

Rivalry



Ownership

Ben Johnson and crew a disruptive force in the North

By **LUKE REIMER**
Green & Gold Express

It wasn't pretty, but Green Bay got back in the win column in Florida this past week.

Led by Jordan Love's two touchdown passes, the Green Bay Packers defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 17-14 in Tampa on Oct. 4.

In what has been a recurring scenario for the Packers over the past 10 games, it led its opponent by two scores in the second half. This time though, Green Bay was able to shut the door despite two turnovers in the fourth quarter.

"There were some positive things, but I think that we are never going to be satisfied with scoring 17 points in a game," coach Matt LaFleur said. "That is just not to our standard, and we have to find ways when we have opportunities in the red area to convert. We can't be turning the ball over, can't have penalties."

The major story surrounding the Packers

during the previous week was the three veterans it brought in to help the struggling offensive line. After signing Laken Tomlinson, Mekhi Becton and Kevin Zeitler, it was Tomlinson who was the only one to see the field against the Buccaneers.

Tomlinson, who slotted in at left guard, joined Jordan Morgan at left tackle, Sean Rhyhan at center, Travis Glover at right guard and Anthony Belton at right tackle. The quintet put together the best performance up front for the Packers this season as Love was hit just twice and was not sacked. On top of that, Green Bay registered its best rushing day of the season with six players combining for 86 rushing yards.

"I think the O-Line did a great job today," Love said. "Pass protection. Run game. Obviously just keeping me clean (and) getting me some time. They did a great job and you can feel the difference back there for sure."

RECAP, continued on page 2



Wide receiver Christian Watson and his teammates took one on the chin in the NFC Wildcard game in January. The 31-27 loss to the Bears ended the Packers season.
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OFFENSIVE LINE CHANGES HELP PACKERS REACH .500

By **LUKE REIMER**
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The Packers got a peak at its new offensive line in Week 4 against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, kind of.

In the week leading up to the Week 4 matchup, Packers general manager Brian Gutekunst did his best to remedy the issues on the offensive line, by signing 34-year old Laken Tomlinson, 27-year old Mekhi Becton and 36-year old Kevin Zeitler.

Tomlinson was the only one to see the field against the Bucs, as he logged all 55 offensive snaps at left guard, alongside Jordan Morgan, Sean Rhyhan, Travis Glover and Anthony Belton. Tomlinson's addition to the offensive line, as well as Glover's play at right guard, certainly improved upon Green Bay's recent struggles as Jordan Love was not sacked and the run game totaled a season high 86 yards.

It is encouraging to



Jordan Love had a good game against the Bears in the playoffs, except for the 31-27 final score that sent Green Bay packing for the offseason.

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see the offensive line take the step in the right direction, but with the additions of three veterans who have primarily played guard throughout their careers, the Packers may all of a sudden have too many players for not enough starter spots.

Becton came into the

NFL as a tackle prospect out of the University of Louisville but saw his best days on the interior, winning a Super Bowl with the Philadelphia Eagles while starting at right guard. Becton's signing appears to be more of a depth addition, given his spot on the practice squad.

Zeitler, who has spent most of his career in Cincinnati and Baltimore at right guard, is a familiar name for many Packers fans. Zeitler went to high school at Wisconsin Lutheran before attending college at Wisconsin. He figures to play sooner than later for Green Bay despite not being active for the Week 4 matchup.

"The guy just got here this week," said Packers head coach Matt LaFleur, on not activating Zeitler. "We have to ramp him up. That was our decision. We just have to get him acclimated with what we are doing. I think it would have been pretty unfair to put him in these conditions today with three practices under his belt."

LaFleur went on to say that the team is going to take it day-by-day to evaluate when Zeitler will be ready to play.

Outside of bringing

TAMPA, continued on page 2



Defensive lineman Micah Parsons leans into a conversation with coach Matt LaFleur. Parsons' return is still up in the air, and he did not practice this week.

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RECAP, continued from page 1

Love finished the game completing 22-of-30 passes for 197 yards and the two touchdowns, while also throwing for one interception.

Christian Watson was the leading receiver for the Packers, hauling in three passes for 47 yards. Despite another dropped pass, Tucker Kraft totaled 42 yards and a touchdown on six receptions. Matthew Golden was the other recipient of Love's two touchdown passes as the Texas alum finished the game with 21 yards on three receptions.

In the run game, Kaleb Johnson led the way for the Packers, as he totaled 42 yards on eight carries. Chris Brooks added another 30 yards on four carries, while MarShawn Lloyd totaled 13 yards on seven attempts.

On the Buccaneers side of the ball, undrafted rookie Jalon Daniels, who started at quarterback in place of an injured Baker Mayfield, completed 19-of-27 passes for 148 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions.

Tight end Cade Otton was the leading receiver, totaling 37 yards on four receptions, while veteran wide receiver Chris Godwin added 31 yards on six receptions. It was running back Kenny Gainwell, who caught Daniels' lone touchdown pass.

Bucky Irving headed

the run game for Tampa Bay, totaling 61 yards on 16 carries, while Daniels finished with 55 yards on eight carries. Sean Tucker added a rushing touchdown.

Despite seeming like the better team on paper, Green Bay was up to its old tricks as two turnovers in the fourth quarter almost cost the team its second win of the season.

With just over nine minutes remaining in the game, Buccaneers safety Tykee Smith forced Johnson to fumble, as Green Bay was just five yards away from scoring. Green Bay's defense bailed Johnson out though, forcing Tampa Bay to punt just six plays later.

On Green Bay's next drive, after a 12-yard reception by Lloyd, Love was intercepted by Buccaneers defensive back Jacob Parrish with just under four and a half minutes remaining in the game. Again, the Packers defense was able to get out of the jam, turning the Buccaneers over on downs and essentially icing the win.

While getting back in the win column is certainly a positive, Green Bay may have taken a massive hit, as linebacker Edgerrin Cooper was forced to leave the game with an Achilles injury. After the game, LaFleur was not confident on seeing Cooper back on the field this season.



"I would suspect that, yes," said LaFleur, when asked if Cooper would be out for the season.

The win brings Green Bay's record to 2-2, tying it with the Detroit Lions, who lost to the Carolina Panthers on Sunday Night Football, in the NFC North.

Green Bay will look to add another win to the record, as it takes on the Chicago Bears at Lambeau Field next week.



Above, quarterback Aaron Rodgers salutes the fans at the end of his career in Green Bay. At right, Caleb Williams checks out the scoreboard in his rookie season. Williams will miss the Week 5 matchup against the Packers due to a hamstring injury. His status is on a week-to-week basis.

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TAMPA, continued from page 1

in three veterans, Green Bay still has Aaron Banks when he returns from injury. Given the solid play of Tomlinson, it is going to be tough to move him out of the starting lineup when Banks is ready to return. Given LaFleur's comments, it appears that Zeitler is going to play at some point. Assuming Zeitler slots in at right guard, the Packers will have an interesting decision to make with shuffling the offensive line around when Banks is healthy.

Given that Banks is being paid \$19.25 million per year, the Packers have an incentive for him to play, assuming it does not want that money to be sitting on the bench. Moving

any of the three players to the tackle position is also not ideal, considering the draft investments that Green Bay has put into Morgan and Belton.

One thing is clear though. The first game with a somewhat revamped offensive line worked in Green Bay's favor, as Love came out unscathed and the running game took a step forward. Even if the guard position is overcrowded, the team now at least has some depth if more injuries were to occur. It is unknown yet who will be the five starters on the front against Chicago, but seeing the improvement this past week is something to give Packers fans hope for the future.



The status of Chris Brooks' (30) ankle injury is uncertain, while Matthew Golden (0) is finding success with passes from quarterback Jordan Love (10). Against Tampa Bay, Brooks left the game in the first half, and Golden caught three passes for 21 yards and one touchdown.

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CHICAGO BEARS AT GREEN BAY PACKERS

Time and date: 3:25 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 11
Location: Lambeau Field
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 2-2, Bears 3-1.
History: The Packers lead the historical NFL rivalry against the Bear with a 109-98-6 record (including three postseason

games).

Both of their matchups last year were absolute thrillers, with the Packers and Bears both holding serve at home. Green Bay's scored first blood with a 28-21 victory over the Bears on the strength of three touchdown passes from Jordan Love, and a game-sealing interception from Keisean Nixon.

The second time these two teams met, the Packers led by 10 just before the two-minute warning when disaster struck. Romeo Doubs bobbled an on-side kick, and Caleb Williams threw two touchdown passes on

Chicago's final two possessions, with the finishing blow being struck by DJ Moore.

Coaches: Packers, Matt LaFleur, eighth season, 78-42-1. Bears, Ben Johnson, second season, 14-7.

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, W 17-14
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

Houston at Tennessee, noon
Minnesota at New Orleans, noon
Las Vegas at New England, noon
Cincinnati at Miami, noon
Denver at LA Chargers, 3:05 p.m.
Detroit at Arizona, 3:25 p.m.
San Francisco at Seattle, 3:25 p.m.
Chicago at Green Bay, 3:25 p.m.
Baltimore at Atlanta, 7:20 p.m.
Monday, Oct. 12
Buffalo at LA Rams, 7:15 p.m.

Philadelphia at Jacksonville (in London), 8:30 a.m.
NY Giants at Washington, noon
Cleveland at NY Jets, noon
Indianapolis at Pittsburgh, noon

MOMENTS

OUT FOR THE SEASON



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ANOTHER HUGE LOSS FOR PACKERS

Linebacker Edgerrin Cooper went down in the second half Oct. 4 against Tampa Bay with what was announced as an Achilles injury. He was carted off the field. Coach Matt LaFleur said the injury is “not good” and that he “would suspect” Cooper’s season is over. It’s a significant loss. Cooper has been, along with edge rusher Lukas Van Ness, arguably one of the defense’s top two players this season.

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TIME FOR ANOTHER WIN VS. BEARS

Jordan Love is 4-3 against the Chicago Bears, including a playoff appearance at the end of the 2025 season. In those games, he has thrown for 1,525 yards and 13 touchdowns with two interceptions. In Jan. 10's NFC Wildcard game, Love threw for 323 yards and four touchdowns, but the Packers fell 31-27 after a second-half comeback by Caleb Williams and the Bears.

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