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LEROY BUTLER, HALL OF FAMER



MARK HERTZBERG, SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL TIMES

eRoy Butler is surprised early on the morning of Jan. 27 when a fellow former Green Bay Packer. house in Mount Pleasant to tell him he had been selected for induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. Butler played for only

The Knock came in Mount Pleasant

Packers great was at his in-laws' home when another great knocked

MARK HERTZBERG

Special to The Journal Times MOUNT PLEASANT - The Knock on the front door came as

and military precision.

Green Bay Packers safety did Florida, to deliver the news that not know that the interview was Butler would be named a 2022 door, telling him to do it.

One of Butler's clothing scheduled at 8 a.m., with stealth choices that morning - a Pack- his gold Pro Football Hall of Page C1.

ers sweatshirt - was a good one, Fame blazer, like the one Butler It came as LeRoy Butler was because when he answered the will be wearing during enshrinebeing interviewed in the kitchen door, he saw Charles Woodson, ment ceremonies this summer, of his in-laws' house in Mount a fellow former Packer. Wood-Pleasant early on Jan 27. The son had flown in from Orlando, part of a ruse to keep him occuinductee into the Pro Football • More inside: Packers pied until The Knock. No one in Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, in the family moved to answer the a nationally broadcast show on

was not alone. Four SUVs also

Please see BUTLER, Page A4

quarterback Aaron Rodgers named NFL Most Valuable Player for the fourth time and Woodson, who was wearing second year in a row. Sports, TRICIA HANSON

DA won't charge election officials

But district attorney agrees with sheriff that WEC likely broke the law

ADAM ROGAN

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Saying she didn't have jurisdiction over the matter, Racine County District Attorney Tricia Hanson is declining a request by Sheriff Christopher Schmaling to file charges against five of Wisconsin's six elections commissioners for advising clerks in

2020 not to send election workers into nursing homes.

But in a letter dated Thursday and released Friday, Hanson agrees with Schmaling that the state Elections Commission likely broke the law in telling clerks they could skip the mandatory step of sending in the elections workers after several nursing homes banned them out of concerns

about spreading COVID-19. According to an investigation led by Racine County Sheriff's

Luell Lt. Michael Luell, eight residents of Ridgewood Care Center, a Mount Pleasant nursing home, submitted absentee ballots even though

Please see DA, Page A6

Hanson

■ **More inside:** *Trump backer,* 4 others charged with voter fraud in Wisconsin. Local,



■ Interactive crosswords, sudoku and more

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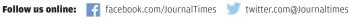
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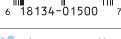
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Butler

From A1

brought Jim Porter, president of the Hall of Fame; reporter Steve Wyche of the NFL Network; and film, lighting, and sound crews, all standing in the driveway in the early-morning cold, waiting to surprise Butler.

A handful of people were in on the ruse, which Julia Burney Witherspoon of the Cops 'N Kids Reading Center, a family friend, helped arrange. Butler's wife, Genesis, had kept the secret for a week.

Butler said his mind was "blank" when he opened the door and saw Woodson: "I didn't wrap my head around why he was there. When I saw everybody, that was shocking."

Woodson addressed him by his team nickname: "Roylee, welcome to the Hall of Fame!"

He had been a finalist in past years. "You never know how you'll react when you get news you've said. "It can be compared to if a young lady wanting a certain guy to marry her and he finally asks. I know what it feels like now ... the longer you're dating ... then all of a sudden, you give up, and then it happens. It's pretty remarkable!"

Member of the All-1990s team

1990-2001. A member of the NFL's 1990s All-Decade Team, he was the first player in league history to have 20 interceptions and 20 sacks in a career. Named to four All-Pro teams, he finished his career with 38 interceptions and 201/2 sacks in 181 regular-season games.

He also invented the Lambeau Leap on Dec. 26, 1993, when he jumped into the stands in the south end zone of Lambeau Field after scoring a touchdown against the then-Los Angeles Raiders.

Butler, 53, grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, a Dallas Cowboys fan from the age of 5. "When I was drafted (in 1990 as a second round pick from Florida State), I had to learn about the (Packers) fan base and history. It was night in New Orleans. the best decision they ever that the fans are shareholders. I like that kind of

history. "It is truly amazing, the fans. In Green Bay they don't have (professional) basketball or baseball. It's almost like a college football town, like a university. It's just the Packers. They wear it year-round."

A difficult childhood

On Jan. 26, 1997, he helped bring a Super Bowl Packers fans. He reflected



MARK HERTZBERG PHOTOS, SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL TIMES

been expecting," Butler LeRoy Butler reacts after his wife, Genesis, tells him that she has known for a week about the plan to surprise him with the Pro Football Hall of Fame news.



Butler played for the Former Green Bay Packers football star LeRoy Butler tries Green Bay Packers from on fellow former Packer Charles Woodson's Pro Football Hall of Fame ring. Later this year, Butler will have a Hall of Fame ring of his own.



Former Green Bay Packers football star LeRoy Butler wipes his eye on Jan. 27 in Mount Pleasant upon learning he's being inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.



Former Green Bay Packers football star LeRoy Butler reacts as he is filmed by the NFL Network and Pro Football Hall of Fame after he was surprised early Thursday January 27, 2022 when his former teammate Charles Woodson came to Butler's in-laws' house in Mount Pleasant to tell him that he was selected to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

"Why are you all here? Players don't do that.' We would just drive by a church

and just go in there. No one knew. We just sat in the back. Then they started to

thought it was crazy, but you can be a normal person and be saved. Just be

"Oh my goodness. An made, and I made. I like African-American kid, poverty, the dream of one notice (after seeing a check for \$5,000 in the collection plate). Our teammates day getting out of the projects. I remember telling my mom I want to play in yourself." fabric of the state and the the NFL when I was a special-needs kid." The Pittsburgh Steelers beat his be-1979. "I was so upset, I was crying like a baby. My mom (Eunice Butler) said, 'One Bowl,' and that is the only thing that made me feel better. I stopped crying."

He was racially torchampionship to those mented in school. "I opened my locker and on his journey to the Vince there was a noose in it or a Lombardi Trophy that KKK mask, something ev-

these waters." Then came Bowl XXXI game. "I just remember saying this is what heaven is like. There is no way I should beat the odds, living in the most crime riddled projects in Jacksonville, wearing hand-me-downs ..."

Butler was moved at Super Bowl XXXI by a poster alluding to 30 years of "misery" for Packer fans waiting for another championship.

the year I was born (and the year of the Packers last Super Bowl win) ... I don't think people really believed what I went through. People think beyou grew up in a mansion with Rolls Royces.

that was amazing. It's like your Bible all the time. ple could walk up to and Fame.

not react to it. "God was it to you. What's this for? person I ever knew. Reggie navigating my ship in You can cash it in 25, 30 years from now. Adversity day you can win a Super that victorious Super can strike but I know I have by a Salvation Army shelit if I get arrested. As long as you do exactly what God cash that ticket. Every year prised. you get closer." And then, "eureka! January 26 (1997) I get a chance to cash that ticket and win the Super Bowl! Those waters pavement. I went through all the waves!"

The late Reggie White is "I waited my whole life the teammate he admired and these people ... 1968, most for his off-field contributions to society, he be a normal person and be said.

"He wanted everyone this is what heaven is like. to know that you could be felt racial animosity in saved and be a normal person," Butler said of White, an ordained minister. "You pect. "No one ever called cause you have a jersey on, can hang out. You can even me the N-word," he said. drink a beer. You can do He shopped at Pick 'n NFL Honors awards show normal stuff. You don't Save: "I always wanted to "To win a Super Bowl, have to walk around with be the person that peo-

taught me how to do that."

They enjoyed dropping that ticket. I can only lose ter or a church with no advance notice, "just pop up on them," perhaps once a wants you to do, you can month. People were sur-

" 'Why are you all here? Players don't do that? We would just drive by a church and just go in there. No one knew. We just sat smoothed out like it was in the back. Then they started to notice (after seeing a check for \$5,000 in the collection plate). Our teammates thought it was crazy, but you can saved. Just be yourself."

Butler said he never Green Bay, contrary to what he was told to ex-

loved Cowboys in 1976 and ery day." He felt he could a lottery ticket. They give He's the most impactful be approachable. I stayed 10 minutes from the sta-

Leroy Butler, former Green Bay Packer

dium." When Butler was young, his mother took him to the Salvation Army for a toy giveaway. He told her he didn't want any toys, he only wanted a new shirt, one that he could rip the sales tag off of. Vicki Durham, his sister, found him a new white T-shirt. It was too big for him, but she tied it around him so he could wear it.

That was 50 years ago. His wardrobe has evolved since then, to a No. 36 green and gold Packers jersey, and, soon, to a gold Pro Football Hall of Fame blazer.

Editor's Note: This report and the accompanying photographs were held for publication until after Thursday night's televised under an agreement with the Pro Football Hall of



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