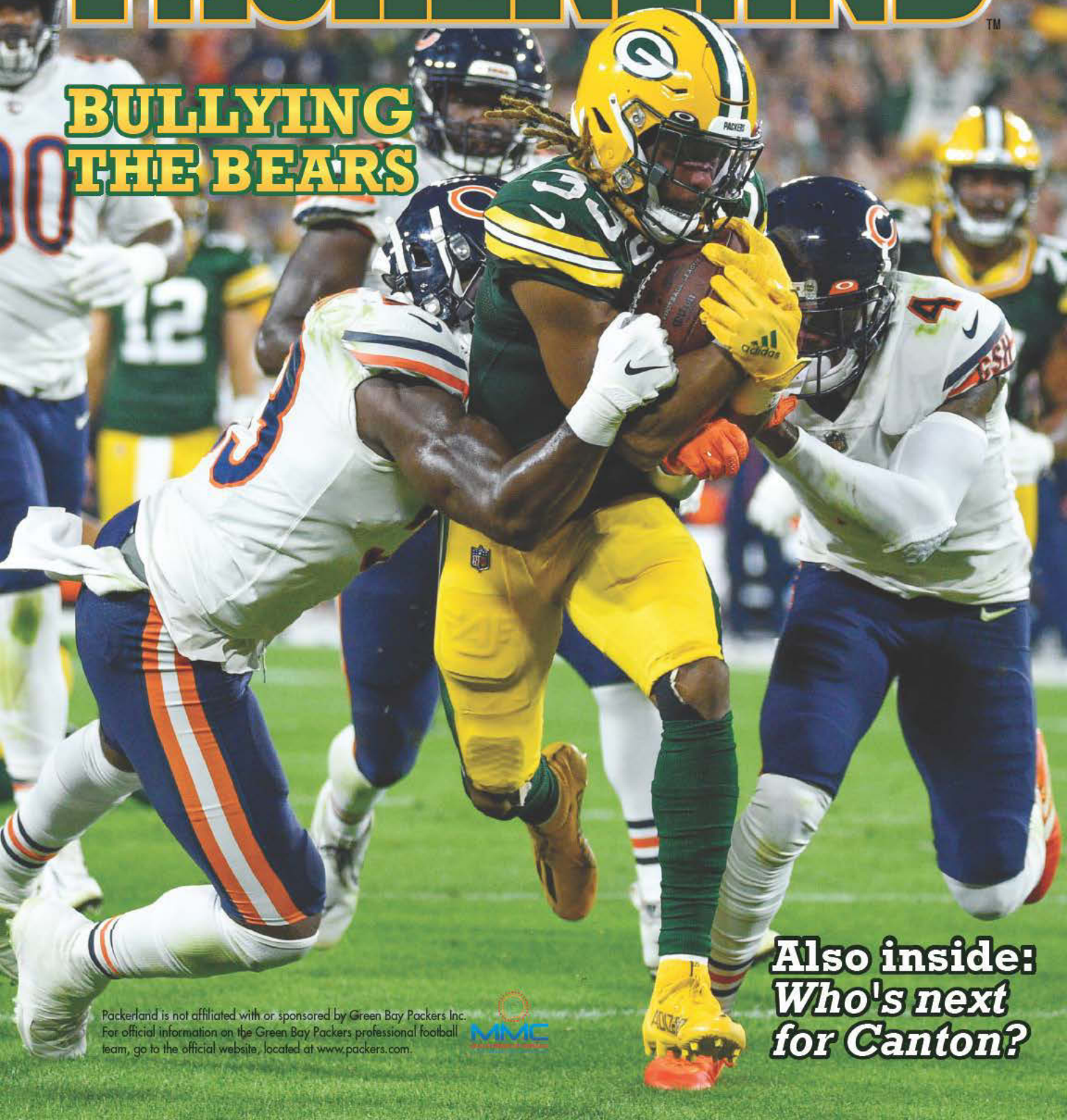


Press Times

OCTOBER 2022

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THE BEARS**



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FROM THE EDITOR



The two Aarons, Jones and Rodgers, share a laugh on their way off of the field after dispatching their NFC North rivals.

JOSH STALOCH PHOTO

With the first few games in the books, optimism always runs high for the Packers.

But it also creates a plethora of questions.

Will the defense be as good as advertised, or will the Week 1 loss to the Vikings foreshadow how the Packers will look against good opponents?

Can the Packers' rookie wide receivers step into their own, and will they gain trust from Aaron Rodgers so he wants to throw their way?

Packerland photographer Josh Staloch had a front-row seat to the action for the Packers' home opener against the Bears. Staloch shot his first NFL game, and he — of course — loved it. Check out his photo gallery from the oldest rivalry in NFL history on page 20.

We dive into a bunch of different story angles in this issue of Packerland.

Kevin Damask — who loves looking back and writing about Packers games of the past — revisits some of the best comebacks in Green Bay's storied franchise. They range from the Packers' comebacks in Week 2 of the 1989 season, beating the Saints 35-34 after trailing by three touchdowns, to Matt Flynn saving the day in December 2013 when Aaron Rodgers was injured. Damask spoke with former Packers players Paul Coffman and Ken Ruetgers as well as longtime media member Dennis Krause about what they recall from some of the epic games.

With safety LeRoy Butler entering the Pro Football Hall of Fame this year, the Packers now have 28 former players that have received the greatest individual achievement in the sport. Green Bay is second all time in the number of players in the Hall behind the Bears'

30. But the Packers could catch up to Chicago soon. Damask examines three Packers — two players and one executive — who could get the call from the Hall in the next few years.

We also have a feature story on former Packers athletic trainer Pepper Burruss. Writer Rich Palzewic sat down with him this summer at a golf tournament, and the two talked about Burruss' 26 years with the Packers.

Also in this issue, we take a behind-the-scenes look at Lambeau Field. I wrote a story on what working concessions during a Packers' home game is like and all the preparation that goes into it. I was fascinated to learn how many non-profit organizations from around Northeastern Wisconsin and the state partake and benefit from working on game day. The concessions story is the first in a multi-part series we've dubbed "Inside Lambeau Field," which will take readers behind the scenes for look at the inner workings of Lambeau on game day.

I hope you enjoy this issue. As always, reach out to me — gbates@mmclocal.com — with any story ideas. I'm always looking for interesting pieces about folks who have fun Packers collections or remember the days of watching Lombardi-led practices.



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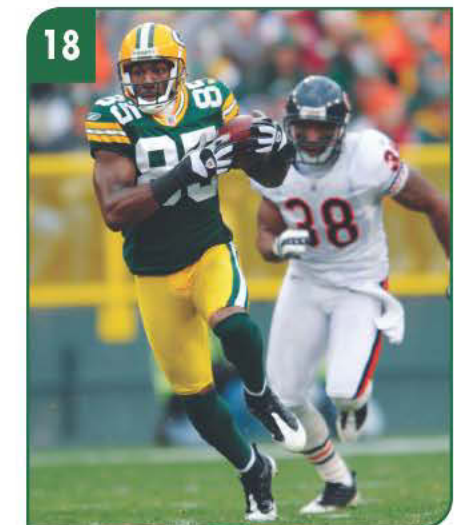
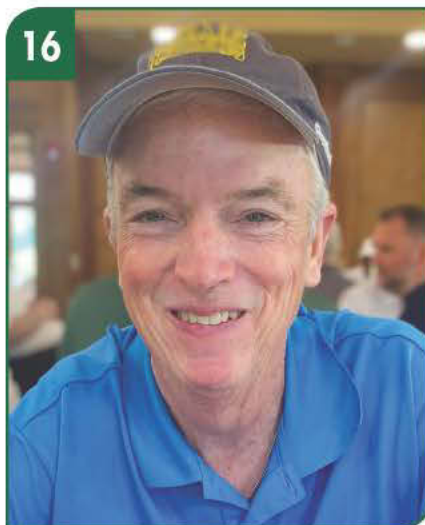
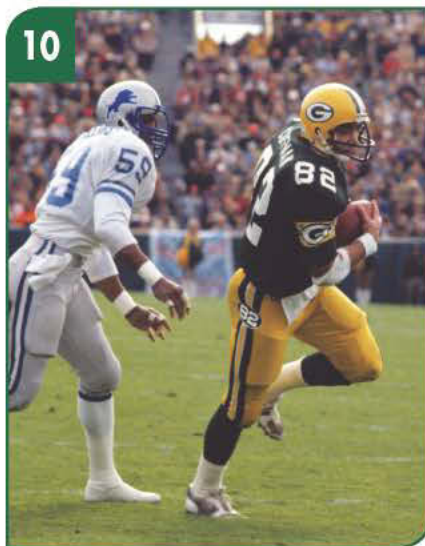
20 Packers vs. Bears

The NFL's longest running rivalry didn't disappoint in their game on Sept. 18 at Lambeau Field.

On the cover...

Packers running back Aaron Jones drags Bears defenders Eddie Jackson (4) and Nicholas Morrow into the end zone. This was Jones' first of two touchdowns on the night.

JOSH STALOCH PHOTO



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The Green Bay Preble softball team group is in its second season volunteering for Packers games. It's a group that the Packers and Delaware North bank on to have concessions run smoothly. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

READY FOR THE RUSH

Concessions staff at Lambeau Field is kept busy on game days by hungry, thirsty fans

Editor's note: This is the first installment in a series of stories titled, "Inside Lambeau Field." Packerland will dive into certain areas of game day at the stadium that are often overlooked.

BY GREG BATES
EDITOR

GREEN BAY – It's Sunday Night Football and the Green Bay Packers and Chicago Bears are preparing for the latest installment in their bitter, 100-year-old rivalry.

Fans from both sides are tailgating in the Lambeau Field parking lots, getting lubed up for the showdown.

Inside the stadium, Delaware North — the food and beverage service providers for Lambeau Field and Titletown — have nearly 1,000 employees and volunteers ready to serve the onslaught of thirsty and hungry fans about to flood inside the gates.

There isn't a typical game day for the

concessions and food service folks. Delaware North Director of Operations Jordan Burke said his team is ready for anything that comes their way.

"We always have different challenges that we have to work through on our side to make sure that we are set up for success," Burke said. "Our concessions team, we're operating 100-plus locations on gameday, so ensuring that every location is set up for success is obviously a very diligent, a very extensive operation to encapsulate into sometimes on a week basis — sometimes on a four-day flip around if we have a Sunday to Thursday game. Just making sure that we're looking at the season as a whole, not just looking at the next game, we're looking at two to three games out, trying to base our ordering."

With supply chain issues throwing a wrench in the hospitality industry over the last couple of years, Burke is always making sure that orders are sent in a sufficient amount of time so that there is

enough product in the building for when it's needed.

Delaware North tries to offer customers as many choices as possible for food and drinks.

"Providing options for the guests is obviously something that we make sure that we are taking into account once we're doing it," Burke said. "Obviously, being a large venue concessionaire, speed of service is a very huge point of emphasis for us, but also making sure that we're getting people through our lines, through our stands and back to their seats so they don't miss 12 (Rodgers) throwing a touchdown, it's making sure that we're providing a variety that will not instill us, but instill the Packers and make sure there's no negative reflection on that.

"Each offseason we try to point out a few key areas of improvement on our offerings, whether it would be, this year we're going with some sort of new barbeque concepts and new melt concepts with like a grilled cheese concept with a couple of our part-



Wausau School District Orchestras is in its first year volunteering. High school students are raising money to participate in the All-Stars of Music program to perform all over Europe.



Heal Our City Inside-Out Ministries is working games this season for the first time. The group out of Wauwatosa will be volunteering for Packers games all season.

ners at Johnsonville. But just making sure we're taking the regional fan favorites into account whenever we're trying to decide or change our menus."

Burke noted every sports venue has its to-go items that have to be offered because it's the local food choice. At Lambeau Field, cheese curds — both deep fried and fresh — are a must-have menu item for game day.

For games with a noon kickoff, Delaware North sees an increase in bloody mary sales.

For 3:25 p.m. games, there is an uptick in food sales because it's hitting the late lunch/early dinner rush crowd. That busy food stretch spans from pregame to halftime.

For late games that don't start until after 7 p.m., it's a beverage-heavy scenario with beer and liquor sales.

"We kind of make sure based on who we're playing, what time it is, we'll make sure that we are able to actively and proactively be ready for those kinds of things," Burke said.

For the annual Bears game, especially if it is played at night, more beverages are ordered as opposed to a noon game against, say the Jacksonville Jaguars.

"We definitely take all that into consideration," said Burke, who is in his 12th season working at Delaware North. "Obviously our Bears games in years past are our highest revenue games given the team, where they're coming in from,

what Green Bay has to offer. We always see a great turnout from the Bears, which I know that as a lifetime Packers fan, I don't like to see the blue and orange in here. But as an operator in this building, I love seeing the blue and orange because they're great fans to have in this building.

"We definitely do see an uptick in our sales, so we process that at the beginning of the year prior to the season even starting. We go through the season, see what times are, we analyze based on correlating games from previous years and what we've seen for sales."

There are always ebbs and flows for the concession stands depending on what time kickoff is, who the Packers are playing and if it's going to be a tight contest down to the wire.

"For example, those 3:30 games, we see a pretty even hit pregame and at halftime, with both of those being substantially higher than any other point in the game," Burke said. "But any other game, obviously halftime is our largest hit. We see quite an increase during that time frame. Our alcohol shutoff is at the end of the third, beginning of the fourth quarter, so obviously we see our beer sales go down to zero in the fourth quarter; however, we do see quite an uptick in food during those first few minutes of the fourth quarter, where people are just trying to grab a last little bit to eat to watch Aaron Rodgers win the game, hopefully."

The largest revenue concession loca-

tions are in the recently renovated north and south end zones.

What are the best selling items on game day?

Burke said water is big for early contest and beer all throughout the game. Miller Lite and Coors Light are the top two selling beverage brands.

As for food, brats are the top dog.

"Rightfully so," Burke joked. "I know we're one of very few stadiums that brats outsell hotdogs. Delaware North, I think we're one of only two. I think Miller Park may be the other one, I can't confirm that."

There are 130 concession locations all throughout Lambeau Field in the concourse and in all the club level premium areas, suites and restaurant.

While it's impossible to tally exactly how many customers are served on game day, Delaware North tracks how many transactions are made each game.

During last year's Bears game in mid-December, during the peak hour there were 40,000 transactions logged that encapsulated all areas of the stadium.

Since Johnsonville Tailgate Village is operational hours before Lambeau Field's gates open and some of the premium areas are open an hour after the game ends, there's a span of six to seven hours that Delaware North is selling food and beverage.

It's safe to say there are a couple hundred thousand transactions posted each game.



Boy Scout Troop 1468 has been a dedicated group for volunteering for a number years. The group helps out all season long.

NONPROFITS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Packers and Delaware North utilize around 1,000 workers on game day. About 750 of those folks are working concession stands.

Various nonprofit groups from across Wisconsin — some traveling as far as La Crosse — head to Lambeau Field on game day to help with concessions. In turn, those groups receive a lump sum of money.

“It’s a really nice way for us to give back to the community,” Burke said. “They come in for four to five hours on a game day, help us out and they’re generating quite a bit in donations for their groups to be able to do what they need for their organizations. In years past, the max amount of nonprofit groups that we have prior to 2019, we would average around 350-400 nonprofit members. We’ve got pretty much nonprofit groups for every single game this year. We’re averaging right around 700 for each game.”

The vast majority of front-line workers in the concession stands are from nonprofit organizations. Most groups are looking to raise funds for specific purposes.

It’s a mutually beneficial partnership that has been going on for over 15 years, noted Delaware North nonprofit recruiting manager Andrea Elliott.

“Anybody coming in must be a nonprofit organization, anything from a school, church; we get a lot of local teams that are

looking to fundraise to go to a championship game,” Elliott said. “We have some bands that are looking to play in the Rose Bowl in 2023, so I think each band has to raise \$250,000 to be able to attend and be able to pay for everything. We have a couple of them that are out here.

“My role is just to go out to the community and find those groups and bring them back in and get them signed up for games. My goal is about 900 volunteers a game.”

Some of the several hundred groups, there is currently a waiting list, that partake annually prefer to work every game of the season, while others will do one or two games.

According to Elliott, for the 2021 season, there were about 25 groups that had full season commitments. This year, that number has doubled.

“The word’s getting out and groups are finding how lucrative it is for them,” Elliott said. “They’re reaching their goal and coming back again the following year, because now they see that this is really a huge support. A lot of these groups are smaller, they’re not a large group like a Red Cross or something. They’re the smaller nonprofits or schools that they’re normally selling things like candy or pizzas, where you’ve got a lot of volunteer hours that go into things like that, and you’re asking parents to go home, spend all the time to do all the things to get ready for these events and then execute

the event. Now they’re realizing they can come for 11 games on average and make three times what they were making just doing some of the other stuff they were doing in the past.”

Groups that work games are given a certain percentage of their total net sales at their food and beverage stand they are working or they are guaranteed a minimum of \$100 per person, whichever is a greater figure. The nonprofit groups are also able to keep 100% of tips they receive.

Most nonprofit organizations that help on game day are from northeastern Wisconsin, mainly within a one-hour drive of Lambeau Field. Some like Greenfield High School travel nearly two hours up Interstate 43.


Fans at the game who are buying concessions may not realize that a vast majority of the workers are volunteers. The nonprofit groups are able to place signage at their stands so customers realize they are helping a good cause.

Workers are required to wear a uniform shirt with a nametag, but Delaware North allows them to wear a hat to promote their nonprofit organization. Workers, who can be as young as 14 years old, are also encouraged to engage with the customers at their stand.

With the Packers being such a community-based franchise, having being owned by the public, it’s just one more perfect example how the team helps out its community for the greater good.

“The Packers have been really supportive,” Elliott said. “They talk about it a lot out in the community, so it’s not just my one voice going out and trying to find these 900 people. They are out there talking about it, offering that opportunity, connecting me with people that have asked about it.”

The volunteers along with the Delaware North employees come together to make game day run smoothly. Neither side would have it any other way.

“Our focus and our point of emphasis every game day is we’re not only doing this for ourselves, we’re doing this for the Packers, we’re doing this for the city, we’re doing this for the NFL to make sure we maintain our post as one of the best overall stadium experiences in the NFL,” Burke said. 

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'You just can never give up'

Former players recall greatest comebacks in Packers history

BY KEVIN DAMASK
SPECIAL TO PACKERLAND

Despite being down 23-0, Paul Coffman wasn't too worried.

There may have been a sense of gloom among the crowd at Milwaukee County Stadium on Sept. 12, 1982 as the Packers headed into the locker room for halftime losing to the Los Angeles Rams by more than three touchdowns.

With this offense, however, no deficit seemed too monumental to overcome.

Armed with a one of the league's most potent passing attacks, the Packers stormed back in the second half, scoring 35 unanswered points, shocking the Rams with a 35-23 victory. What a way to open a season. The historic 23-point comeback is tied for Green Bay's largest rally in team history, sharing the spotlight with the Packers' 37-36 nail-biter against the Cowboys in 2013.

The Packers have had five comebacks down 20 points or more and three have occurred during the past decade.

Coffman, a stalwart at tight end for the Packers from 1978-85, had a significant role in the '82 comeback. Coffman ignited the rally in the third quarter, grabbing a four-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Lynn Dickey. In the fourth quarter, the three-time Pro Bowler hauled in the go-ahead TD, a 10-yard strike from Dickey, giving Green Bay a 28-23 lead. Running back Eddie Lee Ivery sealed the unforgettable win with a 27-yard touchdown run late in the fourth quarter.

"When you're in games like that you just can't give up," Coffman said in a phone interview with Packerland. "You keep playing because you love the game. You really don't think about being down."

Coffman, a former walk-on at Kansas State, knew something about determination. He played in an era when K-State was constantly trying to rally from large deficits against Big 8 Conference powerhouses.

"It always seemed like we were trying to come back, being down big to Nebraska or Texas," Coffman said. "But it didn't matter if we were down by 50, I always had that mentality that we would come back."



Paul Coffman was part of one of the biggest comebacks in Packers' history. The team trailed the Rams 23-0 at halftime and scored 35 unanswered points to pull off a 35-23 victory on Sept. 12, 1982.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PACKERS



Lynn Dickey quarterbacked the Packers to their great comeback over the Rams in 1982. He threw three second-half touch-down passes — two to Paul Coffman — as the Packers erased a 23-point deficit.

In the pros, Coffman had more confidence large comebacks were possible with Dickey leading an offense that included future Pro Football Hall of Fame wide receiver James Lofton, Ivery, full-back Gerry Ellis and wide receiver John Jefferson. Both Lofton and Jefferson were named to the Pro Bowl in '82.

"Lynn was the type of quarterback that never got rattled," Coffman said. "We had a very good offense with a lot of stars and we knew if we just kept plugging away, we had a chance to win."

Coffman said the character of the '82 team came from head coach and former quarterback Bart Starr. Having won five

NFL titles as a player under Vince Lombardi, Starr did not know the meaning of quit. He gave the rifle-armed Dickey the green light to fire downfield.

"We didn't have the best defense so we often had to take chances," Coffman said. "I remember coach Starr telling Lynn, 'Don't worry about throwing interceptions.'"

The Packers' defense in the early '80s ... well, that was another story. In the '82 season opener, the Rams built a 23-0 lead paced by three first-half field goals from kicker Mike Lansford.

Coffman said the defense was battling injuries that season and talented players

weren't always in the best positions to flourish.

"(Defensive end) Ezra Johnson played the two-gap, so his job was to constantly hit the offensive tackle," Coffman said. "They should have put him on the outside to rush. The schemes didn't fit the team very well."

The '82 Packers finished a strike-shortened season 5-3-1, falling to the Dallas Cowboys in a Divisional Round playoff game.

FLYNN TO THE RESCUE

When the Packers traveled to Dallas for a Week 15 game in December 2013,

they needed a win to stay in playoff contention. The 6-6-1 Packers, however, were without Aaron Rodgers and, after Dallas built a commanding 26-3 halftime lead, Green Bay was missing its star quarterback more than ever.

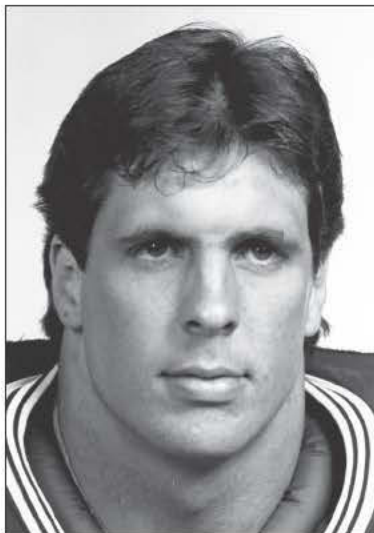
It was do or die for backup QB Matt Flynn.

Flynn fired four second-half touchdown passes, leading the Packers to a dramatic 37-36 victory.

Running back Eddie Lacy capped off the rally with a 1-yard TD plunge with 1:31 left in the game. Spectrum News 1 sports journalist Dennis Krause has covered several of the Packers' greatest comebacks over the past few decades. Krause could sense the Dallas crowd losing faith as the Packers came roaring back.

"I think it's easier to come from behind when you can feed off the home crowd, but you can also feed off the nervous crowd you face when you're on the road," Krause said in an email to Packerland. "That Matt Flynn-led comeback at Dallas is an example. I felt the Cowboys crowd played a role because you could sense their uneasiness and dread."

In 2013, the Packers finished 8-7-1, falling to the San Francisco 49ers in the wild-card playoffs.



Ken Ruettgers

'CARDIAC PACK' RALLIES FROM 21 DOWN

After dropping the 1989 season opener to the lowly Tampa Bay Buccaneers, it appeared a promising season was falling down the tubes fast as the New Orleans Saints raced out to a 21-0 lead in a Week 2 matchup at Lambeau Field.

For Ken Ruettgers, it was more of the same. Ruettgers, a five-year starter at left tackle, had never experienced a winning season in Green Bay. But the '89 unit wasn't like the moribund teams of the past. They had chemistry. They had fight. They also had Don Majkowski.

Majkowski threw three second-half TD passes — including the game-winner to wide receiver Sterling Sharpe — leading the Packers to a 35-34 win over New Orleans. Tight end Ed West grabbed two of

Majkowski's touchdown passes, while running back Brent Fullwood rushed for two scores.

"The Saints were on a resurgence back then with (Bobby) Hebert at quarterback and, of course, Jim Mora as the head coach. I think they scored on their first three possessions," Ruettgers said in a phone interview with Packerland. "Offensively, you're just trying to get things clicking, get some first downs and move the ball. We had really good chemistry on that team. We won four games by one point that year. That gave us such great confidence because we knew we could pull it out at the end."

Majkowski led the league in passing yards (4,318) in '89 and was voted to the Pro Bowl. Dubbed the "Cardiac Pack" for razor-thin wins and losses, Green Bay finished 10-6, just missing out on the NFC's final playoff spot.

"We had high confidence that year and it started with that Saints game," Ruettgers said. "It was a pretty amazing season just in that regard."

Other memorable comebacks include the 2018 season opener against the Bears. Rodgers, nursing an injured foot, rallied Green Bay from a 20-point deficit to shock Chicago, 24-23.

Rodgers hit receiver Randall Cobb on a 75-yard TD pass to give the Packers the lead with 2:13 remaining.

"I remember how pessimistic the mood in the press box was at halftime," Krause said. "The Packers were down big and Rodgers was hurt. It was easy to envision a long and difficult season. Instead, Rodgers returned and the Packers won. The fact that it was against the Bears only increased the drama."

Who could forget the Dec. 3, 2015 game, also a 20-point comeback, against the Detroit Lions?

Known as the "Motown Miracle," Rodgers flung a 61-yard Hail Mary pass to tight end Richard Rodgers with no time left on the clock. Packers 27, Lions 23.

"I think Rodgers is like a lot of great players," Krause said. "They don't enjoy being behind, but they like the challenge of coming back." 🏈



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Who's next for Canton?

Three Packers greats are finalists for 2023 NFL Hall of Fame class

BY KEVIN DAMASK
SPECIAL TO PACKERLAND

LeRoy Butler's wait had finally ended.

In August, Butler, one of the best defensive backs in Green Bay Packers history, was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. Since 2013, six former players and one executive (Ron Wolf), have been enshrined. Overall, 33 Packers legends have received their bronze bust in Canton since the first induction in 1963.

Packer fans might not have to wait long to see another Green Bay legend receive football immortality.

Former head coach Mike Holmgren, along with players Sterling Sharpe and the late Cecil Isbell, are all finalists for the 2023 class. But what are their chances of getting in? Holmgren worked wonders when he came to Green Bay in 1992, turning around a dismal team and winning an NFL title in 1996 — the organization's first in 29 years. However, he lost two Super Bowls, one each in Green Bay and Seattle. He also served as coach/general manager in Seattle for a few seasons. Both Sharpe and Isbell had stellar careers, but the sample size is rather small. Sharpe played seven seasons, while Isbell logged only five.

MIKE HOLMGREN

Ken Ruettgers, a rock along the Packers' offensive line from 1985-1996, played for Holmgren in the latter portion of his career and was a teammate of Sharpe's during his 1988-94 career.

Ruettgers, speaking in a recent phone interview with Packerland, believes both the coach and player have key milestones deserving of a call to Canton.

"What it takes to turn around a team that's been decades in the 'L' column ... oh, my gosh. It just doesn't happen every day," Ru-



Mike Holmgren was the Packers' coach from 1992-98. He won one Super Bowl in Green Bay before heading to Seattle for 10 seasons.

ettgers said about Holmgren. "That lingering mentality from the '60s, before revenue sharing was implemented and time-tested, there was still that leftover mentality of, 'We're being frugal. We're trying to survive. We're trying to keep the Packers in Green Bay and in Wisconsin.' It wasn't until we got Ron Wolf and Mike Holmgren that things started to turn around."

Holmgren, in his first season at the helm, transformed the Packers from a 4-12 afterthought in '91 to a 9-7 playoff contender. Brett Favre, the league's hottest new gunslinger, was a major reason for the team's turnaround, along with an innovative offensive scheme. Prior to becoming Green Bay's head coach, Holmgren had served as quarterbacks coach and offensive coordina-

tor in San Francisco, helping lead the 49ers to back-to-back Super Bowl titles. Under the tutelage of legendary coach Bill Walsh, Holmgren learned the intricacies of the West Coast offense.

"That West Coast offense that Holmgren brought in, oh my gosh, what a great offense," Ruettgers said. "Then getting the players like Favre, Reggie White, and other key guys like Sean Jones, Keith Jackson, who was underrated as a locker room leader. They weren't superstars like Favre and White, but key players that Holmgren and Wolf brought in."

Beginning in 1982, Tom Oates spent nearly four decades covering the Packers as a reporter, editor and columnist for the Wisconsin State Journal. Oates, now semi-retired,



The Packers' first-round pick in 1988, Sterling Sharpe had seven great seasons in Green Bay. His brother, Shannon, is a Hall of Fame tight end.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PACKERS

said Holmgren not only brought the vaunted West Coast offense to Green Bay, he refined it to fit Favre's strengths.

"He was a really bright guy, great offensive mind," Oates said in a phone interview with Packerland. "He was a magnificent play-caller. And, he was a quarterback whisperer. He deserves a lot of credit for developing Brett Favre. When Favre came to Green Bay, he threw nothing but fastballs and wasn't a cerebral quarterback by any stretch of the imagination, and there was a lot of push and pull between the two of them."

Dennis Krause, a sports reporter and TV host for Spectrum News 1, has covered the Packers since the late '80s. Krause hopes Holmgren gets into the hall of fame, but knows the former coach and general manager isn't a lock. While he led the '96 Packers to a 35-21 victory over New England in Super Bowl XXXI, Holmgren looked outcoached in a stunning 31-24 loss to Denver the following year. With Seattle, Holmgren took the Seahawks to their first Super Bowl in 2005, only to fall 21-10 to Bill Cowher's Steelers.

"If he had won that Super Bowl with Seattle, it would be a no-brainer. He'd be the only coach to win Super Bowls with two different teams," Krause said in an email to Packerland. "I'm pulling for Holmgren because of his role in molding Brett Favre and turning around a moribund franchise."

"He got two franchises to the Super Bowl, but not winning in Super Bowl XXXII af-

ter being heavily-favored is a big black mark against Holmgren," Oates said. "That Packer team was ill-prepared for that game in the sense that I think they felt they'd won it. They fell into a trap of thinking that they were just a superior team and they would have no trouble winning that game. Some of that stuff comes back to the head coach. If he would have won back-to-back Super Bowls, no matter what he did in Seattle, he would already be in the hall of fame."

Holmgren presented a vibe as being warm and cuddly, Krause said, but standing at least 6-foot-5, he struck an intimidating presence.

"He had that advantage with his height," Krause said. "With that size, he could get his message across when he wanted to."

Oates said Holmgren was a gentleman, but one didn't want to get on his bad side.

"He did a good job of explaining things," Oates said. "When he came in, he brought the Bill Walsh 49er system in lock, stock and barrel. He had to explain a lot of it and instead of just saying, 'This is how it's going to be, accept it.' He was really good at explaining why that plan worked and why everything was so detailed. And the 49er system was heavily detailed. He didn't give away the farm, but I've always appreciated that from a coach."

Holmgren strived to connect with everyone in the organization, from the top executives to assistant trainers.

"Let's say that assistant trainer when to UW-La Crosse. He would stop and ask him, 'Hey, is La Crosse going to beat Stout tomorrow?'" Oates said. "He had a little something to say to everyone in the organization to think, 'Hey, there's the guy who really runs the organization and nothing is too small for him.' I've always appreciated that about Mike Holmgren."

STERLING SHARPE

Move over, Jerry Rice.

During a period in the early '90s, Sterling Sharpe was considered the best receiver in football.

And the numbers bear the fruit. In 1992, Sharpe became the first player to break the 100-reception barrier, hauling in 108 catches. He also led the league in three other statistical categories, including yards (1,461), touchdowns (13), and yards per game (91.3).

Sharpe followed up his phenomenal '92 season the next year, grabbing 112 catches for 1,274 yards. In '94, his final season, Sharpe led the league in TD receptions with 18, while posting 94 receptions and 1,119 receiving yards. Due to a debilitating neck injury, Sharpe made the heart-wrenching decision to walk away from football prior to the 1995 season. He earned five trips to the Pro Bowl and was a three-time All-Pro selection.

"If you compare his first seven years to other Hall of Famer's first seven years, he's a shoe-in. It's a no-brainer," Ruetters said. "That's the challenge for Sterling and the people voting on this, what do you do with that? You look at Jerry Rice and go, 'That was Sterling Sharpe without the injury.' It's so unfortunate his career was cut short."

Ruetters believes it's not fair to deny Sharpe enshrinement based on a shortened career. His 108 catches in '92 set a major milestone for wide receivers. With the NFL becoming a pass-happy league in years, it's not uncommon for a receiver to break the 100-catch mark. It was unheard of, however, 30 years ago.

"He's the guy who broke the four-minute mile (in football)," Ruetters said. "You're denying that guy the due and just credit he's worthy of. Nobody thought you could catch 100 balls in a season and he did it back-to-back. To me, those are the receipts right there."

Both Krause and Oates compared Sharpe to Gale Sayers — short careers, outstanding results.



Former Packers receiver Cecil Isbell (center) hangs out with A.B. Tumbull (left) and Leland Joannes in 1942.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEVILLE PUBLIC MUSEUM OF BROWN COUNTY.

The legendary Chicago Bear's career ended prematurely due to a knee injury, but he still left a lasting mark on the game. Oates also pointed to Terrell Davis. The former Broncos running back only had a few great seasons, but was voted to the Hall of Fame.

"When I look at Hall of Fame players, the first thing I compare is, was he among the top one or two at his position when he played?" Oates said. "There's no question that in the early '90s, Sterling Sharpe and Jerry Rice were among the top two wide receivers in the NFL. It's pretty striking, statistically, how far both Sharpe and Rice were ahead of the crowd for wide receivers.

To me, that deserves strong consideration."

Sharpe, standing six feet and weighing slightly under 210 pounds, was strong and physical. He played through injuries without a second thought. Oates recalls some games where it was a wonder how Sharpe made it through.

"He never missed a game," Oates said. "And there were times when he went out there with no business being on the field. That speaks to how badly he wanted it and to what a professional he was. He was an elite level player that if he would have played two or three more years, he would be in the Hall of Fame as well."

Besides length of career, one other negative could keep Sharpe out of Canton. He wasn't media friendly. That's a problem since many hall of fame voters are writers and broadcasters who've covered the NFL for decades.

"Fairly or not, some writers will hold that against him," Krause said. "I hope he gets in because I saw how good he was."

Sharpe stopped doing interviews after his rookie season in 1988. Oates thinks Sharpe's media boycott stemmed from an article long-time Packers beat writer Bob McGinn wrote charting all of the receiver's drops as a rookie.

"I went down to talk to him after the first exhibition game (in '89) in Milwaukee and he said, 'Sorry, I'm not talking to you guys this year,'" Oates said. "He really didn't cooperate with the media since then. It's

too bad. He's a bright guy and he's talkative. I thought he was a nice guy. He wasn't a jerk about it, he just didn't talk. I thought that hurt him nationally and in terms of notoriety."

Krause has a different view of how Sharpe treated the media.

"I remember him walking past a bunch of us reporters saying loudly: 'Not today, not tomorrow, not ever,'" Krause said. "Ironically, he did make himself available after the 1993 playoff win at Detroit. I remember word spreading that 'Sharpe is going to talk!' I always felt he only hurt himself by not talking more because he was articulate and engaging."

Ruettgers believes the passage of time has cooled the waters between both Sharpe and the media. That should help his case. His former teammate remembers Sharpe as a consummate team player. After one of his record-breaking seasons, Sharpe purchased Rolex watches for the Packers' entire offensive line.

"That was an incredibly gracious gift," Ruettgers said. "It showed how much he valued the guys in the trenches. What a great guy. Guys like Montana and a couple other quarterbacks would do that, but a receiver?"

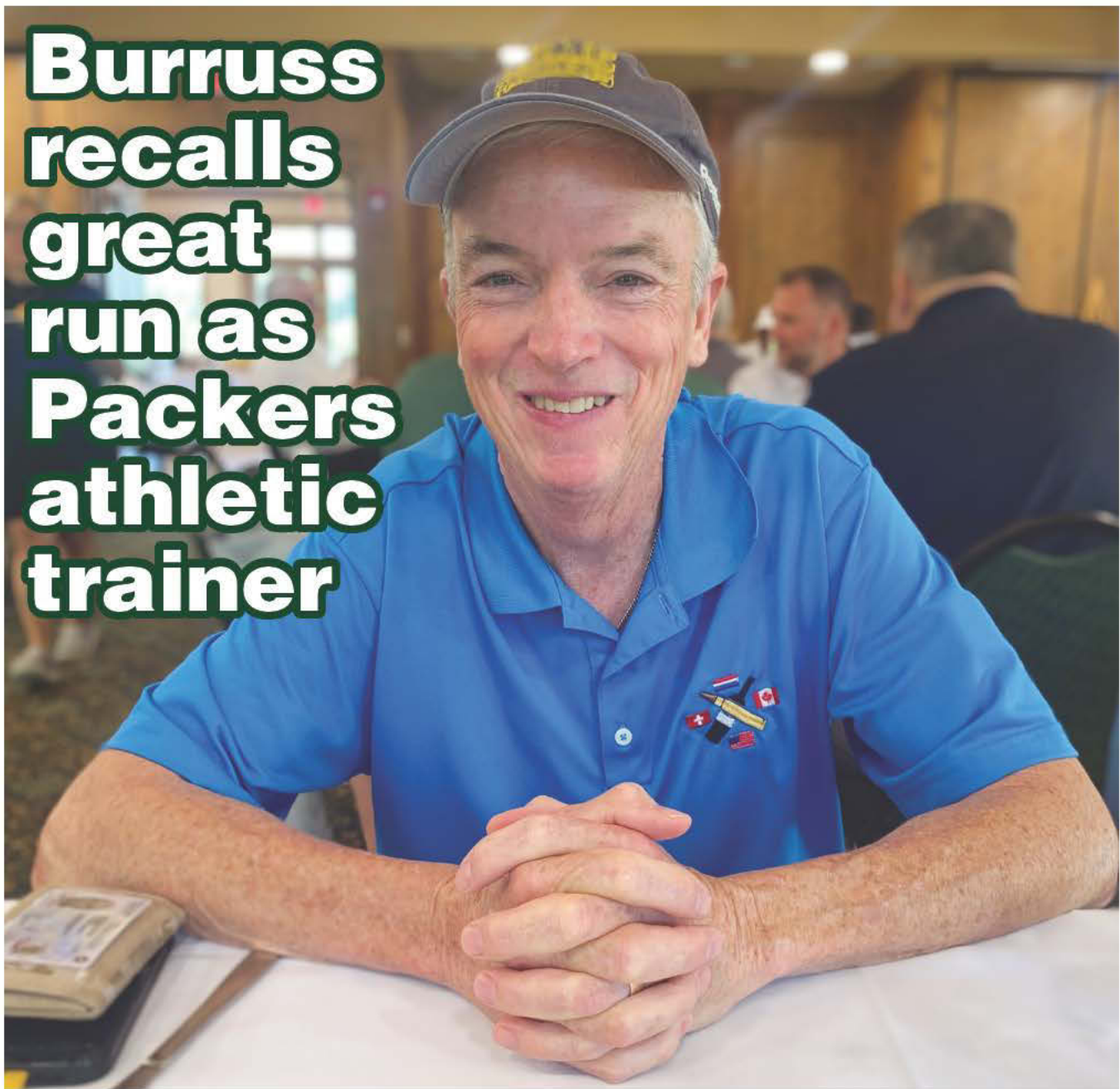
CECIL ISBELL

The halfback played in Green Bay from 1938-42, helping the Packers win the 1939 NFL championship.

Isbell really shined his final two seasons. He became the Packers' primary passer in '41, and with help from receiver Don Hutson, led the league in nine different statistical categories in '42, including yards passing (2,021) and touchdown passes (24). Isbell is a member of the NFL's 1930s All-Decade Team.

Isbell died in 1985 at age 69. 🍷

Burruss recalls great run as Packers athletic trainer



Former Packers athletic trainer Pepper Burruss spent 26 years with the organization before retiring in 2019. He spoke about his Packers days at an alumni golf outing in July. *Rich Palzewic Photo*

BY RICH PALZEWIC
SPECIAL TO PACKERLAND

SHEBOYGAN FALLS — Former Green Bay Packers athletic trainer Pepper Burruss spent 42 years in the National Football League — 16 with the New York Jets and the last 26 with the Packers.

“When (current Packers head coach) Matt LaFleur came to the team (in 2019), he was only 39 years old,” Burruss said at the Packers Hall of Fame Golf Outing in July at The Bull at Pinehurst Farms Golf Course in Sheboygan Falls. “It’s hard to believe I worked in the NFL longer than

(LaFleur) had been alive.”

Burruss sat down with Packerland before the golf outing and reflected on his long career with the team.

“I grew up two hours north of New York City,” he said. “I moved from the largest NFL city in the world to the smallest. (Former general manager)

Ron Wolf asked me to come to Green Bay, and I wasn’t sure I could do that. I didn’t know too much about the area, but I prayed and thought about it before deciding to come.”

Burruss said he still remembers coming to Lambeau Field for the first time as a member of the Jets’ staff,

where he served as the team's assistant athletic trainer for his entire tenure.

"It was 1981, I believe," he said. "We flew into Green Bay, and I still remember walking out of the tunnel and seeing the field — I had not seen a grass field that pretty."

EARLY YEARS IN GREEN BAY

Burruss said Wolf had a plan coming to Green Bay.

"The Packers had made the playoffs like twice in 25 years," Burruss said. "I asked Ron about this Majik guy at quarterback (Don Majkowski), and he said, 'I've got my eye on another guy.' That was the 'birth' of Brett Favre."

Burruss said he didn't join the Packers when Wolf initially asked him to.

"That was in February of '92," he said. "Ron called me and wanted me to come, but (then head athletic trainer) Dominic (Gentile) wasn't done yet. Then Ron told me Dominic was retiring after the '92 year. Essentially, I had the entire '92 year — so to speak — to chew on the (decision). I didn't answer until October of that year."

Burruss said he was sitting at home out east listening to the Packers' final regular season game (on Dec. 27) in '92 against the Minnesota Vikings, but he wanted to be in Green Bay for the players' checkout physicals soon thereafter.

"I wanted to see what kind of shape the team was in," he said. "Essentially, I started working in January 1993."

Burruss said then the team "caught lightning in a bottle."

"I had heard of Favre because Ron was going to draft him with the Jets," he said. "Then Atlanta took him five minutes before the Jets were

going to in the second round. It worked out for the Packers because we went on a playoff run and won a Super Bowl."

FAVRE DAYS

Coming to Green Bay the year after Favre arrived, Burruss said he didn't work on the Hall of Fame quarterback much — but there was a good reason for that.

"Brett had already been working with (assistant athletic trainer) Kurt Fielding, who's still with the team," he said. "I may have taped Brett once or twice because Kurt was out of town, but that's it."

"What you saw with Brett was what you got."

Burruss said the athletic training staff also took some heat when it came to working with Favre, who started 321 consecutive games from 1992-2010.

"There were times on the local radio we were blamed for Brett's addiction (to painkillers)," he said. "We'd hear, 'We know where it's coming from.' That was hard to hear."

COACHING TREE

During Burruss' tenure in Green Bay, he worked with head coaches Mike Holmgren, Ray Rhodes, Mike Sherman, Mike McCarthy and LaFleur.

"As the head trainer, you're talking to the head coach a zillion times per year," Burruss said. "I got used to getting yelled at because I hurt the player or didn't get him well — they needed to vent to someone. I always told them, 'God does the healing — I only help the healing.' Every coach was different, and I have different memories of each of them. Ray was fun to be around, and I think if you could talk to Ron (Wolf), he'd wish he'd given him another year."

LATER YEARS IN GREEN BAY

Burruss spent 22 years as the head athletic trainer for the Packers but then changed job roles during his last four years with the team, retiring in 2019.

"During my final four years in Green Bay, I was the team's director of sports medicine administration," he said. "Before the change, (then general manager) Ted Thompson brought me in and said we were both short-termers — gray hairs. Ted told me he didn't want to lose (then assistant trainer) Bryan (Engel), so he was promoted to head trainer."

Burruss said when Engel was promoted, Thompson asked him how long he wanted to stay in Green Bay.

"I said, 'Selfishly, I'd like to stay through the 100th anniversary because I was here for the 75th (anniversary),' he said. "Ted said, 'How long is that?' We both got a good laugh out of that (because neither of us knew). I wasn't a great historian, but knowing the Packers started in 1919 meant I had to work through the 2018 season. I was asked to stay through the draft in 2019 — that's when LaFleur came in. When the players flew out after the June minicamp, I took my

last box or two out of my office and walked out on July 2. It was a hell of a run. I worked for two NFL teams totaling 42 years and never had a resume. I didn't apply for either job — I prayed to the right God."

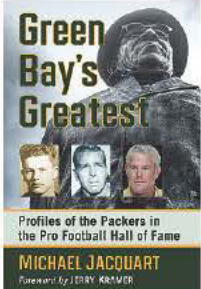
POST PACKERS

Burruss and his wife still live in Green Bay.

"We're a stone's throw from the old Mystery Hills Golf Course," said Burruss, who is currently on the Packers Hall of Fame board. "It's been a charmed and blessed life. After we knew Green Bay would be our home, my wife always joked, 'If I got fired, she was staying in Green Bay.'"

The Burruss' have two kids living in California.

"There's been some talk about spending more time out there, but California to Green Bay is about 10,000 miles of difference of life," he said. "I love my kids to death, but I'm used to the pace of the Midwest. I tell people, 'I grew up on the right coast, my kids are on the left coast, but I like the middle coast.' Some coaches and players say Green Bay might be a hard place to move to, but it's an even harder place to move away from — that speaks volumes." 🏈



Green Bay's Greatest

Profiles of the Packers in the Pro Football Hall of Fame

MICHAEL JACQUART

Highlighting each of the 27 Green Bay Packers enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Michael Jacquart has been published in Packerland Pride magazine and this is his second Packers book. He lives in Iola, Wisconsin.

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During his days with the Packers, Greg Jennings always enjoyed doing the “Lambeau Leap.” The wide receiver was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame in early September. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GREEN BAY PACKERS

GREG JENNINGS, TIM HARRIS JOIN THE EXCLUSIVE CLUB

BY GREG BATES
EDITOR

GREEN BAY — When Greg Jennings left Green Bay via free agency after the 2012 season, the wide receiver didn't know what his legacy would be with the Packers.

But his name was cemented in the franchise's storied history when he received a call at he was being elected into the Packers Hall of Fame.

“To be honest, very transparent, I never thought about it,” Jennings told media members prior to the induction ceremony on Sept. 1. “I did not expect to get that call. I truly never thought about being in the Hall of Fame. But it was a shock. I was like, ‘Oh.’ I remember Sam (Kluck, Hall of Fame, Inc. executive director) calling me and saying, ‘Hey, are you go-

ing to be around Wednesday or whatever day it was. We've got some really good news that I can't share with you right now, but you're going to want to hear this news.’ So, I kind of knew. I'm like, well, Sam kind of just told me. But when they did officially tell me a couple days later, I was honestly numb.

“My daughter's been asking me all the way up until yesterday, ‘So, how does it feel?’ The true honest response is, I don't know how it feels yet, because I really didn't play for individual accolades, I just wanted to compete. I always wanted to win. I wanted to be able to provide the best of me for not only my teammates but just for my representation of what I felt that I was and what I was capable of. To be standing here as a Green Bay Packer Hall of Famer — to stand after

Tim (Harris) — I have no words. I truly have no words.”

Jennings and Tim Harris, who played for five years for the Packers, were enshrined at the 51st Hall of Fame Induction Banquet.

Harris was also taken back when he received word he was going into the Packers Hall of Fame.

“It's very special to see myself honored like that in Green Bay Packer history,” Harris said.

When Harris got the call last year that he would be going into the Hall of Fame, he was hanging out with his longtime friend and teammate Harold Beane.

“We were having breakfast and breakfast turned into a shot of tequila,” joked Beane, who presented Harris at the induction ceremony.

MAKING HIS MARK

When Jennings was drafted in the second round of the 2006 NFL Draft by the Packers, he came in right away and made an impact.

As a rookie, he caught 45 balls for 632 yards and three touchdowns. His numbers gradually increased the next four seasons in Green Bay.

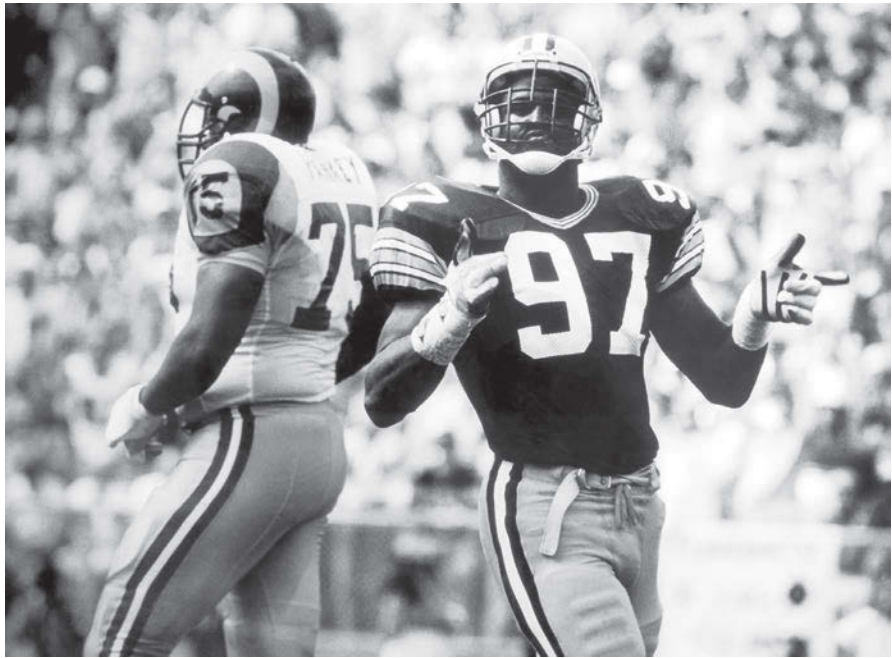
“The reason why I was so successful early was large in part because of the guy who was under center, that guy being Brett Favre,” said Jennings, who earned two Pro Bowl nods with the Packers. “Let’s be honest, he jumps out every time I see him, he knows, he jumps out at my career. I was kind of hanging on the coat tails of all his accomplishments — 420, 421, and all the things. But one of the number one things I would hold my hat and just hold onto was catch the ball. They brought me here to catch the ball, so when 4 drops back, catch the ball. I don’t care if I ran the wrong route, I don’t care what the defender did to disrupt me, at the end of the day, I wanted (Favre) to know he’s going to catch the ball.”

Jennings, a product of Western Michigan University, finished his Packers’ seven-year career with 425 catches for 6,537 and 53 touchdowns. In team annals, Jennings ranks ninth in receptions, eighth in yards and sixth in touchdowns.

In Super Bowl XLV, Jennings had four catches for 64 yards and two touchdowns, including what turned out to be the game winner.

Besides his Super Bowl experience, Jennings was quick to respond when asked what he remembers most about playing with the Packers.

“Running out of the tunnel,” Jennings said. “It’s interesting, my daughter said to me yesterday, my youngest, she said, and she was very young, she said, ‘Daddy, every time I saw you run out of that tunnel, I almost cried.’ The reason why the tunnel was so significant for me is when you’re running out of that tunnel as a player all you can think about is the Tim Harris’, the Bart Starrs — all the guys that have done it and taken that field before you and that’s who you represent. You want to make them proud. Obviously, you want to make yourself and your family proud and your teammates proud, but when you have such a history that has gone on and



Sporting his patented “6-shooters,” Tim Harris was known for his pass-rushing skills. In 1989, he broke the franchise record for sacks in a season with 19 1/2. That record still stands today.

established a culture and a standard, you better live up to that standard.”

When Jennings left Green Bay in 2012, he had some choice words for the Packers’ organization and playing with quarterback Aaron Rodgers. That has created some friction over the years with Jennings and some in the organization.

Jennings wasn’t sure what his reception would be from Packers fans on coming back to Lambeau Field for the Hall of Fame induction.

“You know, I don’t know. I really don’t know,” Jennings said. “I think a lot of times when I think about that, I get a little too deep into my own head, just because of my departure and just the way kind of things ended. But when it comes to what I offered this organization, how I played the game, my representation of my teammates throughout my duration, I expect to receive whatever I get. That’s just who I am. At the end of the day, I’m good. I’m good with it all. I’m excited to be back. I’m excited to receive the welcomes, the potential boos, whatever that may be, I embrace it all, because at the end of the day, when you are thought of or are booed or celebrated, you did something impactful, you meant something. If no one talked about me, I probably wouldn’t be

standing here before you.”

After seven years with the Packers, Jennings played for the rival Minnesota Vikings for two seasons and then the Miami Dolphins for a season before retiring after the 2015 campaign.

Jennings was presented for induction by his younger brother, Cortney. The two are close and that stems a lot from playing sports against one another while growing up. But Cortney has always been his brother’s biggest fan throughout his journey in the NFL.

“I’m always proud of his accomplishments on the field, but even more proud of who he is as a man, the type of person that he is,” Cortney Jennings said. “A lot of people don’t get to see that side of him, because they just see him doing what he’s doing now, talking in front of the microphone. But the type of person that he is and the representation that he provides on a day-to-day basis, it supersedes anything else.”

SACK LEADER ENSHRINED

Even though Tim Harris spent just five seasons in Green Bay, he had a major impact on the defense.

He tallied 55 sacks — which is fourth

See **HALL** page 22



AJ Dillon runs right through the Chicago front line for a nice gain in the first quarter of the Packers' 27-10 victory on Sept. 18. JOSH STALOCH PHOTOS



Green Bay tight end Robert Tonyan covers up the ball and prepares to make contact with Chicago defender Jaquan Brisker.

PACKERS vs. BEARS Sept. 18, 2022



A Bears fan dressed as legendary coach Mike Ditka reacts to a call during the Packers-Bears game.



Packers wideout Allen Lazard is all smiles after hauling in his first touchdown pass of the season.



Packers DB Rasul Douglas hauls down Bears WR Damell Mooney.



A pair of Packers fans hold up signs during the rivalry game.



The two Aarons, Jones and Rodgers, share a laugh on their way off of the field after dispatching their NFC North rivals.



Darnell Savage goes low on Chicago's David Montgomery while teammate De'Vondre Campbell comes in to finish off the tackle. The Packers had difficulty stopping Montgomery.



Aaron Rodgers gets out of the pocket and makes a throw downfield on the run with a pair of Chicago defenders giving chase.



(Far left) Bears quarterback Justin Fields beats Packers linebacker Rashan Gary to the end zone for a first-quarter touchdown.



(Left) Jones took his team into the red zone with this first-half carry. Jones finished with 15 carries for 132 yards in the Packers' victory.

all-time in Packers history — and appeared in 76 games, 70 as a starter.

Harris, an outside linebacker/defensive end, was selected out of the University of Memphis in the fourth round by the Packers in the 1986 NFL Draft. He earned starts as a rookie and logged eight sacks that first season.

One story Harris shared with the crowd at the induction was about his playing for Packers on-field legend Forrest Gregg, who coached Harris in 1986 and '87.

“I was recruited by Forrest Gregg when all the veterans came in and they gave me an opportunity to play a skeleton drill and cover-2, don't let the tight end release inside, but I did and Forrest Gregg yelled at me and told me to go down and rush the passer,” Harris recalled. “If I didn't do any good down there, I was going to be on the next bus ride home to Memphis to play with Elvis Presley.”

Harris' breakout season came in 1989 when he amassed a franchise-record 19 ½ sacks, earning Associated Press All-Pro and Pro Bowl accolades that season.

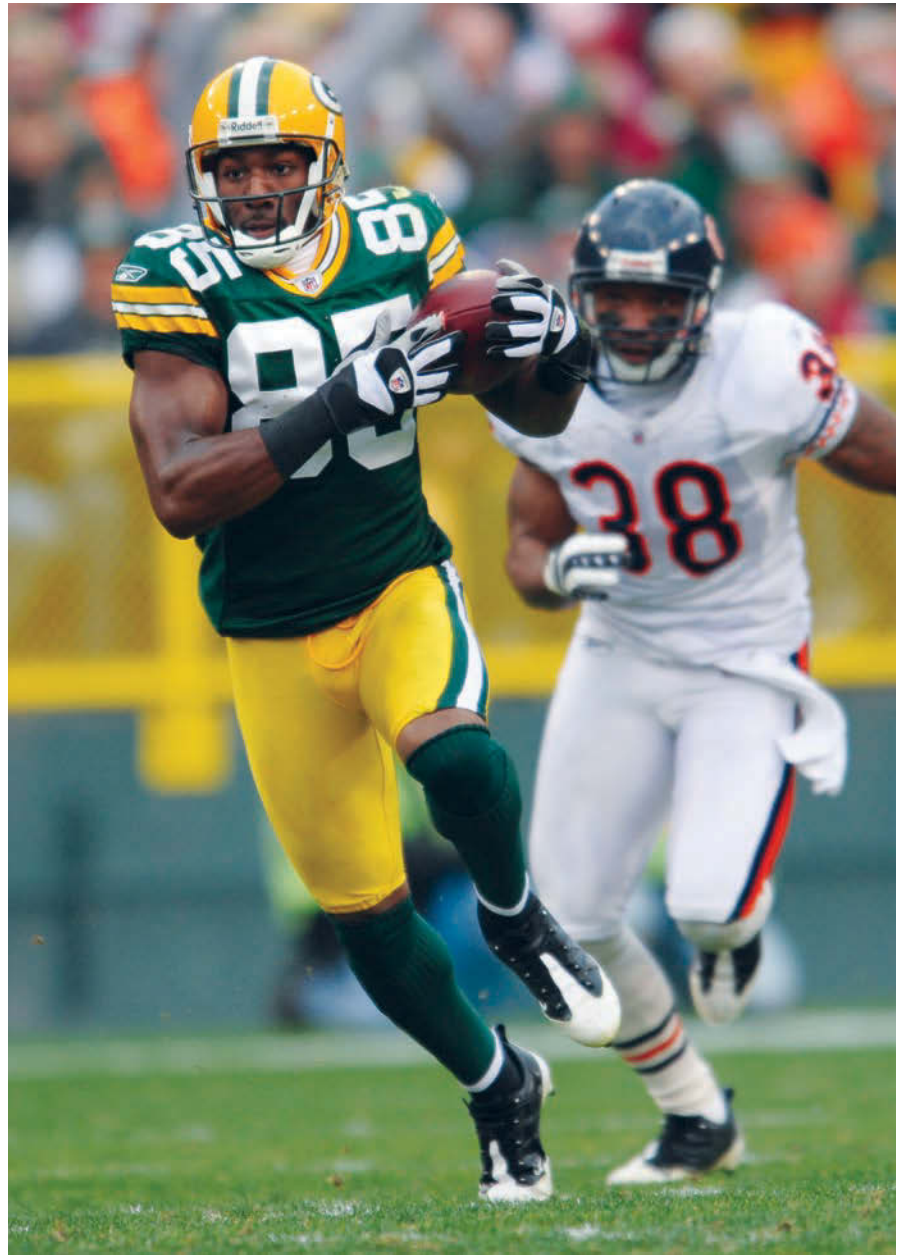
“It had a lot to do with Robert Brown as well, he played next to me,” Harris said. “He did a lot of you and me game stunts. He helped free me up a lot. He actually texted me today, congratulating me and I actually texted him back telling him if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be in this situation.”

Harris wasn't quite sure he would get into the Packers' Hall of Fame after playing for the organization from 1986-90.

“I was there when the phone call came in when the Packers called him, and he was shooting his 6-shooters into the ground like a quarterback was lying on the floor, the whole nine yards,” Beane said. “It was a real good moment.”

Beane, who was a college teammate and defensive linemate with Harris, loved watching Harris compete at the highest level during his 10-year career.

“We'd get excited, knock over a couple TVs. ‘Sack 'em, Tim. Sack 'em,’” Beane said. “It was the bomb, man. A lot of things with Tim have been first experience — first time I drove a Porsche, first time I got a ticket in Porsche, first time I've been to a Super Bowl, first time I've been to Green Bay, everything. A lot of



Jennings had a knack for playing well in big games, including this one against the Bears in the 2008 season. In Super Bowl XLV, he scored two touchdowns in the Packers' victory.

good experiences. This is my guy right here. Slide down a razor blade butt naked for him.”

After leaving Green Bay, Harris had two stints with the San Francisco 49ers for a combined four seasons — winning a Super Bowl during the 1994 season — and one year with the Philadelphia Eagles. Even though he played for half his NFL career in other seasons, Green Bay was always home to Harris.

“Yeah, it was. I got my start here,” said

Harris, who now resides in La Quinta, Calif. “I learned a lot of adversity when I was here in order to play with the Packers.”

Harris' favorite moment as a Packers player?

“Any time we used to play the Minnesota Vikings pretty much was it,” Harris said. “I always had a good day against Tim Irwin all the time anyway.”

Harris had a way of making good offensive linemen look foolish. 🍖

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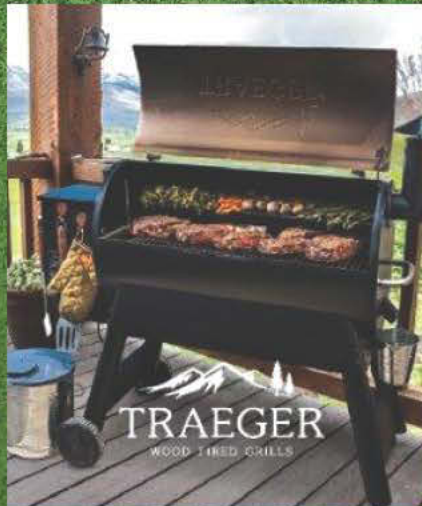
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