

## Out of position and on the clock

Scrambling for answers, Green Bay has no line or running game

By **LUKE REIMER**  
Green & Gold Express

The Packers offense once again sputtered out, as the Atlanta Falcons dismantled Green Bay by a score of 35-14 at Lambeau Field on Sept. 24.

The loss for the Packers gives Green Bay its first home opener loss in the last 11 seasons. This loss also marks the first time the Packers have started a season 1-2 since 2014.

The Atlanta Falcons rode a strong run game to the victory, with its superstar running back Bijan Robinson finishing the game with 194 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 29 carries. Backup Brian Robinson also added 50 yards and a touchdown on 10 rushes.

While Robinson is an elite talent at the running back position, the 242 rushing yards given up by the Packers defense appears to be a bit of an outlier, given that the team had only given up 174 rushing yards through the first two weeks.

"Obviously (Bijan Robinson) is a good running back, which isn't an excuse," said Packers linebacker Isaiah McDuffie. "I think we had a great plan; it is just about execution at the end of the day."

The game looked like



**What's the plan?** Packers President Ed policy, general manager Brian Gutekunst and coach Matt LaFluer had high hopes (and new contracts) to begin the year. Instead, the season has given way to a disastrous start. An embarrassing home opener leaves the Packers at the bottom of the division with many roster questions.

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it was going to go Green Bay's way early, as Falcons quarterback Michael Penix, who was seeing his first start of the season, threw an interception to Xavier McKinney on the fourth play of the game. Even though the Packers were not able to do anything with the strong field position, the Packers got on the board first on the back of Christian Watson's fourth touchdown reception of the season.

Facing third-and-11 on the Falcons ensuing drive, Packers pass rusher Brenton Cox forced heavy pressure on Penix, causing an incompleteness, but a

questionable roughing the passer call gave Atlanta a first down. That first down set up a 55-yard Bijan Robinson rush before he finished the drive off with a touchdown.

More than just giving up a touchdown on the drive, the roughing the passer call seemed to take the wind out of Green Bay's sails, as from that point on, Atlanta outscored Green Bay 35-7.

As a whole, the Falcons totaled 498 total yards, compared to Green Bay's 328 as the Packers were only able to total 17

RECAP, continued on page 2



**Banged and bruised,** franchise quarterback Jordan Love has been pressured more than any other NFL quarterback this season.

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## CELEBRATING 1996, WILL THE PACK BE BACK IN 2026?

By **JACOB WESTENDORF**  
Green & Gold Express

Green Bay travels to Florida to take on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in a Week 4 matchup.

**Packers offense vs. Buccaneers defense**

Can someone, anyone stand in the way of a defender who wants to hit Jordan Love? Green Bay's offense has been downright putrid since their hot start in Minnesota, and their offensive line has been one of the biggest reasons why.

There is no white knight coming to save this group. On defense, the Packers have Micah Parsons on their way back, which should make them better. There are rarely, if ever, good offensive linemen available at this point in the season.

The Packers would settle for below average at this point. According to Next Gen Stats, the Packers allowed 15 quick



**Celebrating the 1996 Super Bowl victory,** MVP Desmond Howard and his teammates left the fans yearning for a return to the championship tradition.

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pressures to the Atlanta Falcons on Sept. 24. That's the second most in a game this season. The most, was the 17 they allowed against Minnesota in Week 1.

Love is under siege to the point where it is affecting his play. He's missing throws when he has time, because he is

anticipating getting hit.

Green Bay's run game is doing nothing to take pressure off of their passing game as well. The Packers have their least amount of rushing yards through three games since 1933. They have been historically awful without Josh Jacobs in

the backfield. Marshawn Lloyd, Chris Brooks and Kaleb Johnson all have done nothing to assert themselves as a leading man in the backfield. Too many yards are left on the field even when a play is blocked up appropriately.

When they are actually able to get the ball in the air, Christian Watson and Matthew Golden are off to excellent starts this season. Both players scored in Green Bay's 35-14 loss to Atlanta.

Golden was the entire offense for a good portion of the game. The offense does have reasons for hope, but it's hard to envision anything good happening if Love is going to get hit 10 or more times in every game.

The Packers did grab some reinforcements on their offensive line. They signed veteran guard Laken Tomlinson off the Cowboys' practice squad.



**Jordan Love has faced a tough start to the season.** With only one win in three games, the Packers are at the bottom of the division.

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It was 194 times 2 when the Packers lost to the Falcons. Receiver Drake London (5) caught five passes for 194 yards including this 68-yard reception in which he shoves cornerback Brandon Cisse out of the way. Running back Bijan Robinson carried the ball for 194 yards and two touchdowns. His longest run was for 55 yards. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

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rushing yards, while Jordan Love was hit 12 times, sacked once and Atlanta finished with three tackles for a loss.

“I think that we have to continue to work with these guys and try to figure out what we do well, because right now I don’t know what we are doing well offensively,” said Packers head coach Matt LaFleur, on how to fix the offensive line. “I think that we can all see the benefit of having a strong rushing attack – how you can get into normal rhythm on

offense and that will open a lot of things in the passing game, but anytime you drop back (53) times in a game and you have nine rushes, it is usually not going to bode well for you.”

Penix finished the game completing 18-of-25 passes for 256 yards, one touchdown and one interception.

Austin Hooper was on the receiving end of Penix’s touchdown pass, as the tight end finished with 11 yards on two receptions. It was Drake

London though who had his biggest day of the season, recording 194 yards on nine receptions.

In another game where Green Bay’s offense struggled to get going, Love finished the game completing 28-of-53 passes for 312 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

Matthew Golden led the team in receiving in the game, totaling 100 yards and a touchdown on five receptions.

Watson added another 96 yards and a touchdown on seven receptions.

In the run game, Mar-Shawn Lloyd totaled 11 yards on four rushes, while Kaleb Johnson added six yards.

“It is a very disappointing feeling right now, you know how we went out and played today,” said Love. “Like I said, myself to start. A lot of stuff to improve on, to get better at and to look at.”

Because it played on Thursday, Green Bay will get an extra three days of rest before taking on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in a Week 4 matchup.



Bijan Robinson (7) is pushed out of bounds by Javon Bullard after gaining 31 yards on a third quarter run. His 194 total yards is more than the Packers have in their first three games. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

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Will he be ready to start on Sunday? That remains to be seen, but the Packers do not have a lot of answers up front right now, and signing a 34-year-old who struggled last season off a practice squad reeks appropriately of the desperate situation this team is in.

**Packers defense vs. Buccaneers offense**

Baker Mayfield got a contract extension before the season started, and he’s gotten off to a slow start. He threw for just 182 yards against the Cleveland Browns last week, in a game that went into overtime. He has one touchdown pass

and one interception.

When he’s able to get the ball in the air, his best receiver is Emeka Egbuka, who was a candidate for rookie of the year last year but lost out to Carolina Panthers star Tet McMillan.

Green Bay’s defense laid its first egg of the season against the Falcons, as Atlanta piled up more than 500 yards, with Bijan Robinson running around, over and through their hapless defense.

Edgerrin Cooper played his worst game of the season before leaving with a concussion.

The Packers defense gave up 27 unanswered

points and was a big part of suffering what was the most lopsided loss at Lambeau Field in Matt LaFleur’s tenure as the head coach.

**Special teams**

Green Bay’s special teams followed up their best game in what seemed like a decade with a bit of a dud against Atlanta. Their return game was shut down with Skyy Moore having little room to roam against Atlanta’s kick coverage.

Trey Smack made both of his PATs but had an egregious blocked field goal in the first half as the Packers were trying to climb their way back into the game.



Safety Xavier McKinney and the defense celebrate an interception that ended the Falcons’ first drive. GREG MELLIS | GREEN & GOLD EXPRESS

GREEN BAY PACKERS AT TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

**Time and date:** Noon, Sunday, Oct. 4

**Location:** Raymond James Stadium

**TV:** FOX

**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

**2026 records:** Packers 1-2, Buccaneers 0-2.

**History:** In an old school NFC Central battle, these two teams have locked horns 59 times and were in the same division

until the NFL realigned before the 2002 season. The Packers lead the all-time series 34-24-1.

The last time these two teams met came in 2023, when the Bucs came to Lambeau in Jordan Love’s first season as a starter. Baker Mayfield was excellent, accumulating a perfect passer rating on the day as the Bucs won 34-20.

The last time these two teams met in Tampa was in 2022, the final meeting between Aaron Rodgers and Tom Brady. The Packers took an early lead on two touchdown passes from Rodgers to Romeo Doubs and Allen Lazard. Their defense had to hold off

the Bucs late, as they scored a late touchdown to get within 14-12.

Brady’s pass on the potential tying two-point conversion, however, was knocked away and the Packers escaped Tampa with a victory.

**Coaches:** Packers, Matt LaFleur, eighth season, 76-41-1. Buccaneers, Todd Bowles, fifth season, 35-35.

**Packers Schedule**

Sunday, Sept. 13, at Minnesota, L 39-22

Sunday, Sept. 20, at NY Jets, W 20-17 (OT)

Thursday, Sept. 24, vs. Atlanta, L 35-14

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 Thursday, Oct. 1**

Pittsburgh at Cleveland, 7:15 p.m.

**Sunday, Oct. 4**

Indianapolis at Washington (in London), 8:30 a.m.

Dallas at Houston, noon

NY Jets at Chicago, noon

New England at Buffalo, noon

Jacksonville at Cincinnati, noon

Arizona at NY Giants, noon

Tennessee at Baltimore, noon

LA Rams at Philadelphia, noon

Green Bay at Tampa Bay, noon

Miami at Minnesota, 3:05 p.m.

Kansas City at Las Vegas, 3:25 p.m.

Denver at San Francisco, 3:25 p.m.

LA Chargers at Seattle, 3:25 p.m.

Detroit at Carolina, 7:20 p.m.

**Monday, Oct. 5**

Atlanta at New Orleans, 7:15 p.m.

# MOMENTS

ATLANTA 35, GREEN BAY 14



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## BRIGHT SPOT

One of the bright spots so far this season has been defensive end Lukas Van Ness. In the first quarter, he caught Atlanta quarterback Michael Penix in a tight grip and forced Penix into an intentional grounding situation. Green Bay was leading 7-0, but a roughing the passer penalty on the next play helped lead to a Falcons touchdown and a 7-7 game.

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## EYES ON THE BALL

Christian Watson was targeted 10 times and caught seven passes for 96 yards and a touchdown. He was joined by Matthew Golden, who caught five passes for 100 yards and a touchdown. The receivers were a bright spot despite no running game.

HO-CHUNK



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