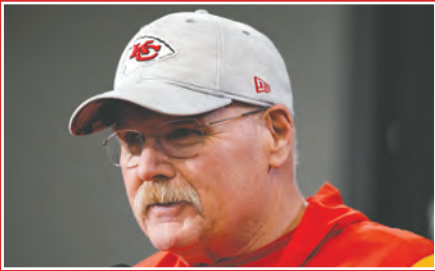
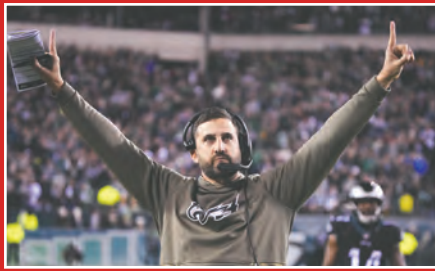


SUPER BOWL LVII



KANSAS CITY COACH, ANDY REID



PHILADELPHIA COACH, NICK SIRIANNI

CHIEFS, EAGLES MEET FOR TITLE

Philadelphia opened as favorite to win it all in Arizona

By **DAVID BRANDT**
The Associated Press

Patrick Mahomes finally got the best of Joe Burrow. All he needed was a little shove.

Harrison Butker made a 45-yard field goal with 3 seconds left — after Cincinnati's Joseph Ossai was flagged for a 15-yard penalty for shoving Mahomes after he was out of bounds — and the Chiefs beat the Bengals 23-20 in the AFC Championship Game to make it back to the Super Bowl.

Kansas City will face the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl on Feb. 12 in Glendale, Arizona.

The Eagles opened as a 1½-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

There are no shortage of storylines: Kansas City coach Andy Reid goes against his old team — which he led to Super Bowl 39 — in a game that's also the first matchup of Black starting quarterbacks in the Super Bowl with Mahomes and Philadelphia's Jalen Hurts.

On top of that, there's a brother-against-brother showdown between Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce and Philadelphia center Jason Kelce.

“Officially done being a Chiefs fan this season!” Jason Kelce tweeted immediately after the Chiefs won.

The Chiefs have been



Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes looks to pass against the Cincinnati Bengals during the second half of the AFC Championship Game on Jan. 29, Kansas City.

REED HOFFMANN | THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

making deep postseason runs on a regular basis ever since Mahomes came to town as the franchise quarterback.

This was their fifth straight trip to the AFC title game and will be their third Super Bowl appearance in that span. They beat the 49ers for the NFL title in the 2019 season, but lost to the Bucs the following season.

The Eagles clobbered the Niners 31-7 in the NFC title game earlier on Jan. 29. They've looked dominant in the playoffs so far, also beating the New York Giants 38-7 in the divisional round.

Philadelphia is back in the

Super Bowl five years after beating the New England Patriots 41-33 on Feb. 4, 2018.

Now a mostly new generation of Eagles — led by coach Nick Sirianni and Hurts — will come to Arizona to try and win another title.

The Chiefs-Bengals game looked as if it was going to overtime before Ossai's ill-advised play. Mahomes — who was playing on a badly sprained ankle — was running to get a first down in the final seconds as Ossai desperately tried to track him down.

Mahomes was out of



Philadelphia QB Jalen Hurts will lead the Eagles in this Sunday's Super Bowl against the Chiefs. Hurts rushed for 153 yards and threw 2 TD's during the Eagles Nov. 27 victory against the Packers.

GREG MELLIS | NEW MEDIA

bounds when Ossai gave him a shove, sending both players tumbling to the turf. The ensuing 15-yard penalty was enough to push Butker into field-goal range and the kick split the uprights.

A distraught Ossai sat on the bench with his head in his hands, well after the game was over.

The Bengals and Chiefs were playing for the fourth time in less than 400 days and Cincinnati had won the previous three meetings — all by three points. This one was decided by a field goal, too, and all Burrow could do was watch.

The Bengals lost to the Rams in last year's Super Bowl and they just missed another chance at returning to the title game.

No drama in NFC

Odds makers thought fans were in for some close conference championship games.

They'll have to settle for a 50% success rate.

The NFC title game was a blowout. Niners rookie quarterback Brock Purdy was injured in the first quarter when Eagles linebacker Haason Reddick drilled his right arm on a play that was ruled a fumble. The Eagles

recovered that fumble and the injury proved to be a game-changer.

With Purdy hurt, San Francisco turned to 36-year-old journeyman Josh Johnson, who couldn't do much before eventually leaving with a concussion. Purdy came back into the game, but could barely throw, and the Eagles cruised to the win.

The 49ers dealt with quarterback injuries all season, losing Trey Lance and Jimmy Garoppolo before turning to Purdy, a seventh-round draft pick out of Iowa State. Purdy stepped into a starter's role in December and won his first seven games before the injury.

Rihanna at halftime

Rihanna will take center stage as the headline act for this year's Super Bowl halftime show.

With sales of more than 250 million records worldwide, Rihanna ranks as one of the best-selling female artists ever. Her most recent album was 2016's “Anti.” Rihanna last performed publicly at the Grammy Awards in 2018.

The singer said she turned down a similar opportunity for the 2019 Super Bowl that was ultimately headlined by Maroon 5.

Country music star Chris Stapleton will sing the national anthem, while R&B legend Babyface will perform “America the Beautiful.”

IN REVIEW: A SPECIAL REPORT OF THE GREEN BAY PACKERS 2022 SEASON • PAGE 3

GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

WWW.NEWMEDIA-WI.COM

Friday, February 10, 2023

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW



Running back A.J. Dillon leads a symphony of air instruments after scoring a touchdown against the Minnesota Vikings on Jan. 1. While the Packers had a lot this season to improve upon, the win over Minnesota in week 17 serves as a bright spot.



Aaron Rodgers lies dejected on the ground after a desperate final play falls short as the Packers lose to the Washington Commanders, their third loss in row.

HIGHS AND LOWS OF 2022 SEASON

Packers ups and downs of 2022 brings an uncertain future

To call the Packers 2022-23 season tumultuous is an understatement.

From beginning as a pre-season favorite with a 3-1 record to winning one game out of the next seven, with five of those losses in a row, the Green Bay season was a roller coaster of ups and downs.

One of the highs that stands out was Green Bay's week 10 victory over the Dallas Cowboys. The win, during former Head Coach Mike McCarthy's homecoming, stopped a five game losing streak and was rookie wide receiver Christian Watson's coming out party as he scored three receiving touchdowns.

On the other hand, one of the lows that stands out was the team giving up 363 rushing yards to the Philadelphia Eagles. Eagles Quarterback Jalen Hurts set a Philadelphia

record for the most rushing yards by a quarterback in the game against the Packers.

A season that was once thought of to be one of Super Bowl contention was quickly lost. Just missing out on the playoffs now puts Green Bay into another offseason of uncertainty. Will Aaron Rodgers play for a different team next year, or will Green Bay try another run at a Super Bowl with the quarterback, who turns 40 in December?

It was a chaotic season for the team, but it is one that players and fans will remember for a long time to come. From the lack of depth regarding the receiving room after the departure of Davante Adams, to intercepting Dolphins Quarterback Tua Tagovailoa three times on three possessions to win a must-win game, this season is one of the most memorable in recent history.

BEAT
The
Expert





Morgan Rode
NEW Media Sports Editor

2022-2023 Season Finale

Kansas City Chiefs vs

Philadelphia Eagles

Season Finale Winner will receive a
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Sunday, February 12, 2023
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Big Game Pick:
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vs
Eagles Score: 27

Morgan Rode
New Media



Big Game Pick:
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vs
Eagles Score: 27

Tim Murphy
New Media



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 31
vs
Eagles Score: 24

Luke Reimer
New Media



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 31
vs
Eagles Score: 34

Iverson's Staff
Piggy Wiggly



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 31
vs
Eagles Score: 37

Shane Senn
Senn Insurance



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 26
vs
Eagles Score: 34

Brenda 22 Shell



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 35
vs
Eagles Score: 31

In Memory of
Patty Lasher
Shawano Seasons Restaurant



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 28
vs
Eagles Score: 35

Packer City
Antiques



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 24
vs
Eagles Score: 28

Walsh
Dental



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 20
vs
Eagles Score: 27

Dr. Adam Hammerbeck
Hammerbeck Dental



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 21
vs
Eagles Score: 43

Hwy 29
Auto Parts
Terry's Auto Sales



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 35
vs
Eagles Score: 37

Oconto Falls
Insurance Center



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 34
vs
Eagles Score: 37

Pinno
Builders



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 23
vs
Eagles Score: 31

Amber
Smokey Joe's



Big Game Pick:
Chiefs Score: 17
vs
Eagles Score: 27

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A BEATING IN SEVERAL KEY POSITIONS • 12

GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

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Friday, February 10, 2023

2022-23 SEASON YEAR IN REVIEW

Rival fans walk together toward Soldier Field donned in Jim McMahon and Aaron Rodgers jerseys on Dec. 1, capturing the comradery and the antagonism of the NFL's longest rivalry, as both teams entered the game with 786 wins.



In a low point of the season, Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers holds his broken thumb after being hit during a matchup against the Detroit Lions on Nov. 6.

FROM FAVES TO FRUSTRATED

Packers season review in perspective photos



One season removed from proclaiming ownership of the Bears, Aaron Rodgers salutes the fans of Soldier Field in Chicago after the Dec. 4 win. Not only was this Rodgers' 24th career victory against the Bears, but it also pushed Green Bay to the most wins in NFL history, knocking off Chicago, which had owned the top spot since 1920.

BY BILL HUBER • CORRESPONDENT

Everything — everything! — broke the Green Bay Packers' way. Seemingly spiraling down the drain with their 4-8 record, the Packers won four in a row. Coupled with all the teams ahead of them in the standings losing one game after another, Green Bay needed to beat the Detroit Lions in week 18 to punch an improbable ticket to the playoffs.



JORDAN LOVE

Instead, the Packers lost 20-16. Aaron Rodgers failed to deliver a clutch performance against one of the worst defenses in the NFL. The defense couldn't get a stop in the fourth quarter. The Packers, with weather and big-game experience in their favor, looked as mediocre as they had all season.

"We had a lot of opportunities to not be in this position," Rodgers said. "We had so many opportunities in different games to put ourselves in a better position — games we should've won based on matchups and talent, and games we'd usually win.

"We shouldn't have been in this position but we were here, and we played like we did before the last few games: not complementary football, turning the ball over on offense, (special)

teams didn't really make a splash play and then we squandered our opportunities in the red zone, were terrible on third down. The same things that hurt us all year, hurt us tonight."

Here's the story of the season, broken down into seven chapters.



Wide receiver Christian Watson takes a pass from Packers quarterback Jordan Love for a 63-yard touchdown in a 40-33 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles on Nov. 27. Although the loss to the Eagles marked Green Bay's seventh in its last eight games, Watson proved that he was not a one-trick pony with a three touchdown performance against Dallas two weeks before.

GREG MELLIS



A new team a new season. Frustrated as the offense struggled on opening day, Rodgers didn't have an answer as the offense scored just seven points in their week one defeat to the Vikings.

Week 1: Miserable in Minnesota

The Vikings took the opening kickoff and drove 78 yards to a touchdown, with Justin Jefferson catching passes for 20 and 22 yards before scoring a 5-yard touchdown. On the first play after the ensuing kickoff, Christian Watson dropped a 75-yard touchdown pass.

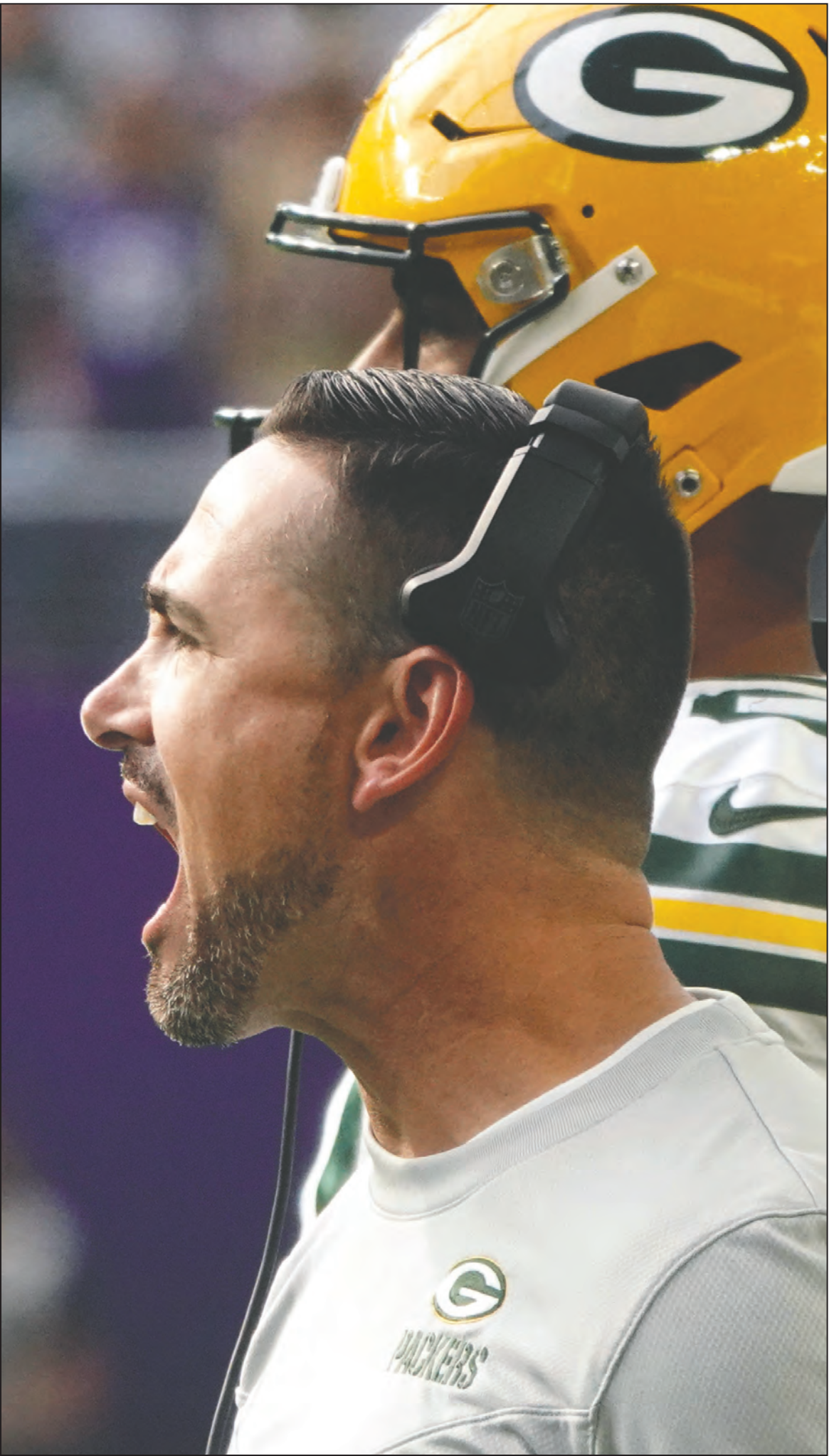
Game over. NFC North race over. The Vikings romped 23-7. The Green Bay offense following the trade of Davante Adams was supposed to be a work in progress, and it was. The Green Bay defense was supposed to be good enough to carry the load, and it was not.

“The gameplan was to not allow 18 (Jefferson) to beat us,” cornerback Jaire Alexander said after Jefferson caught six passes for 158 yards and two touchdowns in the first half alone. “Why I wasn’t on him, that’s not my call. Anybody who watches me play, you know that’s what I want. We played him much better in the second half but, in the first half, he looked like a premier receiver in the league.”



ABOVE: AJ Dillon led the Packers with 10 carries, scoring the Packers lone TD against the Vikings on opening day.

RIGHT: Brian Gutekunst was all smiles watching pregame warmups prior to the start of the season opener in Minnesota.



Frustrated Matt LeFeur and Jordan Love on the sidelines during the lopsided 23-7 opening day defeat to the Vikings.

Weeks 2-4: Back on track

It wasn't pretty, but the Packers rebounded to earn victories over the Bears (27-10), Buccaneers (14-12) and Patriots (27-24). The victory at Tampa Bay in week three looked like one of those huge victories that would have playoff ramifications. It was secured when De'Vondre Campbell broke up Tom Brady's two-point pass in the final seconds.

"If you would've said in the offseason we'd be 2-1 after three with these two tough road games, I'd say that's probably pretty good, considering that you would expect

Minnesota and Tampa Bay to be in the top seven teams at the end of the season," Rodgers said.

A week later at home against New England, the Packers escaped in overtime against rookie third-string quarterback Bailey Zappe. Rodgers' rare pick-six put the Packers in a 10-7 hole at halftime. He responded by going touchdown, field goal, touchdown to open the second half.

"I've been a great player for a long time," he said. "Not a whole lot I need to tell myself. Just play better."



Pressuring the GOAT—Rashan Gary takes down the legendary Tom Brady on a second quarter third down sack. Packers got 14-12 victory on Sept. 25 in Tampa.



ABOVE: Running back Aaron Jones stiff-arms the Bear's defender Roquan Smith during the Packers' week two victory on Sept. 18. During his six-year career, Jones has delivered 560 rushing yards and nine total touchdowns.

LEFT: Legendary New England Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick worked the refs after a penalty was announced during Green Bay's Oct. 2 matchup with the Patriots.



British Packers fans packed the streets and pubs in London prior to the week 5 game. It was the first time the Packers participated in an overseas NFL game.

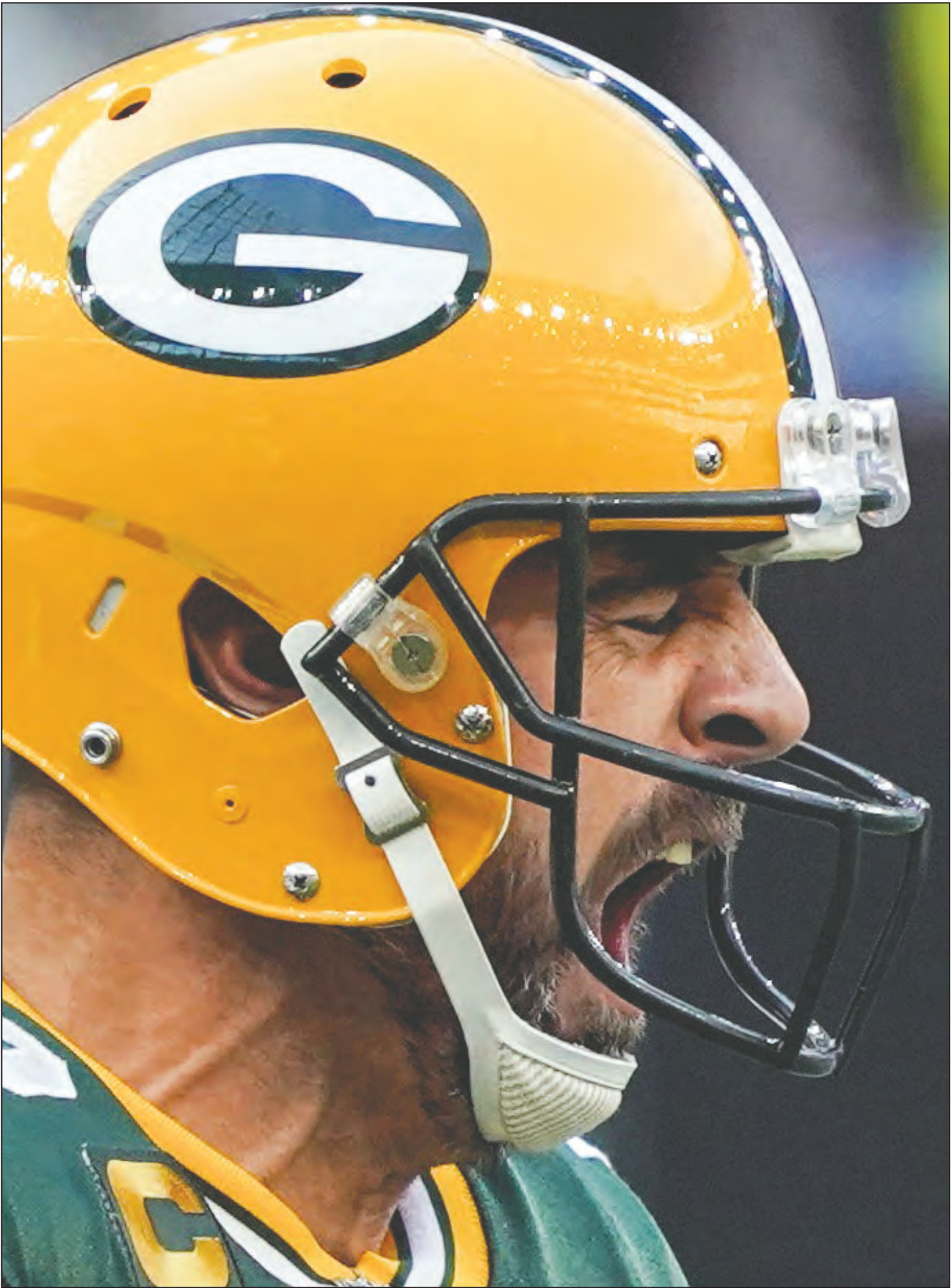
Week 5: Losing in London

Everybody, from team President Mark Murphy to the players in the locker room, was looking forward to the Packers' long-awaited trip to London. Well, everyone other than coach Matt LaFleur.

"I'm not going to give you my honest answer. I'd rather refrain," he said on the Wednesday before the game. "It feels like a Thursday night game for us as coaches just in terms of all the preparation you've got to do. But you just do it, so it is what it is."

Who knows if the team took the direction of the coach, but the Packers laid a London egg, 27-22. Green Bay led 20-10 at halftime before falling apart. Throwing to a rag-tag bunch of receivers, quarterback Daniel Jones completed 21-of-27 passes and led the Giants to five consecutive scoring drives.

On the final play of the game, Rodgers tried to uncork a Hail Mary but was hit from behind by Oshane Ximines. Rodgers suffered a broken thumb on what turned out to be the most important play of the season.



Fans look dejected when it became clear the Giants had the game in hand.



ABOVE: Visibly frustrated, Aaron Rodgers yells after not connecting in Green Bay's Oct. 9 matchup against the New York Giants. The Packers came into the game with a 3-1 record, but a loss in London started a five-game losing streak for Green Bay.

LEFT: Under pressure, Rodgers scrambles to find an open receiver.



A tough visit to the Motor City: Rodgers slid to the ground and ended up face down in the turf against the Detroit Lions on Nov. 6. Rodgers came in with a banged up thumb, and threw three interceptions; in comparison, he threw a total of 4 interceptions in the 2021 season. Five Packers suffered injuries, including Rashan Gary, Aaron Jones, Christian Watson, Romeo Doubs, Eric Stokes, Jon Runyan, Jr. and David Bakhtiari.

Weeks 6-9: Insult and injury

The loss to the Giants kicked off a season-killing five-game losing streak. Back at home, Green Bay was embarrassed 27-10 by the Jets. New York rushed for 179 yards and its defense destroyed the Rodgers-led attack. Green Bay averaged 3 yards per carry, gave up four sacks and went a combined 5-of-20 on third and fourth down. It was so bad that LaFleur tried to find solace in a goal-line stand at the end of a 13-play, 6½-minute scoring drive that iced the game.

“That was very humbling when you’re in your own building and you get taken like that and lose by three scores,” LaFleur said. “We’re in a pretty bad predicament right now.”

Then came a rare three-game road trip in which they lost

23-21 to the Commanders, 27-17 to the Bills and 15-9 to the Lions.

The loss to Detroit was rock bottom. Rodgers threw three interceptions — one intended for left tackle David Bakhtiari — and outside linebacker Rashan Gary suffered a torn ACL. The Packers were one of the healthiest teams in the NFL over the totality of the season but Gary was one of the most irreplaceable players on the roster.

“I’ve been counted out many times in my life as have many of my teammates, and I hope we just dig deep and find a way,” Rodgers said. “We will truly be underdogs for many games moving forward. Hopefully, we can embrace that.”



New York Jets head coach Robert Saleh, left, and quarterback Zach Wilson, right, smile as they watch a replay of a touchdown against the Packers on Oct. 16.



Matt LaFleur is visibly frustrated as listens to Packers defensive lineman T.J. Slaton explain his penalty as the clock runs down during Green Bay's 27-10 loss to the New York Jets on Oct. 16. The loss to the Jets was the second of Green Bay's five-game losing streak.



Sauce Gardner taunted the Packers by wearing a cheesehead celebrating the Jets upset win over the Packers.



Rodgers finished the season at 39 years old, and celebrates his only running touchdown of the 2022 season in week 17 against the Vikings. Rodgers is the longest-tenured Packer in history at 18 years, celebrates with a mini-version of his iconic “champship belt” celebration, indicating that he still has fuel left in the tank.



ABOVE: Aaron Rodgers embraces Packers alumni Frank Winters. Winters spent 1992-2002 in Green Bay and was the primary center during Brett Favre’s Packers career. Rodgers greeted and embraced many of the alumni attending the halftime ceremony.



RIGHT: Aaron Rodgers and Allen Lazard connected for a touchdown during the Sept. 18 game against the Bears with 32 seconds left in the second quarter, giving them a 24-7 lead at halftime. Packers teammates joined in the celebration of what appeared to be the Ayahuasca tea drinking ceremony.

2022 GREEN BAY PACKERS MILESTONES

Crosby is all-time leading scorer and oldest kicker in Packers history

Kicker Mason Crosby celebrates with Packers punter Pat O'Donnell after hitting a 54-yard field goal to end the first half against the Vikings in Week 17. In the 2022-2023 season, Crosby became the 12th player in NFL history to reach 1,900 points.



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2023 • NEW MEDIA • www.newmedia-wi.com • PAGE 9

Packers decision at quarterback to determine several player's fates

Team could run things back with Rodgers, or get younger with Love

By BILL HUBER
Correspondent

Rather than getting ready for the Super Bowl, the Green Bay Packers are getting ready for a game of dominos.

The first domino is the big one. Will Aaron Rodgers play a 19th NFL season in 2023 or will he retire? The second domino is whether Rodgers will play for the Packers or continue his pursuit of a second Super Bowl championship for another team.

It's that second domino that will determine how the rest of the dominos will fall. If Rodgers returns to Green Bay, it will be because general manager Brian Gutekunst has promised to reload the roster in hopes of finally putting together a team that can deliver play-off success.

"Reloads are a lot of fun because you feel like you're close," Rodgers said recently on The Pat McAfee Show.

If Gutekunst believes the current roster has run its course, it probably will lead to a mutual parting of the ways between the legendary quarterback and the iconic franchise and the passing of the baton to Jordan Love.

"If there's a rebuild going on, I won't be a part of that," Rodgers told McAfee.

It's a statement with two meanings. One, the 39-year-old quarterback doesn't want to be part of a team that's young and probably a little ways from returning to contender status. Two, if the team is going to go young, it might as well go young at quarterback with the player it selected in the first round in 2020.

Here's how the decision at quarterback might impact decisions at other positions.

Running back

Aaron Jones set career highs for rushing yards and receptions in 2022. His cap number will swell to a bit more than \$20 million in 2023.

Gutekunst has signaled he'll restructure Jones' contract, a continuation of the team's credit-card approach to the salary cap.

Verdict: Regardless of who's at quarterback, Jones will be a focal point of the

Packers' offense.

Receiver

Veterans Allen Lazard and Randall Cobb are scheduled to be free agents. Lazard led the team in receptions and yards while Cobb remained a viable threat on third down.

Verdict: With Rodgers, both of the veterans might be back, though in smaller roles with the ascension of Christian Watson and Romeo Doubs. Without Rodgers, the Packers could keep Lazard because of his talent, blocking and mentorship. Four of the five receivers under contract for 2023 were rookies last season and the fifth was a practice-squad player with zero career catches.

Offensive line

After missing the 2020 playoffs, almost all of the 2021 season and the start of 2022 with the knee injury sustained on Dec. 31, 2020, former All-Pro left tackle David Bakhtiari provided 11 high-level starts. The 31-year-old has a cap number of \$28.85 million, a huge number born of past restructures. With a post-June 1 release, they'd create \$17.29 million of cap savings.

Verdict: Regardless of the quarterback, he'll need blind-side protection. Even with limited practice time, Bakhtiari did not allow a sack in 2022. "I would hope so," Gutekunst said when asked if Bakhtiari would be back. "We're hopeful that he's cleared some of those injury hurdles that he had the last few years. I thought he got into a really good groove before the appendectomy."

Tight end

Robert Tonyan and Marcedes Lewis are set to hit free agency. Tonyan wasn't as explosive following last year's torn ACL but he led all NFL tight ends in catch percentage for the second time in three seasons. Lewis started all 17 games for the second consecutive season and routinely won his matchup in the run game. He is a revered leader.

Verdict: If Rodgers returns, both tight ends could be back. If nothing else, it would seem Lewis would be



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers reaches for the endzone on a quarterback run during Green Bay's 41-17 victory over Minnesota on Jan. 1.

a slam-dunk re-signing. "A guy like Marcedes Lewis, he's an important cog in the wheel of the locker room and the momentum of the team," Rodgers told McAfee.

"That's a guy I want to finish my career with. If I'm playing, I want that guy next to me."

If Love takes over at quarterback, the Packers could start over at tight end. One of the best draft classes of tight ends in years would allow the Packers to save money and perhaps be better in the long run.

Defense

Defensive linemen Jarran Reed and Dean Lowry and safety Adrian Amos are the three starting defenders who are scheduled to hit free agency. No doubt Rodgers would be interested to see how that side of the ball comes together, but there probably isn't a player the team absolutely must re-sign from his perspective.

Arguably the most important defensive player to retain would be cornerback Keisean Nixon, who came out of nowhere to be the All-Pro kick returner. There's no doubt the Packers would like to keep him, regardless of the quarterback.

Kicker

In year 16, Mason Crosby had a solid season by making 86.2% of his field-goal

attempts.

His kickoffs were the shortest in the league. With Crosby set to hit free agency, the team must determine whether his declining leg strength was due to age (38) or the byproduct of offseason knee surgery curtailing his training.

Verdict: There will be a kicking competition one way or the other. If Rodgers returns, Crosby might be part of it. If Rodgers retires or is traded, look for the Packers to go young.

Conclusion

A fascinating offseason is at hand. Will Rodgers and just about everyone else be back for 2023? Or will Love be directing a youth movement in which the four oldest players on the 2022 roster — Rodgers (39), Lewis (38), Crosby (38) and Cobb (32) — will no longer be in Green Bay?

"This game is about relationships. It's about the players you play off and count on, even if they don't maybe show up huge in the stat book," Rodgers said.

"I want the Randall Cobbs of the world — if he wants to keep playing — in my locker room. Guys you can win with. Allen Lazard, Bobby Tonyan, David Bakhtiari. There's a lot of interesting names that we'll see if there's desire to re-sign certain guys that are glue guys in the locker room."



Miami Dolphins defensive back Kader Kohou watches as Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers signs the ball that Kohou intercepted on Dec. 25.

2022 GREEN BAY PACKER MILESTONES



Hall of Fame selects Packer standout Leroy Butler in 2022

JAN. 12, 1997: NEXT UP, SUPER BOWL - Future Hall of Fame defensive back Leroy Butler (right) had six tackles and a fumble recovery to help the Packers to a 30-13 win in the NFC title game over visiting Carolina. Right, Green Bay's former safety and Hall of Famer LeRoy Butler cries as he is honored at halftime in the game against the Tennessee Titans on Nov. 17. While Green Bay lost the game, seeing Butler enshrined into the ring of honor in Lambeau Field was enough enjoyment for some of the fans.





Green Bay Packers kicker Mason Crosby celebrates after hitting a game-winning field goal in overtime against the Dallas Cowboys on Nov. 13. In the 2022-23 season, Crosby hit two game-winning field goals in overtime.

Weeks 10-12: One-hit wonder

With a five-game losing streak, the Packers welcomed Mike McCarthy's surging Cowboys — who were coming off a bye — to Lambeau Field. In what looked like a season-turning game, the Packers won 31-28 in overtime.

Watson dropped two passes early in the game but scored on a 58-yard touchdown bomb in the second quarter. He punctuated the play with a backflip, an appropriate celebration because the play flipped the season for the rookie and the team.

Watson added touchdowns of 39 and 7 yards as Green Bay rallied from a two-touchdown deficit in the fourth quarter. Mason

Crosby's 28-yard field goal won the game.

"It feels amazing," Watson said. "Just to have, obviously, the guys rallying around me, picking me up. Obviously, not the way I wanted to start but they were in my ear all game. It's not about how you start, it's about how you finish. I think that was huge for me, just in terms of me staying in it. And when more opportunities came my way, I wasn't down. I was cool, calm cool and collected."

When the Packers won Super Bowl XXXI but lost in Super Bowl XXXII, then-general manager Ron Wolf called their championship season a "fart in the wind." And so



Under Construction: Loyal fans weather five straight losses and optimistically cheer the team to a victory over Mike McCarthy and the Cowboys.

was the victory over Dallas. The Packers lost 27-17 at home against Tennessee and 40-33 at Philadelphia.

The loss to the Eagles chal-

lenged the loss to the Lions as the low point of the season. Philadelphia rushed for 363 yards — 157 by quarterback Jalen Hurts and 143 by running back Miles Sanders — and Rodgers suffered injured ribs and was unable to finish the game.

With a 4-8 record and with the four-time MVP quarterback dealing with a new injury, was it time to make a change?

"Aaron's the starting quarterback," LaFleur said a day later.

How about at defensive coordinator with embattled Joe Barry?

"We're not going to go down that road," LaFleur said. "If I thought there was an issue there, then I would certainly, we'd make the change."



Green Bay Packers fans hold up a sign signifying that the team is under construction during Green Bay's Nov. 13 matchup against the Dallas Cowboys. Fans became increasingly frustrated throughout the season, as Green Bay had lost five straight games before beating Dallas in overtime.



Christian Watson became the fourth rookie Packer to have a three touchdown catch game. Dallas head coach Mike McCarthy returns to Green Bay for the first time since he was the coach of the team. In McCarthy's return, Green Bay won 31-28 in overtime for what could be the final time that McCarthy and Rodgers meet together or against each other in a game.





Green Bay Packers defenders get together and celebrate after forcing a turnover against the Miami Dolphins in a matchup between the teams on Dec. 25.

Weeks 13-17: The unthinkable comeback

When the Packers were beaten by the Eagles on Nov. 27, their record fell to 4-8 and they were given a 2% chance of making the playoffs from ESPN Stats & Information.

Even that number seemed to need a “Naked Gun”-style qualifier, when Detective Nordberg was given a 50% chance of living but “only a 10% chance of that.” How on earth could the Packers win their last five games after losing seven of their last eight?

And, effectively four games behind the Washington Commanders and sitting in 11th place in the NFC, how could all those teams ahead of them in the standings lose enough games?

“There was something in there that had hope, but it was a fool’s hope at the time,” Rodgers said before week 18.

The first win came at Chicago, a 28-19 verdict in which the Packers needed to outscore the worst team in the NFC 18-0 in the fourth quarter. An awe-inspiring victory it was not, but the walls separating the locker room from the interview room at Soldier Field couldn’t contain the celebration.

“That was huge,” LaFleur said. “I think momentum is a real thing in this league and when it’s not going good for you, it could be easy to fold the tents. We never want to allow that type of thinking to come into your brains, but I do think there’s a human element to it, as well. But just super-proud of our guys to resilient and truly embody and embrace that one-play mindset and battle right to the end and give the energy and the attitude and the effort that we need to come out on top.”

Next, the Packers beat the Rams 24-12, the defending champions a shell of themselves with quarterback Matthew Stafford, receiver Cooper Kupp and defensive tackle

Aaron Donald among the stars who were out with injuries.

The big test came the following week, a Christmas Day showdown at the Dolphins, a slumping team but one that had been potent at home. Green Bay won 26-20 by ending three consecutive fourth-quarter drives with interceptions.

A day earlier, three teams ahead of Green Bay in the playoff standings — the Commanders, Seahawks and Lions — lost.

“I’d like to be, you know, 10-5, 11-4, but considering where we were a few weeks ago, a lot of has happened in our favor,” Rodgers said afterward.

“All the games that needed to go a certain way went a certain way. Now, there’s obviously much left, but again, we’ve played meaningful games in December, we won all three of those. Now we’re playing meaningful games in January, and we’ve got to win those.”

The Packers earned their signature win over the Vikings in week 17, a 41-17 romp highlighted by early touchdowns by Keisean Nixon on a kickoff return and Darnell Savage on an interception return.

With the Commanders losing again, Green Bay suddenly controlled its playoff destiny headed into a primetime showdown against Detroit.

From game 13 through game 16, the Packers were third in points scored (119) and ninth in points allowed (68). Two season-long weaknesses, run defense and takeaways, made leaps-and-bounds improvement, with Green Bay ranking ninth in rushing yards allowed and first in turnovers.

What about all those people who counted out the Packers after the Philadelphia game?

“They don’t know how to count. Never count us out,” running back Aaron Jones said.



Defensive lineman Kenny Clark completes a sack of Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa in a matchup between the teams on Dec. 25. Green Bay’s defense was a force to be reckoned with, as it recorded two sacks and four turnovers.



Green Bay Packers defensive linemen get together and celebrate after forcing a turnover against the Miami Dolphins in a matchup between the teams on Dec. 25.

NOT SINCE 2011



Green Bay Packers kick returner Keisean Nixon throws his arms in the air as he celebrates a long kick return for a touchdown against the Minnesota Vikings on Jan. 1. Nixon was one of the stand out players from the season, as he finished the season with 1,009 kick returning yards — the most in the NFL the past season.

Week 18: Flop in the finale

Everything was in Green Bay’s favor for the NFL’s made-for-TV Game 272.

The Packers had momentum with their winning streak. They were at home, in the cold, against a dome team. The Lions were eliminated not long before kickoff. Instead, Detroit won 20-16.

Like last year’s divisional-round loss to San Francisco, the game turned on a fumble by one of the team’s best players. Against the 49ers, it was tight end Marcedes Lewis. Against the Lions, it was Jones. Coming just before halftime, the Packers were on their way to at least a 12-3 lead. Instead, Detroit took advantage and cut the margin to 9-6 at intermission.

With everything on the line, the Lions outgained the Packers 118-14 in the fourth quarter. With a chance to deliver one of those legendary performances, Rodgers was 2-of-6 for 12 yards with one interception in the final period.

“It’s going to be a big offseason for us, obviously, to make sure we all improve,” LaFleur’s face red with equal parts cold and anger. “We’ve all got to look inward and figure out what it is we’ve got to do to get better, because I know the expectations here are very high and they should be. And just really disappointed right now.”

The interception, a desperation heave to Watson on third down, might wind up being Rodgers’ final pass in a Packers uniform.

“I have a lot of pride in what I’ve accomplished in this league,” Rodgers said. “In a lot of ways, I don’t feel like we should have been even in this position with some of the games we lost, especially in that stretch of five games, but this is the reality we’re in. Obviously, we didn’t get it done tonight. You want to go out winning the Super Bowl, but it’s very rare that ever actually gets to happen.

“You don’t want to lose your last game and miss out on the playoffs, but this has been a great position and a really tough business. It doesn’t always end with rainbows for everybody.”



Detroit Lions rookie defensive lineman Aidan Hutchinson completes a sack on Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers on Jan. 8. Hutchinson harassed Rodgers all game, compiling two sacks and helping to knock Green Bay out of the playoffs.



Detroit Lions rookie defensive linemen Aidan Hutchinson celebrates in front of Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers after sacking the 39-year-old on Jan. 8.



Aaron Jones, a tough and consistent bright spot in the Packers 2022 losing season, delivers a stiff arm during the Packers Christmas Day victory against the Dolphins. The victory improved the Packers record to 7-8 and continued hope in making the playoffs with two games remaining.

Reflecting on my first year covering the Packers

As someone who grew up in Green Bay going to every Packers home game and idolizing Aaron Rodgers, anyone can understand my excitement when I was told that I would covering the Green Bay Packers this season for NEW Media.

The first event that I got to cover was training camp. Training camp in Green Bay is a one-of-a-kind event with fans coming in droves from all over the country just to watch the Packers put together its season scheme. Almost yearly, I was one of those fans. While it's not a divisional game against the Bears or anything, it is interesting and neat to see how an NFL practice is run.

This year though, I got to watch practice from the inside.

First off, I quickly learned that being a fan and being a journalist are two very separate entities. It was very tough not to be able to cheer and high five everyone around me when I saw Rodgers connect with Romeo Doubs down the right sideline for a one-handed catch.

Instead, I snapped a few pictures and quickly scribbled down some illegible notes and focused my view on Jordan Love taking the next snap. While obviously jotting down notes is not nearly as fun as going crazy with the rest of the fans, that didn't really matter to me. I was wide-eyed watching my favorite athletes and was ready to meet and talk to some players.

A cool perk to covering the Packers is getting the opportunity to be in the locker room and having conversations with the players. That was absolutely the highlight of the season for me.

The interesting part about having these conversations with players is being able to see them as real humans, as opposed to pawns in entertainment. I think that oftentimes, fans of the NFL forget that these players have



LUKE REIMER

actual lives and are not really all that different than you and me.

Randall Cobb exemplified this, as instead of only wanting to talk about football, Cobb was interested in who I was. As opposed to football, Cobb asked me about work and my life in general. Cobb has always been seen as one of the most down-to-earth players on the team, and for him to ask me about myself was a pretty neat experience.

During these locker room sessions, I was also able to talk to my childhood hero and idol — Aaron Rodgers. The old adage has always been that you should not meet your heroes, but that wasn't the case for me. I had a good conversation with Rodgers, something that never would have happened if I didn't have a chance to cover the team. Not a lot of people ever get to meet their heroes, but luckily I was able to do so as a 24-year old.

For me as a fan, the season did not go the way that I had hoped. Of course, I want Green Bay to still be alive and vying for a Super Bowl, but to be a journalist in a disappointing season was very fascinating.

Being in that locker room and being a part of those post-game press conferences was depressing over the

course of the season. That is something that I think the average fan does not see. You can watch a press conference and understand the feeling of disappointment after a loss, but seeing Matt LaFleur have to answer questions on why the team has been struggling every week, once again brings that human element to the team.

Another thing that you don't see as a fan is the commitment and attitude that each player and coach take to a game or practice.

It makes sense since playing football is literally the players' professional jobs, but to see Jaire Alexander on the practice field an hour before practice, or to see LaFleur cry tears of joy after beating Dallas, really makes you understand how much of themselves players and coaches put into the team.

I do have to say that I enjoyed my time covering the Packers this season. Whether it was hanging out with the players, watching games from the press box, or meeting Mike Tirico in an elevator at Lambeau, this was an experience that I will never forget.

I remember in high school, after every game I would try to read as many stories and articles as I could about the game and other news surrounding the team. I would come up with my own stories and think of what the touching points would be on each game. Little did I know, 10 years later, I would actually be producing those stories for a wide audience to consume.

I am not sure yet where my career is going to go, but to have experience covering a professional sports team — my favorite football team at that — is invaluable to me.

The journalistic experience was great, but as a die-hard, life-long Green Bay Packers fan, it was all I could have asked for and more.



Veteran Randall Cobb, a leader in the Packers locker room, greets the team prior to the week 5 kickoff against the Giants



Aaron Rodgers gets prepared with a big smile as the Packers open the season in Minnesota on Sept. 11. Coming into the season, Green Bay had the fifth best odds to win the Super Bowl, behind the Buffalo, Tampa Bay, Kansas City and Los Angeles.



AJ Dillon, a key player, had 186 rushing attempts and 28 receptions during the 2022 season.



Jaire Alexander, a 2022 second team All Pro, chases down former teammate Equanimeous St. Brown during the Packers victory in Chicago. Alexander was a standout throughout the 2022 season.



Robert Tonyan signals first down during the Packers second half come from behind victory on Christmas Day against the Dolphins.

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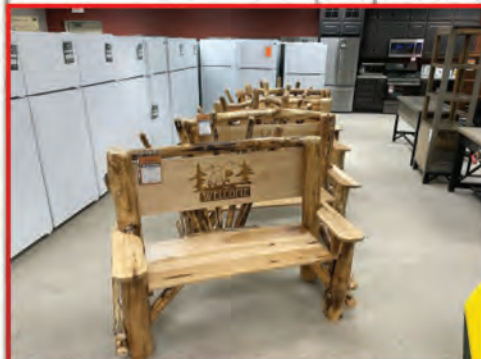
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