

## SPORTS

## PACKERS



Packers offensive lineman Zach Tom rides the bike of a young Packers fan in the Green Bay Packers DreamDrive on the first day of training camp on Wednesday in Green Bay. SARAH KLOEPPING/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

## Rookies learn quickly why there's never a dull moment on the O-line

**Tom Silverstein**  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY - Green Bay Packers fourth-round pick Zach Tom played mostly left guard during the offseason and was prepared to pick up where he left off in training camp.

That is, until he was told he would be playing left tackle on his first day back.

Welcome to the never-dull world of playing offensive line in Green Bay.

Though Tom had played left tackle his final two seasons at Wake Forest, many NFL scouts saw him as a better fit at guard or center. The Packers left the door open for him to play any position, but when he played mostly one spot during organized team activities, it looked like his future was on the inside.

Not so fast.

The Packers were hoping veteran David Bakhtiari would be ready for training camp after missing all but one game last year while recovering from an ACL tear suffered in late 2020. With him back in his familiar position, they would have Yosh Nij-

man, Cole Van Lanen and eventually Elgton Jenkins (expected back from an ACL tear later in the season) available to back up Bakhtiari.

But it turned out that after resting his left knee during the offseason, Bakhtiari aggravated it at the start of organized team activities in May and needed to have it operated on for a third time. Now, there's no telling when he'll be cleared to practice.

The setback affected Nijman, who after working mostly on the right side in the offseason, was hoping to compete for the starting right tackle job in camp. Instead, he must hold down the No. 1 position on the left side. After being passed over in favor of Billy Turner for the start at left tackle in last year's divisional playoff loss, Nijman still must win over the decision-makers.

"I just know my coach is going to put me in a position where I fit and I'm going to prepare accordingly," Nijman said. "I'm going to prepare every day and have a professional mindset. If you're going to play in the NFL, your confidence level has to be high."

It's possible Tom would have found himself playing left tackle at some point during camp given his experience

there, but instead of competing full-time against Jon Runyan, Jake Hanson and rookie Sean Rhyan for open interior positions, he's stuck filling the void Bakhtiari has left.

It's for the good of the team, but it also could be for the good of the player.

"It's my third year and the first two years I've been here we've had guys playing all over the line," Runyan said. "I mean, last year we had Billy on the right and the year before he's playing left tackle, right tackle and right guard. Elton is playing right tackle, left tackle, center and left guard.

"So, that's something they want to have us do, cross train and be able to play multiple positions. I think that makes us stronger as a unit."

Last year, the Packers started four different players at left tackle, had six different offensive line combinations and didn't have a single lineman play every game at the same position.

In other words, it was business as usual.

The first unit during the opening camp practice Wednesday consisted of Nijman at left tackle, Runyan at left

See PACKERS, Page 2B

## PACKERS CAMP INSIDER

## Rookie receiver Doubs making strong bid for playing time

**Pete Dougherty**  
Green Bay Press-Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY - Thursday's takeaways from Packers training camp:

### Romeo Doubs staking his claim

Romeo Doubs is making an early bid for the playing time at receiver that's up for grabs for the Packers this season.

The fourth-round draft pick has stood out as much as any of the Packers' young players in the first two days of non-padded practice in training camp.

In an extended red-zone period Thursday, Doubs caught two touchdown passes from Aaron Rodgers, along with a slant earlier in practice on which he hung on after taking an unintentional hit by safety Darnell Savage.

On the first touchdown, Doubs caught a fade for an eight-yard touchdown by going over starting cornerback Eric Stokes and plucking the ball off the back of Stokes' helmet. On the second he beat tight coverage by linebacker De'Vondre Campbell on a quick out route for a two-yard touchdown.

That came a day after Doubs had one of the highlight catches of the first day of practice when he went up and caught a 50-50 deep ball from Jordan Love against double coverage.

Doubs did have one obvious bad play Thursday on a Rodgers pass over the middle that caromed off his hands and was intercepted by safety Adrian Amos. Doubs said he made the wrong adjustment on the route so the catch was tougher to make than it should have been.

With Davante Adams and Marquez Valdes-Scantling departing in the off-season, there's a lot of playing time available at receiver for anyone who stands out in camp. With second-round pick Christian Watson and third-year pro Malik Taylor opening camp on injured lists and not yet practicing, the Packers are especially thin at receiver. Among the players getting the most reps with the starters are Allen Lazard, their de facto top receiver, plus Randall Cobb, Juwann Winfree and Amari Rodgers.

Doubs also is working in regularly with the starters and he's off to probably the best start of all of them through two days of practice.

### No shoulder pads until next week

The arcane ramp-up rules for training camp get updated almost yearly, so here's a quick synopsis of them for this camp.

The Packers' first practice, which was Wednesday, was limited by rule to 90 minutes and with helmets as the only football gear. On Thursday the limit was 105 minutes and allowed for helmets and protective shirts. On Friday they can go for as long as two hours but again in helmets and protective shirts.

On Saturday they can add shells to their protective gear - that is, mini-shoulder pads. After a mandatory day off Sunday, they're scheduled to add regular shoulder pads on Monday. And then Tuesday they'll add football pants and thus be in full pads.

See INSIDER, Page 2B

## Expectations high for UW's talented outside linebackers

**Jeff Potrykus**  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Latest in a series of position previews leading up to the Wisconsin Badgers' 2022 training camp.

MADISON - Bobby April III is preparing for his fifth season as Wisconsin's outside linebackers coach.

During his time at UW, he has worked with several individual standouts - including Andrew Van Ginkel, Zack Baun and Nick Herbig, who is preparing for

his junior season.

How does April feel about his unit entering the 2022 season?

"From the top down," April said, "it is the most talent we have had..."

"These guys are all hand selected. In the process of going through the recruitment of all these kids, it is really starting to pan out for them."

Noah Burks, who recorded 4½ sacks and 8½ tackles for loss last season, is the only outside linebacker not back from last season.

The group is led by Herbig, who en-

joyed a solid freshman season in 2020 and was more disruptive last season when he led the team in sacks (nine), finished second in tackles for loss (14½) and third in total tackles (64).

C.J. Goetz, the No. 3 outside linebacker last season, worked with the No. 1 defense in the spring opposite Herbig.

"He is probably our best run-stopper," April said of Goetz. "One of the strongest guys in the group. He's got freak explosion. He just needs to put it all together."

"Understand when to release off

blocks. He is starting to get it. He is getting close."

When Herbig was held out of team drills because of an arm injury, Darryl Peterson took his place. Peterson, 6-foot-1 and 242 pounds, got extensive work in the bowl game and in the spring worked at both field linebacker and boundary linebacker. His likely home appears to be at boundary linebacker, however.

"Darryl is a violent player," April said.

See WISCONSIN, Page 3B