



BRIAN GUTEKUNST



ED POLICY

Green Bay Packers President Ed Policy completed his first season and committed contract extensions to general manager Brian Gutekunst and head coach Matt LaFleur, despite a disappointing end to the 2025 season.

Signed and sealed: Can they deliver?

Pressure on leadership after losing last 5 games

By JACOB WESTENDORF Green & Gold Express

The Green Bay Packers are running it back. After collapsing in the Wild Card round a season ago against the Chicago Bears, team President Ed Policy decided to extend the contracts of head coach Matt LaFleur and general manager Brian Gutekunst.

Now, the pressure is on to win and prove Policy right.

The Packers looked like a team poised to compete for a Super Bowl when they were 9-3-1, ahead by two scores against the eventual one-seed in the AFC, Denver Broncos.

The season changed dramatically from there. Zach Tom (now Zach Bako-Bewele) and Micah Parsons were both lost for the season with significant knee injuries. The Packers collapsed at Denver and did not win another game the rest of the year. Now, they need to figure out a way to win without Parsons for at least the first month of the season.

What's the biggest key to that? Winning within the division.

After a disastrous 1-5 record in 2024 in division



Green Bay Packers head coach Matt LaFleur is tasked with bringing the team back after losing five straight games to end the 2025 season, including a playoff loss to the Bears. The 2025 campaign changed dramatically after Zach Tom (now Zach Bako-Bewele) and Micah Parsons were both lost for the season with significant knee injuries. The Packers collapsed at Denver and did not win another game the rest of the year.

play, the Packers rebounded to a respectable 4-2 last year. They easily could have been 6-0 had it not been for kicking away a game in Chicago and not trying to win against Minnesota in the final week of the season.

How are they going to navigate the first month of the season without

Parsons with just one division game on the schedule? That could shape how the rest of their season goes.

The New York Jets and Atlanta Falcons could be two of the worst teams in football this year. Green Bay faces them after a Week 1 date in Minnesota.

Tampa Bay follows

before the toughest stretch of the year.

October includes home games against Chicago, Dallas and Carolina sandwiched around a road date with the Lions.

The good news is that Parsons should be back to full capacity by some point during the aforementioned stretch. The

Packers will desperately need him. They were one of the worst defenses in football without him in what was a five-game losing streak to end the 2025 season.

The biggest problem with getting on board with the Packers for the 2026 season is how 2025 ended.

When the 2025 season

ended, they had questions at offensive line, cornerback and head coach.

Now, they have questions at offensive line, cornerback and head coach.

At the top of the organizational food chain, it certainly felt like the LaFleur

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Daniel Whelan has been a standout punter. Rookie Trey Smack finished preseason with a perfect record on field goals and extra points.. Special teams has been a perennial challenge for the Packers. New special teams coach Cam Achord joined the Packers following the surprise resignation of Rich Bisaccia.

2026 opening day roster raises more questions than answers

By JACOB WESTENDORF Green & Gold Express

The NFL season is upon us, which leads us to look around NFL rosters and wonder who is new to the team and how they'll help their teams reach the next step.

In Green Bay, most of those new players for the 2026 season are rookies with an added twist.

When the Packers' season ended, they were

missing who were arguably three of their four best players.

Zach Bako-Bewele, Micah Parsons and Tucker Kraft all missed at least most of December and the team's 31-27 playoff loss to the Chicago Bears.

Those three will be back on the field at some point this season, with two of them potentially as soon as Week 1.

How are those players going to perform?

Brandon Cisse

Cisse was the team's second-round pick, and the highest investment the team has made in a cornerback since they drafted Eric Stokes in the first round of the 2021 draft.

Cisse was far and away Green Bay's best defensive back during training camp. The Packers are typically a team that slow plays their rookies but appear to be ready to feed their second-round pick to the wolves

as soon as Week 1.

Chris McClellan

Speaking of rookies likely to be slow played, third-round pick Chris McClellan could certainly apply here. McClellan had a good training camp, but he's caught at what is arguably the deepest position on the roster. The Packers kept seven

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era had run its course during a funereal press conference that he gave in the aftermath of the Wild Card loss to the Bears.

Usually, when a coach has reached the end of his tenure, it's obvious. The end of Mike McCarthy's tenure in Green Bay, for example, was obvious.

Perhaps LaFleur will prove his critics wrong and help the Packers rebound, and prove worthy of the mission to bring the Packers back to Super Bowl glory. With the way last season ended, color me skeptical.

There is an easy path to seeing LaFleur rebounding. He's been one of the winningest coaches since taking the job in Green Bay in 2019. The bigger question is whether he has enough to work with

in key spots.

The aforementioned problems on the offensive line and at cornerback are not going anywhere.

For all the handwringing during the offseason about Keisean Nixon, he's still starting. The alleged upgrade from him is a rookie who has flashed but is still a rookie.

Can a defense make stops without quality cornerback play? Relying on Parsons to cover up some of the major warts in the secondary is likely foolish in a season where he's returning from injury. As great as Parsons is, he cannot do it all alone, and was often asked to do so a season ago.

On the offensive line, the Packers have stability at two positions, and they're both players who

are playing new positions.

Jordan Morgan's natural position is left tackle, but he's starting there primarily for the first time in his pro career. Sean Rhyan moved to center last season and will be the pivot man for the offensive line this season.

The rest of the group has been a mess throughout training camp. Aaron Banks has struggled with knee tendinitis. Zach Bako-Bewele still has uncertainty surrounding his status.

The starter at right guard is Jacob Monk. Monk has one start in two seasons, and it came in last year's regular season finale against Minnesota.

The Packers have plenty of strengths. Jordan Love gives them a puncher's chance in every game.



Veteran special teams coach Cam Achord brings a new level of optimism to the Packers. Previously, he had coaching experience with the New England Patriots and New York Giants.

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defensive tackles following training camp. McClellan could be someone who plays at nose tackle or moves around the defensive line. That would be McClellan's best bet to finding his way onto the field early.

Dani Dennis-Sutton

Dennis-Sutton may have been the most exciting of all Green Bay's draft choices, because it still feels wrong that he was available at the end of the fourth round when Green Bay picked him.

Dennis-Sutton did not make his preseason debut until the final game of the preseason, but he did not waste any time making an impression, recording a sack on his seventh snap of the preseason. He created havoc in the backfield for most of the night and looked like a man among boys.

That is a positive development in a game like that one, because Dennis-Sutton is not going to be facing backup offensive linemen anymore. He'll be one of Green Bay's rotational edge rushers early in the season while they wait for Parsons to return. While Parsons is on the mend, however, Dennis-Sutton will have a chance to win a job as the first guy off the bench once Parsons is back in

the lineup.

Jager Burton

Much like Evan Dietrich-Smith or JC Tretter, Jager Burton has worked his way into the team's primary swingman on the interior of the offensive line. Burton is the primary backup at center, so he'll find his way into the lineup if Sean Rhyan were to miss time with an injury. Before that, however, he could find himself filling in as early as Week 1 at left guard.

Aaron Banks has been struggling with a knee injury throughout the offseason, and the Packers are unsure if he'll be able to play a full game. If he can't, Burton is the next man up.

Trey Smack

Smack was one of the biggest stories of the draft because of the move the Packers made to get him. He also became the biggest story of the offseason, because he was money in the bank during games.

Smack did not miss a kick in exhibition play. He made multiple kicks of more than 50 yards. The Packers were preaching patience with their rookie kicker as he struggled early in the spring, but Smack has proven them right over his first big audition. His next test will be



Micah Parsons, left, and Tucker Kraft are recovering from ACL injuries. Kraft returned to the field and is expected to play Week 1 against Minnesota. Parsons "optimistically" could return as soon as Week 5 against Chicago.



making a kick in a game that matters.

The Packers have given away far too many points in big games in recent years. They have either had a kick blocked or missed a kick in every playoff game since 2021. That's a big reason why Smack was brought to Green Bay.

Tucker Kraft

Kraft has checked every box this offseason and says he'll be active for a full workload against the Minnesota Vikings. The only thing that is worth monitoring with Kraft is his contract situation. Kraft still does not have a new contract in place, with his current deal set

to expire at the end of the 2026 season.

The Packers and Kraft have both insisted that getting a deal done is a top priority for them.

On the field? Kraft is their best offensive player and looked excellent during training camp. He should be someone that Love and LaFleur can both rely on when the offense hits a lull.

Micah Parsons

Parsons is one of the biggest variables of the season. He's currently on the PUP list, which knocks him out for the first four games of the season. His practice window, however, opens after the second game of the season. If

Parsons starts practicing after two games, he could be back in limited capacity as soon as Week 5 against the Chicago Bears. It's also possible that he continues to rehab beyond the month of October.

There's no real timetable that has been given at this point, but Parsons is eager to return and will be pushing to return to play as soon as he can.

Zach Bako-Bewele

Of the three injured returners, Bako-Bewele's return appears to be the one that is the most uncertain. He could play in Week 1. He could have to rotate out of the lineup with Anthony Belton.

Everything is unclear at

the moment, which gives the Packers even more instability with the rest of their offensive line.

In a perfect world, the Packers want to build around their two offensive tackles with Bako-Bewele on the right and Morgan on the left. Green Bay's offense is significantly better when Bako-Bewele is on the field, so they need him to play and play up to his previous standard.

Josh Jacobs

Most teams hope the offseason can end on a good note, but things ended on a sour note in Green Bay. Jacobs was placed on the commissioner's exempt list due to two charges that were filed against him.

Jacobs' availability is unknown at this point. The league is reviewing his case and will likely levy some discipline against him. The Packers, to this point, have given no indication they're going to release him.

Behind Jacobs, the run game is pretty inexperienced. Marshawn Lloyd is talented but has been unavailable. Chris Brooks and Kaleb Johnson have limited to no experience in Green Bay.

The lack of stability in the run game could cause Matt LaFleur to put more of a burden on Jordan Love's shoulders until the day that Jacobs returns.

GREEN BAY PACKERS AT MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Time and date: Sunday, Sept. 13
Location: U.S. Bank Stadium
TV: CBS
Radio: Flagship WRIT-FM, Milwaukee, 95.7. Packers Radio Network includes WRLO-FM Antigo, 105.3; WMJQ-FM, Clintonville, 92.3; WIXX-FM, Green Bay, 101.1; WLST-FM, Marinette, 95.1; and WSAU Wausau, 550 AM and 95.1 FM
2025 records: Packers 9-7-1, Vikings 9-8
History: The Vikings and Packers have a rivalry that dates all the way back to 1961. The Packers lead the all-time series 67-61-3.

The last time these two teams met in a game of significance, the Packers won 23-6 in a relatively non-descript game offensively. Emanuel Wilson had the first 100-yard rushing performance for the season. Micah Parsons and Devonte Wyatt were dominant up front as the Packers' defense tormented JJ McCarthy from the opening snap of the game.
The second game of the season between the two teams was a glorified preseason game. The Packers started Clayton Tune, who was released after the game. Any significant contributor was left on the bench in the

name of getting healthy for the playoffs.
Matt LaFleur has struggled a little more with the Vikings in his career.
Coaches: Packers, Matt LaFleur, eighth season, 75-39-1. Vikings, Kevin O'Connell, fifth season, 43-24.
Packers Schedule
Sunday, Sept. 13, at Minnesota, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Sunday, Sept. 20, at NY Jets, noon, FOX
Thursday, Sept. 24, vs. Atlanta, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 4, at Tampa Bay, noon, FOX

Sunday, Oct. 11, vs. Chicago, 3:25 p.m., FOX
Sunday, Oct. 18, vs. Dallas, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Sunday, Oct. 25, at Detroit, 3:25 p.m., FOX
Thursday, Oct. 29, vs. Carolina, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 8, at New England, 3:25 p.m., FOX
Sunday, Nov. 15, vs. Minnesota, noon, FOX
Week 11 BYE
Wednesday, Nov. 25, at LA Rams, 7 p.m., Netflix
Sunday, Dec. 6, at New Orleans, noon, FOX
Sunday, Dec. 13, vs. Buffalo, 7:20 p.m., NBC

Sunday, Dec. 20, vs. Miami, noon, FOX
Friday, Dec. 25, at Chicago, noon, Netflix
Monday, Jan. 4, vs. Houston, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Week 18, vs. Detroit, TBD
NFL Schedule
Wednesday, Sept. 9
New England at Seattle, 7:20 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 10
San Francisco at LA Rams (Melbourne, Australia), 7:35 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 13
New Orleans at Detroit, noon
Tampa Bay at Cincinnati, noon
Baltimore at Indianapolis,

noon
Cleveland at Jacksonville, noon
NY Jets at Tennessee, noon
Buffalo at Houston, noon
Atlanta at Pittsburgh, noon
Chicago at Carolina, noon
Green Bay at Minnesota, 3:25 p.m.
Miami at Las Vegas, 3:25 p.m.
Arizona at LA Chargers, 3:25 p.m.
Washington at Philadelphia, 3:25 p.m.
Dallas at NY Giants, 7:20 p.m.
Monday, Sept. 14
Denver at Kansas City, 7:15 p.m.

MOMENTS

FEELING THE MOMENT ON THE HOME FIELD



22 CONSECUTIVE YEARS

For more than two decades, at least one undrafted free agent has been on the Green Bay Packers rosters for Week 1. Wide receiver J. Michael Sturdivant, who finished his college career at Florida and also spent time at Cal and UCLA, made the Green Bay Packers initial 53-man roster this year, extending the streak to 22 years. The streak dates to 2005. Sturdivant cemented his place in Green Bay's final preseason game against Arizona on Aug. 28, pulling in six catches for 112 yards and a touchdown.



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MOMENT

FAMILY TIME FOR PARSONS



FAMILY NIGHT

Moments of on-field joy and celebration are what Parsons dreams about as he grinds away on his rehab, a nine-month process that will get him back on the field most likely in October sometime, after the 2026 season’s first handful of games. In the interim he’s had plenty of time to ponder what this difficult chapter will mean within the full story of his career. First and foremost, it’s the type of obstacle he’s never faced before. Parsons became the first NFL player since sacks became official in 1982 to post at least a dozen sacks in each of his first five seasons. He earned four All-Pro honors and five Pro Bowl selections along the way. Now, even the most mentally tough player many of his teammates have encountered, who trains beyond the point of exhaustion and will play every snap of a 15-play drive without thinking twice, admits there’s natural doubt as to whether he’ll be the same player again. But he doesn’t let it linger.