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COMMENTARY

A long plane ride home

Packers are slowly and painfully missing chances to succeed

I was stoked when the news broke earlier this year that the Green Bay Packers would be playing in London for the first time.

This was a chance to visit the city for the first time and cover a game at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, not to mention the fact that I thought the trip could yield three or four decent column ideas if I was over there

long enough.

Well, one thing led to another and we decided I'd be staying home, mainly because I didn't want to miss any University of Wisconsin football games. Given what happened this past week at 1440 Monroe St., where UW athletic director Chris McIntosh fired football Paul Chryst on Oct. 2, it's a good thing I was here and not across the pond.

So I watched the Packers' 27-22 loss to the New York Giants on Sunday morning from my couch, an ugly defeat that confirmed a suspicion that had been brewing over the first month of the season: This team doesn't have the look of a Super Bowl contender.

We'll get to the reasons why but first some soccer talk: Some readers may know that I'm a huge fan of Tottenham, one of the 20 teams in the English Premier League. It's a club that hasn't won a trophy in over a decade and has tortured its fans over the years with heartbreaking defeats, often blowing late leads to watch potential wins turn into draws or potential draws turn into losses.

There's even a name for that pattern of choking: Spursy.

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STEVE LUCIANO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Green Bay Packers running back Aaron Jones stands on the field between plays during a game against the New York Giants on Sunday at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. The Packers lost 27-22.

GOLF

Career moving at warp speed

Kim having Tiger-like start to his pro career

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — Tom Kim still didn't have PGA Tour status two months ago. Now he's a two-time winner being mentioned in the same space as Tiger Woods and is the highest-ranked Asian player in the world.

Even for the 20-year-old Kim, life feels like it's moving at warp speed.

A win in North Carolina. The FedEx Cup playoffs. The Presidents Cup. A win in Las Vegas.

"It's been crazy," Kim said. "Definitely doesn't feel slow, that's for sure. I've just got to keep going, and I'm enjoying the ride. So hopefully, many more to come."

His latest victory Sunday in the Shriners Children's Open was only shocking the way it ended, with Patrick Cantlay having one bad swing turn into one big mess.

They were tied for the lead when Cantlay hooked his 3-wood into a desert bush in a ravine, tried to hack it out into the fairway, took a penalty drop, went

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Kim



Cantlay

COMMENTARY

Yarbrough still directing the way

Horlick graduate passing her passion to excel to her children

This was initially intended to be just a career overview of Arnedo Yarbrough, the spunky, determined young lady who followed the great Sonja



PETER JACKEL

Henning at Horlick High School in 1987. Yarbrough was recently inducted into the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. This was 31 years after she played her final game for Horlick and this column might have been just a standard recognition of Yarbrough's

achievements to commemorate that induction.

Well, let's get that part of her story covered in the next couple of paragraphs because what's far more meaningful about Yarbrough is what she's doing today.

So here goes as far as Yarbrough the athlete.

She led the Rebels as a sophomore to the 1989 WIAA Division 1 Tournament — the program's most recent appearance to date. She was named the Associated Press Player of the Year in Wisconsin two years later despite being someone who willingly set up her teammates instead of routinely pile



Yarbrough



PAUL W. ROBERTS, JOURNAL TIMES FILE PHOTO

Arnedo Yarbrough, left, brings the ball up court in a game against South Milwaukee, Feb. 24, 1989. Yarbrough, a sophomore that season, led Horlick to the WIAA Division 1 Tournament that season — the program's most recent appearance to date.

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UW FOOTBALL

Wrist injury to sideline RB Mellusi for Saturday

STEVE MEGARGEY Associated Press

MADISON — Wisconsin running back Chez Mellusi will miss an unspecified length of time after injuring his right wrist in the Badgers' 42-7 victory over Northwestern.

Mellusi has rushed for 223 yards and one touchdown on 56 carries this season. He also has two catches for 25 yards, including a 23-yard touchdown in the Northwestern game.

Wisconsin announced Monday

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Mellusi

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Jackel

From B1

up points.

As Yarbrough recalled, “It wasn’t about me and my statistics. It was about me guiding and leading the team to victory. That’s what point guards do.”

And then she took her magic to Iowa City, where she was the floor leader as a sophomore in 1993 on the first Iowa women’s basketball team to advance to the NCAA Final Four. The following season, she led the Hawkeyes in assists.

All of this stuff happened three decades ago and her exploits have been chronicled countless times in the pages of the Journal Times sports section, among other publications.

What lives on all these years later is Yarbrough’s character and the life she has chosen to lead. It was rooted right here in Racine, where Yarbrough steered clear of dead ends, found detours when necessary and always arrived at her destination.

While she was at Horlick, Yarbrough worked for what she got and wasn’t interested in instant gratification. She didn’t pout. She didn’t walk away when she didn’t get what she wanted. She didn’t skip practices. She didn’t cause grief for her coaches.

And she didn’t feel the pressure of following in the footsteps of Henning, who went on to earn first-team All-American honors at Stanford. Instead, Yarbrough was raised to feel comfortable in her own skin.

“‘NeNe’ was one of Racine’s best,” said Barb Chambers, Horlick’s coach from 1983-2002. “She was a leader on and off the court. Her attitude and outlook on life made her a role model for those who followed. It was a privilege to coach her and then to see her grow into the woman she has become.”

And what a woman she has become. Two months before her 50th birthday, Yarbrough is a Registered Nurse of Clinical Operations in Crown Point, Ind. She is a single parent of daughter Amaria, 14, and son Amir, 8. And she’s raising her children



CHUCK D’ACQUISTO, JOURNAL TIMES FILE PHOTO

Arned Yarbrough, left, brings the ball up court in a game against Case Feb. 22, 1990.

with the same tough love and discipline that she came to understand from her mother, Jean Malone, while growing up in Racine.

Yarbrough expects her two children to go onto to college but she also expects each of them to figure out a way to make that happen. Arned made it clear that her retirement account is off limits for their college tuition. So they’d better earn an academic or athletic scholarship. Or they better work their way through college.

It happens that Amaria is an emerging softball player and a straight ‘A’ student at Crown Point High School who has college potential. She’s not going to waste that gift. Her mother won’t allow that.

Arenda recalls counseling her daughter that, “TikTok is not going to allow you to hit that ball. TikTok is not going to allow you to field it when it comes to you. It’s not going to allow

you work on your speed and agility to get from base to base. You’ve got to put your work and dedication in your sport. When you have time during the day, everything you can be doing to work on your craft, you should be doing. That’s the only way you’re going to get better and to get where you want to go.

“Her goal is to go to the University of Texas to play softball.”

Goals are what Arned preaches to both of her children. Accepting nothing less than the best is what she demands.

More parental figures like Arned would mean so much to so many directionless youths who spend endless hours staring into their smart phones instead of embracing possibilities. Arned set up a future for herself. So many others leave their futures hanging in the balance and allow society to take the hit when they fail.

“I’ve talked to my daughter about sex, the consequences,

all of that,” Yarbrough said with a powerful conviction in her voice. “I had that conversation with my daughter at age 10 and still at 11 and still at 12 and still at 13 and still now at 14.

“You always have to stay in their ear about it because the streets can take over your kids. And I’m not going to let the streets take over my kids. I make sure my kids understand, ‘This is appropriate’ and ‘This is not appropriate.’

“You have to get them when they’re young. My kids have been disciplined since they were younger. And I continue to do that as they get older.”

Yarbrough has done more than talk the talk.

“Guess what?” she said.

“I had a home built from the ground up three years ago. I just sold my home to get my daughter in a different school district that’s better for her academically and athletically.”

What’s sad for Yarbrough is

visiting her old hometown and not seeing the same passion to excel from high school students that use to be so much more common. Sure there are exceptions, but the Arned Yarbroughs of this world seem to be dwindling.

The result is a far different high school sports landscape.

Fans across the nation must walk through metal detectors to attend a high school event. High school programs are being merged or dropped all together because desire has been overtaken by indifference.

“The culture is completely different,” Yarbrough said. “I was like, ‘Whoa!’ The kids don’t want to work! It’s just too much of modern technology that has gotten a hold of our kids that has taken away that commitment to the game, to the craft.”

One exception for Yarbrough is 2011 Case graduate Sam Logic. Twenty years after Yarbrough was named the state’s player of the year, Logic received the same honor. And just like Yarbrough did, Logic went on to play for Iowa, where she earned third-team AP All-American honors as a senior.

The common denominator between the two? They were both the first to arrive at practice, the last to leave and they made every moment in between count. What’s more, their seasons lasted 12 months a year.

“She worked for everything she got!,” said Yarbrough, who coached Logic. “I love Sammie. Oh, my God, I love her to pieces! She had that work ethic that is needed to take you to the next level, not only in basketball, but in life.

“I just admire her for her work ethic because there weren’t many in her era at all. She was the reason Case went as far as they did because she just pulled them along. She was that leader who held people accountable.”

Holding people accountable.

It sure seems like we need a lot more of that these days.

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Polzin

From B1

Well, the Packers were Spursy on Sunday. What once was a 17-3 lead became a 27-20 deficit, a turn of events that was caused by the defense completely falling apart and some panic on the part of coach Matt LaFleur and quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

Here are my quick thoughts on a loss that dropped the Packers to 3-2:

What I liked

The Packers got off to a strong start, scoring on four of their five drives in the first half to build a double-digit cushion.

Rodgers was sharp after a slow start, completing 16 of 17 passes at one point and finding wide receiver Allen Lazard and tight end Marcedes Lewis for short touchdowns. There was a good balance of run and pass and the Packers had produced 20 points by halftime.

■ Mason Crosby continued his perfect start to the season.

The Packers had a delay of game prior to his first field-goal attempt but it didn’t bother him a bit and he drilled a 46-yarder. His next conversion, which came from 48 yards out, was even more impressive because the field-goal unit had to scramble on the field before the clock ran out in the first half.

What I didn’t like

Where to even begin?

The defense was atrocious in every way, shape and form from midway through the second quarter to the end of the game.

Take a look at this carnage on what turned out to be four consecutive scoring drives for the Giants spread over three quarters:

Touchdown: 11 plays, 86 yards; 6 minutes, 10 seconds.

Field goal: 11 plays, 56 yards; 7:03.

Touchdown: 15 plays, 91 yards; 8:07.

Go-ahead touchdown: 6 plays, 60 yards; 3:34.

Green Bay’s run defense continues to be an issue and it gave up 125 yards on the ground to Saquon Barkley and Co.

The Packers also made Daniel Jones, playing on a bum ankle, look like Joe Montana. And there was no Jerry Rice, John Taylor and Dwight Clark in the Giants’ stable.

Grading the Packers

OFFENSE: C-minus

Aaron Rodgers completed 15 of 16 passes at one point in the first half but things went south after that. He got too deep-ball happy after halftime and had two passes knocked down after guiding the Packers into range for a game-tying touchdown late in the fourth quarter. Aaron Jones and AJ Dillon had success running the ball but were all-but ignored in the second half.

DEFENSE: F

The Giants produced 24 points and 293 yards in 43 plays over the course of four consecutive drives that stretched over three quarters, taking 24 minutes, 54 seconds off the clock in the process. Green Bay’s run defense was shredded, Giants quarterback Daniel Jones was made to look like an All-Pro and Rasul Douglas lost his cool in the process. Ugly.

SPECIAL TEAMS: C-plus

Mason Crosby converted field goals from 46 and 48 yards despite distractions before each attempt. Amari Rodgers fumbled a punt but the Packers got it back. Keisean Nixon had a chance to jump on a loose ball after a Green Bay punt in the fourth quarter but couldn’t corral it before it slid out of bounds.

COACHING: D-minus

Matt LaFleur mismanaged the second half and showed signs of panic in his play-calling after the Giants came storming back. His choice of Joe Barry as defensive coordinator prior to last season continues to look suspect.

OVERALL: D

This was a chance to move to 4-1 and the Packers blew it. Through five games, none of their three facets are good enough to truly label this team a Super Bowl contender.

There’s a lot of blame to go around, starting with defensive coordinator Joe Barry, of course. But if you’re pointing fingers at individual players, start with Rasul Douglas, who had three costly penalties. The biggest was a personal foul for unnecessary roughness that turned what would have been a third-and-goal for the Giants into a first-and-goal at the 2.

■ How many times have we heard LaFleur scold himself for not giving Aaron Jones and AJ Dillon enough touches?

Where was that voice in his head on Sunday when he all-but ignored his two productive running backs in the second half.

Jones finished with 63 yards on 13 carries, while Dillon had 34 yards on six carries. That’s a combined 97 yards on 19 handoffs, a healthy 5.1 yards per carry.

So what happened after the Giants tied the game at 20 after that 91-yard drive? Three consecutive incomplete passes from Rodgers, including a pair of deep balls to Lazard.

And what happened when Green Bay put together a nice

drive to set up a third-and-2 at the New York 7 late in the game? Back-to-back incomplete passes from Rodgers, both of which were knocked down before they got to the intended receiver.

It’s pretty clear LaFleur and Rodgers weren’t big fans of playing a game in London, but the Packers could have come home with a win had their two biggest decision-makers on offense not flinched.

What it means

The Packers had a chance to return home with a 4-1 record heading into a home game against the New York Jets. Remember, the schedule gets much more difficult starting in a few weeks.

Instead, it’ll be a long flight home for a team struggling to figure out what exactly it is.

And the heat definitely should be turned up on Barry.

LaFleur hasn’t had many head-scratching defeats to deal with during the regular season but this one qualifies.

Just when the Packers were starting to get their fans’ hopes up, they went all Spursy.



MORRY GASH, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wisconsin running back Chez Mellusi outruns New Mexico State defensive back Dylan Early on Sept. 17 at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison.

Badgers

From B1

that Mellusi wouldn’t be available Saturday when the Badgers (3-3, 1-2 Big Ten) visit Michigan State (2-4, 0-3). Badgers interim head coach Jim Leonhard said it was uncertain just how much time Mellusi would miss.

This marks the second straight year that Mellusi has missed time with an injury.

Mellusi, a Clemson transfer, rushed for 815 yards and five touchdowns on 173 carries in nine games with Wisconsin last

year before a torn left anterior cruciate ligament knocked him out for the remainder of the season.

“It’s certainly sad when you see your brother like that getting injured, especially with the journey he’s had,” left tackle Jack Nelson said. “I’m confident he’ll be back. I remember when that guy came back from his ACL, I was shocked. He looked like a bodybuilder, just incredible. There’s a silver lining in the sense that I know he’ll come back stronger than ever, better than ever.”

His absence will limit Wisconsin’s running-back depth behind Braelon Allen, who has rushed for 634 yards and six touchdowns.

“It’s hard for him,” Allen said. “He’s a guy who, no matter what he’s going through, he’s always going to try to be on the field and help his team out. For him not to be able to do that, at least right now, is tough. He was having a tough time after the game.”

Wisconsin also announced that tight end Hayden Rucci (right leg) would miss a second straight game and that safety Hunter Wohler (right leg) would be out for a sixth straight game.

In other roster news, reserve quarterback Deacon Hill announced on social media that he is entering the transfer portal. Hill’s only game action was a brief appearance in a 66-7 rout of New Mexico State on Sept. 17.

Myles Burkett beat out Hill for the right to serve as Graham Mertz’s main backup this year. Chase Wolf, who entered the season as the projected second-team quarterback behind Mertz, hasn’t played yet this season due to an injured right leg.

“I have a ton of respect for Deacon,” Leonhard said. “This is a little bit the new normal. Kids have to weigh what they think their future is, where they stand, what has the communication been with the staff. You get one opportunity to play college football. You like guys to continue to push and trust the process and trust the decision they made to come here, but sometimes it gets to a point where they feel like they have to move on.

“We’ll do everything we can to support Deacon. I think he’s got