfect for families. Highlights will include:
• Bike Parade – Young fans can participate in the Green Bay tradition by riding their bikes around the NFL Draft Experience before gates open.
• NFL Farmers Market – A celebration of local vendors, where fans can enjoy a taste of Wisconsin's finest offerings.
• Wisconsin Humane Society On-Stage Puppy Adoptions – A heartwarming moment as fans meet adorable pups looking for their forever homes.
• Military Enlistment Ceremony – A tribute to those who serve.

- Oneida Smoke Dancers – Performances that reflect the heartbeat of their heritage and inspire pride, connection and cultural appreciation.
 - University of Wisconsin Marching Band – High-energy music and spirit from members of one of the state's most iconic ensembles.
 - Polka Band and Dance Group – Lively rhythms of a classic Wisconsin polka performance.
 - Cheese Carving Demonstration – Showcase featuring artisans who transform cheese into intricate works of art, celebrating one of Wisconsin's most famous exports.
 - Packers Legends – Up close with Packers legends as they share stories and memories of their time in Green Bay.
 - Surprise Celebrity Guests – Special appearances by local personalities and celebrities.
- As a finale, the NFL will host a free concert in the Draft Theater following the seventh round of the draft. Admission is first-come, first-served.

Taking place from April 24-26, the NFL Draft Experience will transform the area near the legendary Lambeau Field and Titledown into a free, three-day festival for fans of all ages. The NFL Draft Experience offers an immersive festival featuring interactive activations such as high jump challenges, the 40-yard dash and more, alongside NFL Hall of Fame exhibits. Fans can meet NFL stars and legends, including Packers players, and capture unforgettable moments with the Vince Lombardi Trophy and all 58 Super Bowl rings. The Play 60 Zone and Titledown will host NFL FLAG drills, skills challenges and football clinics for younger fans. NFL Draft Experience hours of operation are noon to 10 p.m. April 24, noon to 10 p.m. April 25 and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 26.

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Packers still in search of No. 1 receiver

Several holes need to be filled to be a Super Bowl contender

BY JACOB WESTENDORF
Green & Gold Express

The Green Bay Packers entered the offseason with some big perceived positions of need.

As free agency progressed, some big names were thought to be available either as free agents or on the trade market.

As it turns out, no trade was swung for DK Metcalf. They did not land Josh Sweat.

They did not land DJ Reed.

They were able to add an offensive lineman and a cornerback.

Aaron Banks was given \$77 million over four seasons to take over as their starting left guard.

Nate Hobbs was given \$48 million to be the team's starter at cornerback in base but with a skillset versatile enough to move all over the field.

Despite their shopping in the offseason, there are more needs to be filled in April's draft. There could also be a trade swung during the draft to add a proven veteran.

Brian Gutekunt has never given up a premium pick for a veteran player, but this could be the year something changes with a Super Bowl drought that has now reached 15 years in Green Bay.

Here's a look at what Green Bay's biggest needs are going into draft day.

Defensive End
Gutekunt made his feelings clear as day following the season.

Matt LaFleur echoed the same sentiments.

The Packers want to be able to rush the passer with four guys.

They're likely envious of the Philadelphia Eagles' ability to do just that against Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LIX.

The Eagles pummeled Mahomes en route to a 40-

22 victory.

The Packers likely came out of training camp thinking they had similar possibilities on the defensive line. Their front wrecked two different offensive lines during joint practice sessions and consistently won the day against Green Bay's offensive line during training camp as well.

That did not translate to the regular season. Green Bay's pass rush ran hot and cold for most of the year.

Lukas Van Ness did not take the jump that most of the team was hoping he would.

Preston Smith looked like an old player, and he was traded at the deadline for a seventh-round pick.

Rashan Gary was the team's best pass rusher but only had 7.5 sacks on the year. He's a good player but not a great one at this stage of his career. The Packers are paying him to be great.

This could be a spot where the Packers look for their first-round pick. Texas A&M's Shemar Stewart, Tennessee's James



Romeo Doubs and other Packers receivers need to step up and compete for the No. 1 position.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS



Green Bay Packers general manager Brian Gutekunt talks with members of the national media at a game during the 2024 season. While Gutekunt has enjoyed decent success in past drafts, the majority of his tops picks have been questionable.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Pearce Jr. and Georgia's Mykel Williams have all been in Green Bay on pre-draft visits.

If they do not draft a defensive end early, the likelihood is the Packers will be banking heavily on internal development from the guys that were considered disappointing and inconsistent a season ago.

Wide Receiver
A yearly tradition unlike any other – a debate about the Green Bay Packers' wide receiver corps.

Coming into last season, the Packers thought they had four options they could feasibly rely on at any given moment.

That did not include the uptick they expected in production from tight ends Luke Musgrave and Tucker Kraft, along with some help from Josh Jacobs in the passing game as well.

As the season went along, the passing game regressed. By the end of the season, it looked like an utter disaster.

Jordan Love was picked off three times in the

team's 22-10 Wild Card loss in Philadelphia, and they found little success attacking the Eagles' defense through the air.

This could have been passed off as being shut down by a really good defense, if it were just a one-game issue.

It was not. Green Bay's offense struggled with an identity crisis through the end of the season, and none of their top four receivers got appreciably better from 2023 to 2024.

Romeo Doubs and Christian Watson are both in contract years, and both suffered injuries a season ago, making their futures uncertain.

Dontayvion Wicks and Jayden Reed both struggled with drops.

The Packers did not make any notable outside additions in free agency. Davante Adams and Metcalf never appeared to be serious considerations.

Green Bay has made its hay with receivers in the second round in the past.

They may have to do that again with the issues with injuries and inconsistency surrounding their current crop.

Defensive Tackle
Kenny Clark was thought to be a long-term fixture when he signed a rare third contract in Green Bay just before training camp began a season ago.

Clark responded by having his least productive season since he was a rookie.

Was it the new scheme? Was he starting to age? That question will be answered in 2025.

The primary starter next to Clark last season was T.J. Slaton, who left this offseason for Cincinnati.

Devonte Wyatt has struggled with inconsistency, but Brian Gutekunt called him the team's best interior rusher in his end-of-season press conference.

Wyatt is entering a contract year, and with the conversations surround-

ing Clark, the Packers could use some help in the middle of their defensive line.

The good news, most experts agree, is that the interior defensive line is where the draft is at its best.

There are multiple players who fit what the Packers typically like from their defensive tackles, and this could be a spot where the Packers use their first-round selection.

Offensive Line Depth
Depth on the offensive line is a rarity around the NFL. There just aren't a lot of quality offensive linemen in the NFL, let alone enough to support entire teams.

The Packers have typically been spoiled in that regard.

Last year, that was not the case.

Their depth on the interior of the offensive line was perilously thin. That was exasperated when Jordan Morgan, the team's primary backup at both guard spots, went on



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injured reserve with a shoulder injury.

The lack of depth on the interior did not show up for Green Bay until the biggest moment of the season.

Elgton Jenkins left the team’s playoff loss to the Eagles, and the offensive line crumbled.

Travis Glover and KaDeem Telfort both struggled against Philadelphia’s ferocious front.

As of now, the Packers likely feel good about their top six guys on the offensive line.

Behind that? It’s the same lack of depth they had a season ago.

None of their young offensive linemen took a step to where the Packers would have to feel good if they had to play in a game tomorrow.

There will be competition added for the back end of the offensive line room. Gutekunst has taken three offensive linemen three separate times in the draft. He probably does not have enough picks to do that, but it’s a safe bet he will take at least one.

Cornerback

Perhaps the biggest need on the roster is the last one listed here.

The Packers have lost three cornerbacks this offseason.

Corey Ballentine, Robert Rochell and Eric Stokes are all officially out the door. Jaire Alexander’s future is tenuous to say the very least.

The only addition they’ve made thus far is Nate Hobbs, who is going to be one of their starters.

Who else plays with him remains to be seen.

Keisean Nixon said he wanted to be the team’s top cornerback in 2025. He’s the likely favorite to start across from Hobbs if the season were to start tomorrow.

Carrington Valentine had some nice moments but has been up and down during his brief NFL career.

The Packers could be in the market to take another defensive back in the first round. If Alexander is not going to be in the picture, there are some question marks about how good this group can truly be.

At the same time, the Packers’ secondary is not why they lost to the Eagles in the playoffs.

Perhaps the Packers feel they can get by at that position without a premium investment?

Even if that is true, they need to add numbers to the position.



Kenny Clark Jr. was selected by the Packers in the first round of the 2016 NFL draft, with the 27th overall pick. Today, he is in his third contract with Green Bay.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS



Packers special team coordinator Rich Bisaccia talks with cornerback and return specialist Keisean Nixon. In 2025, the Packers will be on the hunt for a new returner as Nixon has said he prefers to concentrate on his cornerback duties.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Packers will host Super Bowl champs in 2025

The Packers know their home and road opponents for 2025, with a complete schedule yet to be announced.

For next season, the NFC North is matched with the NFC East and AFC North, so all teams in the NFC North will play all teams in those two divisions.

In addition, the Packers finished third in the NFC North, so they will face the third-place teams in the NFC South, NFC West and AFC West.

Here’s how it breaks down, with the full schedule of dates and times to be announced in the spring.

Home: Minnesota, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Cincinnati and Carolina.

Road: Minnesota, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, New York Giants, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Denver and Arizona.

The NFL has announced it plans to play eight international games in 2025, with contests slated for Madrid (Spain), Berlin (Germany) and Dublin (Ireland), as well as Mexico City, Brazil and the United Kingdom.

With AFC teams having nine home games in 2025, most international games will have AFC teams moving their home games.



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The star of the 2024 draft class was Edgerrin Cooper, left. When Cooper is able to hunt the ball, his ability is special. He has a closing speed the Packers have not seen at the linebacker position since Nick Barnett was at his peak. Jordan Morgan, above, was a controversial pick at the time simply because the Packers insisted Morgan was going to play tackle for them, despite the consensus thought being he was better suited at guard. As it turns out, at least for his rookie season, Green Bay agreed. Morgan hardly repped at tackle during training camp. He never played there during the season.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

How did the class of 2024 perform?

Players were a mixed bag of good, bad and incomplete

BY JACOB WESTENDORF
Green & Gold Express

The Green Bay Packers entered the 2024 NFL draft looking to take the next step.

They were coming off a season where they finished 9-8, but optimism was flying high after winning a road playoff game in Dallas and pushing the San Francisco 49ers to the brink of elimination.

The Packers augmented their roster by signing Xavier McKinney and Josh Jacobs in free agency before turning their attention to the draft.

They got instant impact from some of their choices; others gave them hope for the future, and some are still unknown at this point.

Knowing what we know now, however, it looks like all of the top picks from the 2024 draft are slated to play big roles in 2025. While it's truly hard to evaluate a draft class after just one season, instant impact is the name of the game in today's NFL.

Here is who they took, and how things shook out.

Round 1: Jordan Morgan

Morgan was a controversial pick at the time simply because the Packers insisted Morgan was going to play tackle for them, despite the consensus thought being he was better suited at guard.

As it turns out, at least for his rookie season, Green Bay agreed. Morgan hardly repped at tackle during training camp. He never played there during

the season, mostly competing with Sean Rhyhan to play right guard.

Morgan never fully usurped Rhyhan for the job. He never took more snaps in a game than Rhyhan did.

Eventually, Morgan missed time due to a shoulder injury. He did return but only to re aggravate the shoulder, which ended his rookie season on injured reserve.

Matt LaFleur and Brian Gutekunst have both said this offseason that the plan is for Morgan to compete with Rasheed Walker at left tackle when training camp opens.

If Morgan were to win that job, it would make the Packers' decisions along the offensive line easier for the future.

Zach Tom, Rhyhan and Walker all have contracts expiring at the end of 2025. The best bet is that if Morgan does not win the left tackle job, he'll be penciled in as the starter at right guard in 2026.

Either way, it was tough for Green Bay's fanbase to watch Morgan end his season on injured reserve, while the player they wanted to pick — former Iowa defensive back Cooper DeJean — returned an interception for a touchdown on Super Bowl Sunday.

Grade: Incomplete

Round 2: Edgerrin Cooper

The star of the show was Edgerrin Cooper. The only complaint about him was his availability. He suffered an injury in training camp that kept him on the sideline, which limited his



During training camp, it felt like Evan Williams was catching more passes than some of the team's wide receivers. Williams is a smart, heady player with ball skills.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

ability to make an impact early in the season.

Once he was on the field, however, he was immediately a standout.

When Cooper is able to hunt the ball, his ability is special. He has a closing speed the Packers have not seen at the linebacker position since Nick Barnett was at his peak.

Cooper finished the sea-

son with 13 tackles for loss in 14 games. That gave him the high mark for the entire defense during the season.

He added an interception, forced fumble and fumble recovery.

As he gets more experienced in Jeff Hafley's defense, he should have an opportunity to become a star in the future.

Grade: A

Round 2: Javon Bullard

Bullard looked to be the rookie most likely to make an instant impact when the rookies got to training camp.

He was inserted as the starter at safety next to Xavier McKinney.

He stayed there until the regular season.

He had to move between safety and slot corner due to injuries in the secondary during the season.

The moving around the defense is part of his draw, but it clearly affected him as he appeared to be swimming upstream as a rookie.

He did make a nice play, forcing a fumble in Green Bay's 24-22 loss to the Chicago Bears in the team's final regular season game.

With the addition of Nate Hobbs, Bullard appears to be in competition to find his way onto the field.

There is not a clear path at the moment for him, so he'll need to earn his reps.

Grade: C

Round 3: Marshawn Lloyd

After hip and hamstring injuries sidelined Lloyd for most of the summer, he injured his ankle just six carries into Green Bay's home opener against Indianapolis.

After being placed on injured reserve, Lloyd appeared to be on the cusp of returning to the active roster in mid-November when he was sidelined with appendicitis and forced out for the rest of the season.

Grade: Incomplete

Round 3: Ty'Ron Hopper

Hopper was probably the pick that caused the most raising of eyebrows in this draft class.

The Packers hosted Hopper on a predraft visit, but many thought he'd be a choice much later in the draft.

Instead, the Packers chose Hopper at pick 91. He was the second of two linebackers taken in the top 100, and third they've used a high pick on since 2022.

Once he was on the team, however, he was injured with a sprained ankle. He missed some of training camp but really struggled when he found his way onto the field at the end of preseason.

He did not play much as a rookie. With Isaiah McDuffie returning to the team, there's questions as to how much he'll be in the plans on defense, e if at all.

Grade: D

Round 4: Evan Williams

During training camp, it felt like Williams was catching more passes than some of the team's wide receivers.

Despite making a play per day, Williams did not play a single snap in the team's season-opening loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Eventually, he did usurp Bullard as the team's preferred option at safety next to McKinney.

Williams is a smart, heady player with ball skills.

Perhaps the defining play of his career thus far was a short yardage situation where Williams was assigned to the quarterback on a zone-read.

After the fake from the quarterback, he was one-on-one with Williams.

The quarterback was Arizona Cardinals star Kyler Murray.

Williams stoned Murray behind the line of scrimmage, giving the Packers the ball back.

It was a small play in the moment, but it gave a glimpse into how smart Williams is. He stuck to his assignment instead of chasing the ball and took down one of the more elusive quarterbacks in all of football.

Williams finished the season with just one interception, a game-sealing pick on Anthony Richardson's Hail Mary attempt in the team's 16-10 win in their home opener against the Indianapolis Colts.

When Williams was available, he looked to be the better player than his draft classmate, Bullard.

As of now, he should be the odds on favorite to start next to McKinney in 2025.

Grade: A

Round 5: Jacob Monk

Monk looked like he was trending toward becoming the Packers' next diamond in the rough of offensive linemen the Packers have found on Day 3 when training camp progressed.

Monk was rotating in with the starting lineup. He had a great line given to him by offensive line coach Luke Butkus, who claimed he was ready to rip someone's lips off before his preseason debut in Cleveland.

Monk was active until midway through the season, where he became a healthy scratch.

Perhaps the most telling part about how Monk's season progressed was the team moving Rhyhan to center, a position that Monk is suited to play, instead of putting Monk in the lineup during the team's 22-10 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Monk will likely be fighting for a spot on the back of the roster with the Packers likely to add more depth on the offensive line through this year's draft

Grade: D

Round 5: Kitan Oladapo

Oladapo was a healthy scratch until being put into the starting lineup for the team's final game of the regular season.

He's got an opportunity to compete for a spot on special teams this year in training camp but did not make any headway there as a rookie either.

Grade: D

Round 6: Travis Glover

Glover made his NFL debut in surprising fashion.

His first extended action came when Elgton Jenkins left during the team's loss to the Eagles in the play-offs with a neck injury.

Instead of KaDeem Telfort, who had been ahead of Glover most of the season, it was Glover.

His time on the field was short lived.

He was flagged twice in 12 snaps and beaten badly for a pressure on Jordan

Love.

Glover was a project when he was drafted; he'll get more chances to become the team's swing tackle.

Grade: D

Round 7: Michael Pratt

Pratt was drafted to compete with Sean Clifford to be the team's backup quarterback.

Both Pratt and Clifford struggled mightily in training camp and the preseason.

Pratt became one of the rare draft choices that was released by Gutekunst after training camp.

He was not brought back to the practice squad, and the team did not make any effort to bring him back.

Grade: F

Round 7: Kalen King

King had some nice moments during the pre-season but did not make the final roster.

He was elevated once during the regular season but did not play any snaps of significance.

He'll need to compete again to be on the 53-man roster but also for a spot on the practice squad

Grade D

In summary, Cooper looks like a bona fide star in limited action. He could be the next great Packers linebacker.

Williams, another player who was an immediate contributor, has a leg up in the competition to be the team's starting safety next to McKinney in 2025.

Morgan and Lloyd can essentially be looked at as outside additions to the team after they hardly played as rookies due to injuries.

Morgan will compete to be the team's left tackle. Lloyd should be the team's primary running back behind Josh Jacobs.

The depth on the offensive line is relying on their Day 3 selections taking a step forward in 2025. If the season were to start tomorrow, neither of the offensive linemen selected on Day 3 looks like they would be ready to play meaningful snaps in a game.

Overall Grade: B



Josh Jacobs was one of the better free agent signings in recent years. The six-year veteran signed with Green Bay in 2024 and went on to rush for 1,329 yards.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Winning the offseason?

Selective free agency signings follow the Packers script prior to draft

BY LUKE REIMER
Green & Gold Express

When the new NFL year started March 12, the Green Bay Packers again followed the trend of filling holes but staying somewhat quiet.

This offseason, general manager Brian Gutekunst and the Packers front office did not make any splash signings or trades, but instead they opted to upgrade some of the team's deficiencies from last season.

The first player Green Bay signed was offensive lineman Aaron Banks, who played his first five seasons in the NFL in San Francisco. Banks spent a majority of his time with the 49ers playing the guard position. He is expected to once again play guard in Green Bay.

With the departure of Josh Myers, who played the center position last season, signing Banks allows the Packers some flexibility on the offensive line. Elgton Jenkins, who primarily played the left guard position in his career, is now expected to shift to center and Banks will fill in at guard.

Overall, signing Banks gives the Packers an option to retool the offensive line. At a four-year, \$77 million deal, on the surface it may look like Green Bay slightly overpaid for him. But as Green Bay looks to compete while still rolling with Jordan Love, Josh Jacobs and the receiving corps, getting a proven starter at a very important position is not a bad option.

"We have talked a lot about how versatility plays into our offensive line," said Gutekunst. "(Banks) is a really large man that can do all of the things that Matt (LaFleur) asks those guys to do in our scheme, as far as his ability to get off of the ball quickly and get out into space and really run. His ability to play physical in the run game and anchor down in pass protection is - he has played at a really high level for years now and to get a guy like that in the prime of his career is something that I thought would really benefit us."

After Banks, Green Bay addressed its defense, looking to add some depth

to the secondary. It is no secret that after the injury to Jaire Alexander last season, the Packers needed help in the defensive back room. Among a few defensive backs leaving in free agency, Gutekunst dipped into the Las Vegas Raiders free agents and signed Nate Hobbs to a four-year, \$48 million deal.

"I think Green Bay is a special place," said Hobbs, on what attracted him to the Packers. "I think Green Bay is a place that a lot of players have transformed, you know. They go from a good player to a great player to a hall of fame player to better men. Everybody that I have spoken to has said that it is a special place, so I want to be a part of a special place."

Assuming Alexander is not with the team next season, it seems likely that Keisean Nixon moves to the outside, leaving a hole to fill in the slot. Similar to Banks on the offensive line, bringing Hobbs in gives the Packers flexibility to move defensive backs all around the secondary. During his time in Las Vegas, Hobbs lined up primarily on the inside. That flexibility is a major reason why he was signed to Green Bay, according to Gutekunst.

"We just really thought he is a really versatile, all-around corner that can do everything," said Gutekunst. "We really like his ability to play on the outside, which he has not done a ton of, but then the ability to move him inside to match different receivers. And then his play style - I think that is one of the things that really stood out to us, and we are really excited to see what he is going to do for us this year."

The last major free agent signing for Green Bay that came from outside of the organization was wide receiver Mecole Hardman. In his six-year career, Hardman has played with the Kansas City Chiefs and New York Jets, winning three Super Bowls.

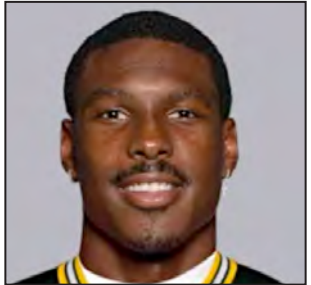
It is no secret that Green Bay is in desperate need of playmakers to add to Love's arsenal, and in that need is a player who can use his speed to stretch opposing defenses. With



Aaron Banks



Nate Hobbs



Mecole Hardman

the future of Christian Watson up in the air, due to injuries and inconsistent play, that field-stretching role seems to be voided heading into the 2025-26 season. Hardman, who has been known for his speed during his time in the NFL, figures to fill that hole, giving Love and the offense another weapon.

With Nixon seemingly taking on a larger role on the defensive side of the ball, another hole that Hardman has the opportunity to fill is in the return game. During his time in the NFL, Hardman has shown a penchant for returning balls, recording 1,892 career return yards and two touchdowns.

"He is a little more experienced in the punt return game than the kick return game, but he can do both," said Gutekunst. "He obviously adds an element of speed to our football team. He has been in big games and has played well in big games. He has been hampered by some injuries along the way, but I think when he is healthy, he is certainly an impactful player."

Green Bay signed Hardman to a one-year, \$1.5 million contract.



Javon Bullard (20) earned himself a "C" grade for his performance with the Packers in his rookie season. The moving around the defense is part of his draw, but it clearly affected him as he appeared to be swimming upstream as a rookie.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Oconto County markets to draft visitors

BY GREG SEUBERT
Green & Gold Express

Visitors to the NFL draft in Green Bay later this month have an option when it comes to finding a place to stay, eat or just chill out.

They can head north to Oconto County.

The county's border with Brown County is less than 30 minutes from Lambeau Field, where most of the draft activities will be held April 24-26.

Jayne Sellen is the executive director the Tourism and Economic Corporation for the Oconto Region (TEDCOR), an Oconto-based nonprofit group that helps promote tourism in Oconto County.

Draft organizers estimate about 240,000 will attend this year's draft. Detroit hosted last year's NFL Draft, which ended up drawing more than 700,000 visitors.

Unlike Detroit, however, Green Bay is the NFL's smallest market.

Whether Green Bay draws a crowd that big remains to be seen, but Sellen said TEDCOR is doing what it can to promote Oconto County.

"We did a series of reels and videos for social media, the One Mile, One Minute campaign," Sellen said. "Each community



Oconto County, like others in the area, knows an opportunity when it sees one. With several hundred thousand football enthusiasts expected to converge on the Green Bay market, the county is hoping to cash in on fans' spending.

and some of the businesses in that community did a campaign that said, 'Hey, we're Oconto, Wisconsin, we're 35 miles away from Lambeau Field and it's a 35-minute drive.'

"It was kicked off by me or my colleague Kelly (Schwartz) kicking a football," she said. "That person caught the football and they threw it to the next person and it promoted our communities and a lot of businesses in the area, too. It got a lot of views."

TEDCOR's website - tedcor.org - has informa-

tion about the draft, including links to the Packers official draft information site. Details on where to park near Lambeau Field and road closures can also be found.

Also on TEDCOR's site is a link to RiverWood Saloon & Campground, located on state Highway 22 between Oconto and Oconto Falls on the Little River. The campground and saloon will be open during the draft and offer transportation to and from Lambeau Field.

Sellen can't say for

sure if TEDCOR's campaign will draw people to Oconto County and said she probably won't know until the three-day event is underway.

"One thing I don't know about is the hotels," she said. "I know there's availability."

Sellen expects draft visitors to be looking for lodging in adjacent counties, including Oconto, Shawano, Outagamie, Calumet, Kewaunee and Manitowoc.

"With the numbers we were told from the Packers, there's no way all

those people can fit into the Green Bay area," she said. "They would have to overflow to the surrounding areas. Some of them will probably go down to Appleton, but we're hoping a good portion of them will know about us. The commute north is going to be a lot easier than (Interstate) 41 down to Appleton."

Sellen said Oconto County is also an option for Green Bay area residents thinking about heading out of town for a few days.

"There might be some

folks that live there that might want to escape some of the traffic and congestion that's going to happen," she said. "It's a byproduct of a really good thing."

Oconto County is part of New North, an 18-county regional economic development organization.

"It goes up to Florence (County) and down to Sheboygan," Sellen said. "They are bringing in site selectors at that time. We are going to meet with them and tell them all about the opportunities here for businesses to come here. We're looking at it from the tourism side, but we'd be foolish not to take advantage of it from an economic development side of things."

Sellen views the Packers hosting their first NFL draft as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for football fans and Oconto County as well.

"We're trying to take advantage of it, but we don't know to what extent," she said. "I think (area counties) are all in a similar spot. We don't know what to expect. We thought the numbers would be a lot higher than they are, but I also think that there might be some last-minute 'Oh my gosh, this is coming up, we can still get a good deal.'"



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Christian Watson dropped what should have easily been a completed pass against the San Francisco 49ers. Like the other receivers, he took a step backwards in 2024, and the Packers are in need of someone to grab hold of the No. 1 position. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRES

Packers looking at another defensive first-round pick?

Gutekunst's latest choices leave something to be desired

BY JACOB WESTENDORF
Green & Gold Express

The NFL draft is finally here. Soon, the days of mock drafts will be gone. We will no longer be talking about who teams could possibly draft. Instead, we will know who each team did draft and be able to look ahead to the 2025 regular season.

The primary focus for the Green Bay Packers is to help augment a strong roster that gets them out of the playoff hunt and into the status of Super Bowl contenders.

Brian Gutekunst said in his season-ending press conference that he felt it was time that his team started competing for championships.

They started this offseason by adding a player to the offensive line and their secondary, both of which should be improved from the group that finished the season in Philadelphia.

A Wild Card weekend loss to the Eagles puts the Packers picking 23rd in the first round of the draft.

They have eight picks, which include a seventh-round pick they acquired by trading Preston Smith to the Pittsburgh Steelers at the trade deadline.

That also includes a compensatory pick. The NFL gave the Packers a seventh-rounder essentially for the departure of offensive tackle Yosh Nijman in free agency last year, after the additions of

running back Josh Jacobs and safety Xavier McKinney were offset by the losses of guard Jon Runyan and safety Darnell Savage.

Green Bay's original seventh-round pick might have been the best trade of the season. Gutekunst used that pick to acquire backup quarterback Malik Willis.

Willis played extended snaps in four games, including two starts. The Packers were 3-1 in those games with the one loss coming in a largely meaningless regular season finale against the Chicago Bears.

The Packers have some work to do with their roster. The NFC North has gotten better around them, and they can ill afford to rely on the incompetence of the rest of their division to get themselves into the playoffs.

They need to beat the teams in the North after going 1-5 against divisional opponents a season ago. The one, of course, was tenuous at best. A blocked field goal by Karl Brooks saved the Packers from suffering defeat at Soldier Field and taking the collar in the division.

That starts with the ever important first-round pick.

For as well as Gutekunst has done in the draft, especially in the later rounds, his early picks have left something to be desired.

Lukas Van Ness, Jordan Morgan, Quay Walker and Devonte Wyatt represent the last three years of first-

round choices.

Walker is the closest thing to an impact player, and that is far from a sure thing.

If you go back further, the last time Gutekunst took an impact player in the first round, it was quarterback Jordan Love.

Gutekunst needs to acquire some blue chip talent to take this Packers team to the next level.

Here are Green Bay's choices, and what they could do.

Round 1, No. 23

This choice is arguably the most important of Gutekunst's career to date. The Packers are a good team. They're not a great one.

Great teams typically have their stars lead the way. They can be rookies as well.

One season ago, the Philadelphia Eagles drafted Quinyon Mitchell and Cooper DeJean with their first two picks.

Both players became key contributors to the Eagles' Super Bowl run. Mitchell became their best cornerback. DeJean returned an interception for a touchdown in the Super Bowl and is one of the league's best slot defenders.

The Packers' first-round pick was Jordan Morgan. He could be a key contributor for them in 2025 if he wins the job at left tackle. Unfortunately, he'll always be compared to DeJean, a popular pick for the Packers a season ago.

When it comes to this year's pick, there are a few options at key positions of need.

The most likely scenario, based on the shape of this draft, is that the Packers will use their pick on a player in the front seven of their defense.

Defensive end and defensive tackle appear to be the most likely candidates here.

Tennessee's James Pearce Jr., Texas A&M's Shemar Stewart and Georgia's Mykel Williams have all taken predraft visits to Green Bay.

Stewart is the most athletic player in the class. Williams fits the mold of what the Packers have typically preferred in their edge players.

Pearce Jr. would be a bit of a departure from their preferences because of his size; he's less than 250 pounds, and he's more of a speed rusher than a power guy.

If they're looking for a different type of rusher, Pearce is immensely talented. He could be the guy.

On the defensive line, there are two main candidates who could be available when Green Bay is on the clock: Michigan's Kenneth Grant and Oregon's Derek Harmon.

Harmon is more of the mold the Packers have on their defensive line. He's an interior disrupter, who is best suited going up the field to make plays in the backfield. He has some technical issues to work

through but could wind up being one of the most disruptive players in this draft class.

Grant is a bigger man, tipping the scales at more than 330 pounds, but he is a good athlete.

Grant's potential is sky high because of his athleticism in addition to his size. He could be a ready made replacement for T.J. Slaton as he refines his craft as a pass rusher.

If they don't look to the defensive front, it's likely the Packers will target someone at the skill position, whether on offense or defense.

At cornerback, Jahdae Barron from Texas is a popular choice with the fanbase. It just depends if the Packers feel like he can play on the boundary. They have a plethora of slot defenders, but the team might need someone to play on the outside.

If they want a boundary corner, Michigan's Will Johnson, Ole Miss' Trey Amos or East Carolina's Shavon Revel are all potential candidates in this spot.

If they were to buck a trend that has existed since 2002 and take a wide receiver, there are some players who fit the bill.

Gutekunst was the only general manager at Arizona receiver Tet McMillan's private workout. That is likely a sign of interest in the player and not just due diligence.

Apart from him, Ohio State's Emeka Egbuka and

Iowa State's Jayden Higgins are guys the Packers could target either at 23 or if they wanted to slide back a couple of spots.

One other possibility at receiver in the middle rounds is Texas' Isaiah Bond, a speedster who took a predraft visit with the Packers in March.

Of course, always account for variable change. If a player the Packers love that they weren't expecting to be available, is available, the Packers will not hesitate to pick a player based solely on the position he plays.

Some examples include Texas' offensive tackle Kelvin Banks, Ohio State's offensive tackle Josh Simmons or Alabama linebacker Jihaad Campbell.

The rest of the picks are as follows:

- Round 2, No. 54
- Round 3, No. 87
- Round 4, No. 124
- Round 5, No. 159
- Round 6, No. 198
- Round 7, No. 237 (from Pittsburgh)

Round 7, No. 250 (compensatory)

They'll likely look to add some depth to their offensive line at this point of the draft and find some value for their special teams.

Something else to keep in mind – the Packers have stated they want to get back in the practice of drafting a quarterback on a yearly basis. That could be something they look to target as the draft gets into its later stages.



A.J. Dillon, a member of the Packers 2020 draft class, spent all of 2024 on injured reserve. On March 13, he signed a one-year deal with the Philadelphia Eagles.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Green Bay says farewell to seven free agents

BY LUKE REIMER
Green & Gold Express

As the new NFL season kicked off last month, the Green Bay Packers were once again somewhat active with regard to shaping its roster for the coming year.

While it is always more fun to look at the new players who are brought in, Green Bay’s free agency really revolved around who was heading out. In total, Green Bay said farewell to seven players who regularly saw time as rotation pieces.

The first of those departures was running back AJ Dillon. After failing to meet expectations in Green Bay due to injuries and inconsistent play, Dillon signed a one-year, \$1.3 million contract with the Philadelphia Eagles to help spell Saquon Barkley as the Eagles look to make it back to the Super Bowl.

Given the improved play of both Emanuel Wilson and Chris Brooks, as well as the workhorse ability of Josh Jacobs, losing Dillon does not seem like it will be a major hit to the Packers’ offense.

After Dillon’s departure was Eric Stokes, who signed a one-year, \$3.5 million deal with the Las Vegas Raiders. Stokes, much like Dillon, suffered the fate of not living up to expectations during his time in Green Bay. Drafted as the team’s first-round pick in 2021, Stokes only started 32 games for the Packers, shifting to a rotational role



Drafted by the Packers in 2021, Eric Stokes had his fifth-year option declined by Green Bay, making him a free agent after the 2024 season. On March 13, he signed a one-year deal with the Las Vegas Raiders.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

in 2024.

Filling the running back position in Dillon’s place is probably not a major priority for the Packers, as Wilson and Brooks have both shown ability to fill in Jacobs’ shoes when he is taken out. Even though the Packers have a solid trio in the backfield, spending a later draft pick on a running back may be in the cards, to build some competition.

As for the cornerback position in replacing Stokes, that must be a point Green Bay addresses quickly, as the NFC North features three of the better passing offenses in the NFL.

With Keisean Nixon taking on a larger role on the defensive side of the ball, as well as the signing of Nate Hobbs, it seems that the Packers have started a plan, but looking at a defensive back early in the NFL draft

seems likely. Either way, replacing the cornerback position really seems like it comes down to whether Jaire Alexander is on the team next year or not.

“There could be a possibility, absolutely,” said general manager Brian Gutekunst, on if Alexander will play for the Packers next season. “We are kind of in the middle of that right now.”

What does not help support the depth at the defensive back position right now is two more Packers corners signing elsewhere in free agency. Robert Rochell, who primarily spent his time on special teams, recently signed with the Kansas City Chiefs, and Corey Ballentine, who saw extended time on defense last season due to injuries, signed a deal with the Indianapolis Colts.

Continuing on the defensive side of the ball,



Another 2021 draft pick, Josh Myers missed just one game playing at the center spot. The Packers have already started to rectify Myers’ departure as it signed Aaron Banks to the offensive line from the San Francisco 49ers.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

Green Bay also lost on defensive tackle T.J. Slaton in free agency. Slaton, who showed his prowess as a solid rotational piece, playing in every game since he was drafted in 2021, signed a contract with the Cincinnati Bengals.

This loss probably hurts more than a lot of people think, just due to Slaton’s availability, as well as his production – 133 total tackles, six tackles for loss, two sacks and seven quarterback hits and four batted passes.

While defensive tackle is another position that is probably not at the highest priority, making up for 133 total tackles over four seasons is not an easy thing to do. This is probably another position that Green Bay can use a mid- to late draft pick on, similar to what it did with Slaton in 2021.

Either way, Kenny Clark

is only getting older, and Devonte Wyatt has some injury concerns. If these two are healthy though, Green Bay has enough personnel to kick-the-can down the road at defensive tackle for a year or two yet.

Other than Dillon and Stokes, the most notable departure for the Packers in free agency this season was Josh Myers.

Since he was drafted in 2021, Myers missed just one game playing at the center spot. The Packers have already started to rectify Myers’ departure as it signed Aaron Banks to the offensive line from the San Francisco 49ers. Signing Banks allows Elgton Jenkins to slide into the center spot, where Jenkins had most of his success in college.

“We have had plenty of conversations with Elgton leading up to it, and obviously he played center in

college, and we feel he has a chance to be an all-pro center,” said Gutekunst. “We have talked a lot about how versatility plays into our offensive line and having guys that can move to different spots. Elgton is one of those guys that can play all five spots. He is a luxury, but I am excited to see what he can do at center.”

Finally, the last Packers player who will be wearing a new uniform next season is Eric Wilson.

Wilson, who started 12 games at the linebacker position, due to injuries to Quay Walker last season, signed a one-year, \$1.2 million contract with the Minnesota Vikings in the offseason. While playing for Green Bay, Wilson totaled 87 total tackles, three sacks and one interception.

Losing Wilson takes more than a hit to the defense though, as he became one of Green Bay’s better special teams players. Over the past three seasons, he recorded 33 tackles, leading the team. He now returns to Vikings where he played his first four seasons in the NFL.

Replacing a leading tackler on special teams is not going to be an easy thing, but given Green Bay’s roster, it has to be addressed sooner than later. Signing a veteran to a cheap deal may be in the cards, but again looking to the draft might be the Packers’ best option for long-term success at both special teams and on defense.

Wisconsin supper clubs take front and center

Friday fish fry, other fare just as popular as football with residents

Prepare to experience the culinary magic of Wisconsin's legendary supper clubs while helping to tackle student food insecurity. The first-ever Taste of the Draft will showcase a blend of iconic menu classics and nostalgic ambiance in a one-of-a-kind gathering of Wisconsin supper clubs. Presented by Schreiber Foods, Taste of the Draft is a new community impact initiative in collaboration with the Green Bay Packers to benefit GENYOUth's commitment to end student hunger in Wisconsin.

It will be held on the evening before the NFL Draft – April 23 from 4-7 p.m. at Schreiber Foods headquarters, 400 N. Washington St., Green Bay.

Taste of the Draft will be hosted by Andrew Zimern, Emmy- and four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality, chef, Taste of the NFL culinary host and Goodwill Ambassador for the UN World Food Programme; Mark Bucher, co-founder of Medium Rare Restaurant Group, World Burger Champion and Taste of the NFL chef; and Paul Bartolotta, owner and co-founder of The Bartolotta Restaurants and a two-time James Beard Award-win-



A Friday night fish fry is among the most popular meals at Wisconsin supper clubs, and Classics in Shawano is no different. The traditional Wisconsin fare is just as popular as the Green Bay Packers.

GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

ning chef.

Twenty Wisconsin supper clubs will serve up signature dishes:

- Bootleggers Lodge in Tomahawk.
- Cattails Supper Club in Larsen.
- Dalles House Supper Club in St. Croix Falls.
- Eddie's Restaurant in Superior.
- Gabe's Wisconsin Kitchen and Tavern in Oshkosh.
- Green Acres Supper Club in Sauk City.

- House of Embers in Wisconsin Dells.
- Hotel Seymour Supper Club in Seymour.
- Krabbe's Supper Club in Seymour.
- Lox Supper Club in Combined Locks.
- Mark's East Side in Appleton.
- Moonlight Tavern & Supper Club in Port Washington.
- Nightingale Supper Club in Sturgeon Bay.
- Rupp's Supper Club in Cleveland (Wisconsin).

- Palms Supper Club in Schofield.
 - 3 Mile House Supper Club in Hazel Green.
 - Timmer's Resort Union Hotel & Restaurant in West Bend.
 - Van Abel's of Hollandtown in Kaukauna.
 - Wildflower Supper Club in Kewaunee.
- From relish trays, popovers and America's Dairyland delights, to meat and seafood specialties, and Fork Farms salad bar favorites, Taste of the Draft will

feature flavorful supper club cuisine from across the state. And no Wisconsin supper club is complete without a showcase of local cheeses and other dairy favorites, as well as curated spirits and after-dinner dairy-delicious ice cream drinks — including grasshoppers and pink squirrels. In addition to tasting the favorite dishes of celebrity and locally loved chefs, guests will be able to mix and mingle with Green

Bay Packers greats including LeRoy Butler, Jerry Kramer, James Lofton, Dave Robinson and Ahman Green, as well as experience other surprise-and-delight moments including musical entertainment, a sleight-of-hand magician, a silent auction, an appearance by Miss America and Taste of the Draft's very own beer garden.

Taste of the Draft will raise critical funds for GENYOUth's commitment to tackling student food insecurity in Wisconsin. Nutrition grants will be awarded to up to 90 schools, in celebration of the 90th NFL Draft, including Grab and Go school meal carts and milk coolers to increase access to and participation in healthy school meals.

"With one in six Wisconsin children living in food insecurity and nearly half of the state's students qualifying for free and reduced-price school meals based on household income, GENYOUth's mission to help all kids thrive through nutrition and physical activity is more urgent than ever," said Ann Marie Krauthaim, CEO of GENYOUth.

Tickets to Taste of the Draft are available at tasteofthenfl.com/taste-of-the-draft-2025/.



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