



**1939**



THE  
**PACKERS CENTURY**

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**P R O J E C T**

*ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.*

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**1919-2019**

BY JIM RICE

[packerscentury.com](http://packerscentury.com)



## 1939

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**Record: 9-2-0 NFL Champions**

**Coach: Curly Lambeau**

- The selection of Larry Craig in the NFL Draft allowed Lambeau to move Don Hutson from the defensive line to the defensive backfield. The move extended Hutson's career.
- The Packers had one of the top offenses in the league. It was well balanced with 14 rushing touchdowns and 13 passing.
- Don Hutson led the league in catches, receiving yards, and average yards per catch. His yards per catch (24.88) is still a Green Bay record.
- The Green Bay defense was good. In the last four games, when it mattered most, the unit gave up just 29 points.
- The Packers put together winning streaks of two, three and four games to capture the Western Division for the second straight season.
- The Packers moved the championship game from Green Bay to a suburb of Milwaukee (West Allis, Wisconsin). It was played at State Fair Park which had more seats at the time than City Stadium.



1919-2018

CHICAGO

**CARDINALS**     **10**  
**PACKERS**         **14**

9.17.1939

This game was the tale of two halves – the first going to Green Bay, the second to Chicago. Arnie Herber’s passing put Green Bay on top to stay. He found Carl Mulleneaux from 26 yards away for a 7-0 lead. Two minutes later, after Andy Uram’s interception, Herber threw a 43-yard bomb to Don Hutson that set up another score.

In the second half, two Packer fumbles almost sunk the ship. Quarterback Cecil Isbell fumbled as he was sacked and the Cardinals cashed-in four plays later. In the fourth quarter, Joe Laws fumbled which led to a Chicago field goal. Fortunately, the comeback ended there.

After the game, the great Ernie Nevers, the Cardinal coach and former great running back who spent part of his childhood in Superior, Wisconsin, took exception to the Packer victory saying, "I still think we have the better ball club.....outside of two long passes and a prayer, what did you (the Packers) have?"<sup>1</sup>

|                  |          |           |          |          |           |
|------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Chicago</b>   | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>7</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>14</b> |

**Attendance: 11,792**

*“A set of pennants donated to the Packer corporation by the C. Reiss Coal Company decorated the walls of the stadium. Brightly colored, they carry the names of the National Professional Football League clubs. The new Lumberjack Swing Band made its initial appearance in colorful style, attired in bright uniforms and playing lovely music.”<sup>2</sup>*

1 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 9/18/39, Flatley, p. 13  
2 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 9/18/39, Flatley, p. 15



CHICAGO  
**BEARS**  
**PACKERS**

**16**  
**21**

**9.24.1939**

## **Bird Watching!**

Before the game, George Halas of the Bears stoked the rivalry with accusations of Packer fans spying on Chicago practices. He "went so far as to as to question some of the residents, all of whom claimed they were bird watchers."<sup>1</sup>

A brutal rivalry game included a few altercations. The biggest took place between George Musso of the Bears and Russ Letlow of the Packers. They were ejected for fighting.

Bill Osmanski and Bernie Masterson of Chicago scored two quick touchdowns on the ground in the second quarter to put the Bears in front 13-0 at halftime. Green Bay's comeback began with the second half kickoff. They marched 70-yards for a touchdown, and quarterback Cecil Isbell took it himself for the last 11 yards.

A bungled lateral from quarterback Bernie Masterson to running back Joe Maniaci was recovered by Green Bay's Bob Swisher on the Bears' 11-yard line. A few plays later, Clarke Hinkle's one-yard touchdown plunge made it 14-13 Green Bay. When the Bears fumbled a punt into their end zone, it was recovered by Packer rookie Tom Greenfield to seal the deal!

|                  |          |           |           |          |           |
|------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Chicago</b>   | <b>0</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>3</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>21</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>21</b> |

**Attendance: 19,192**

*There were 5 punts in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.*

<sup>1</sup> Bears vs. Packers, Swain, p. 81



CLEVELAND  
**RAMS**  
**PACKERS**

**27**  
**24**

10.1.1939

### **Fourth Quarter Troubles**

Green Bay held a 17-7 lead in the second half behind touchdowns by Clarke Hinkle and Ed Jankowski. When Arnie Herber “zig-zagged through the whole Ram team 14 yards for a touchdown,”<sup>1</sup> the Packers led 24-14.

The fourth quarter was all Cleveland. Their defense held the Packers scoreless, and rookie quarterback Parker Hall had a fantastic game for the Rams (13-20-192-1-0). Hall’s passing sliced-up the Packer secondary and Johnny Drake scored on a five-yard run to trim the lead to 24-21. One minute later, Green Bay quarterback Cecil Isbell was intercepted by Parker Hall at midfield. Hall’s day ended perfectly seven plays later when rookie running back Gaylon Smith went five yards around left end for the win.

|                  |          |          |           |           |           |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Cleveland</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b>  | <b>13</b> | <b>27</b> |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>24</b> |

**Attendance: 9,888**

*Cleveland ran for just 53 yards.*

<sup>1</sup> packershistory.net/1939Packers



CHICAGO

**CARDINALS**  
**PACKERS**

**20**  
**27**

**10.8.1939**

### **Another Collapse?**

The largest crowd to date in Milwaukee saw an offensive explosion of 738 yards – Packers 440, Bears 298.

Green Bay took the lead the second time they had the ball. Don Hutson caught a 25-yard pass from Arnie Herber and sprinted 92 yards for a 7-0 lead. Clarke Hinkle made it 14-0 on a one-yard run, and in the third quarter, Andy Uram swept around right end and sprinted 97 yards for a touchdown!

Trailing 21-0 in the fourth quarter, Chicago quarterback Jack Robbins threw two touchdown passes to Bill Smith. The second score came after a Packer fumble by quarterback Cecil Isbell. With only a seven-point lead now, Don Hutson picked off a Robbins pass on Chicago's 30. Three plays later, Hutson also ran it in from the two-yard line. Despite a late interception and touchdown by the Cardinals, the Packers held on.

|                  |          |          |          |           |           |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Chicago</b>   | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>6</b>  | <b>27</b> |

**Attendance: 18,965**

**Milwaukee**

*Uram's TD is the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest run from scrimmage in Packer history.*



DETROIT  
**LIONS**  
**PACKERS**

**7**  
**26**      **10.22.1939**

## Big Win!

In a showdown with the first-place Lions, Detroit scored first. A 58-yard run up the middle of the Packer defense by fullback Bill Shepard gave Detroit a 7-0 lead. Green Bay came back with two touchdown passes from quarterback Arnie Herber to Andy Uram and Don Hutson. They led 17-7 at the break.

Amazingly, Hutson caught only two passes and both went the distance. The first was a 60-yard touchdown strike from Herber in the second quarter. In the fourth quarter, the second came from quarterback Cecil Isbell who hit Hutson for a 51-yard score to end any doubt.

Green Bay outgained Detroit by more than 100 yards. The defense stole three passes – one by Hutson – and they “broke up passes, rushed passers, smeared line plays, stopped goal line advances, punted, passed, and ran the Lions to death.”<sup>1</sup> As was the practice on Tuesdays following games, the Packers met “to witness motion pictures of Sunday’s game.”<sup>2</sup>

|                  |          |           |          |          |           |
|------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Detroit</b>   | <b>7</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>26</b> |

**Attendance: 22,558**

*GB moved into 1<sup>st</sup> place tie with Detroit.*

*“Football fans of Green Bay and vicinity who plan to attend the Sunday game at Milwaukee are urged to lose no time in getting their ticket reservations salted away for a sellout is anticipated.”<sup>3</sup>*

1 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/23/39, Walter, p. 15

2 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/24/39, Walter, p. 15

3 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/24/39, Walter, p. 15



WASHINGTON  
**REDSKINS**  
**PACKERS**

**14**  
**24**     **10.29.1939**

In the rain, turnovers were the story. Six interceptions by Green Bay – three by rookie Charley Brock – and two fumble recoveries were too much for the undefeated Redskins to overcome.

The Packers drove 68-yards for their first score that was topped off by a two-yard run by Clarke Hinkle. Brock picked off his first pass and Green Bay took advantage with Cecil Isbell's touchdown pass by Hank Bruder for a 14-0 lead. Before intermission, Andy Farkas kept it close with a touchdown run.

In the fourth quarter, the Packers closed the deal. Sammy Baugh, who threw five interceptions, threw number four to Joe Laws. After the pick, Laws topped off the touchdown drive with a three-yard run for an insurmountable 24-7 lead.

|                    |               |           |          |          |           |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Washington</b>  | <b>0</b>      | <b>7</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Green Bay</b>   | <b>7</b>      | <b>10</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>24</b> |
| <b>Attendance:</b> | <b>24,308</b> |           |          |          |           |
| <b>Milwaukee</b>   |               |           |          |          |           |

*Sammy Baugh: 9-22-101-0-5*

*“Red hot Milwaukee fan for the Packers: Seymour C. Crinkler, who runs the men’s shop in the Schroeder Hotel.....handles a batch of tickets in his shop, and never misses a chance to boost Green Bay stock to outsiders who are unfamiliar with the Packers.”<sup>1</sup>*

1 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/30/39, Flatley, p. 14



**PACKERS**  
CHICAGO  
**BEARS**

**27**  
**30**

11.5.1939

### Lead changes sink Pack

Before this game, not to be outdone by George Halas (see 9/24), Curly Lambeau claimed that men in white coats were spying on Packer practices from the apartments across from Wrigley Field. Halas claimed they were biologists!

This back and forth battle had seven lead changes. Though the Packers threw the football all over Wrigley Field for 331 yards, the Bears shut down the run (54 yards) and intercepted three passes to knock the Packers out of first place.

A 72-yard punt return by Joe Laws started the scoring. Two long touchdown passes from quarterback Cecil Isbell put Green Bay in front 20-17 at halftime. The Bears took back the lead in the third quarter 23-20.

It stayed a three-point game until the eight-minute mark of the fourth quarter. Arnie Herber threw a 20-yard scoring strike to Don Huson who "speared the ball over the goal line"<sup>1</sup> with eight minutes left for a 27-23 lead. Six plays later though, Chicago's rookie quarterback, Sid Luckman, had the Bears inside Green Bay's five-yard line. From there, another rookie, Bill Osmanski took it in.

|                            |           |           |          |          |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Green Bay</b>           | <b>13</b> | <b>7</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>27</b> |
| <b>Chicago</b>             | <b>7</b>  | <b>10</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>30</b> |
| <b>Attendance: 40, 537</b> |           |           |          |          |           |

*The Packers passed for 311 yards.*

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/6/39, Walter, p. 15



**PACKERS**  
PHILADELPHIA  
**EAGLES**

**23**  
**16**

11.12.1939

The winless Eagles took an early 3-0 lead, but Green Bay came back with the next 20 points to take control. Philadelphia did not go down without a fight, however, as rookie quarterback Davey O'Brien completed 19 passes for 189 yards. He also threw three interceptions.

After an Eagles field goal, Don Hutson caught fire. His two catches – plus an end around run that went for 19 yards – put the Packers at Philadelphia's 20-yard line. Arnie Herber hit Andy Uram for the touchdown. The Packers led 13-3 at intermission following Charley Brock's 45-yard pick-six.

On the Packers' first drive of the second half, they ran the ball down Philadelphia's throat. Seven running plays covered 77 yards, and the touchdown came on Clarke Hinkle's nine-yard dash. Green Bay's winning ways were back on track!

|                     |          |          |          |          |           |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Green Bay</b>    | <b>7</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>Philadelphia</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>16</b> |

**Attendance: 22,862**

*The Press-Gazette referred to the Packers as "Goliath" in this NFL battle.*



**PACKERS**  
BROOKLYN  
**DODGERS**

**28**  
**11.19.1939**  
**0**

### Brooklyn Fans Impressed

Four minutes into the game, on Green Bay's first series, Arnie Herber found Don Hutson right away for a 69-yard touchdown for the lead. After catching Herber's short pass, the speedy Hutson broke free of two defenders and raced 43 yards for a touchdown. The Brooklyn crowd was amazed!

On the Dodgers' next series, fullback Jack Manders fumbled , and Earl Svendsen recovered for the Packers and took it 37 yards to the end zone to make it 14-0. Just before the half, quarterback Cecil Isbell threw a touchdown pass to rookie end Harry Jacunski for a 21-0 lead. In the third quarter, an interception by Joe Laws led to Green Bay's final points.

Though the Dodger fans "were out to root for the Brooklyns they remained to admire....the apple knockers from Wisconsin (who) tossed the sphere through the ozone. The Packers did everything with the ball but deflate it."<sup>1</sup>

|                    |               |          |          |          |           |
|--------------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Green Bay</b>   | <b>14</b>     | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>28</b> |
| <b>Brooklyn</b>    | <b>0</b>      | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  |
| <b>Attendance:</b> | <b>19,843</b> |          |          |          |           |

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/20/39, Davis, p. 11



**PACKERS**  
CLEVELAND  
**RAMS**

**7**  
**11.26.1939**  
**6**

### Whew!

The Packers looked listless in a scoreless first half. They were frustrated offensively, but they found the end zone just in time in the fourth quarter.

The Rams scored first after halftime. Quarterback Parker Hall and big Jim Benton hooked up for an 18-yard touchdown. Their missed extra point by Vic Spadaccini proved to be the difference.

Green Bay's offense struggled all game. They got inside L. A.'s 30-yard line four times, but came away without points. But, with two minutes left in the game and trailing 6-0, quarterback Cecil Isbell drove the Packers from their 41-yard line to the Cleveland 18. From there, he threw to a wide-open Joe Laws in the end zone. Tiny Engebretsen added the crucial extra point for the win.

In the final seconds, a 49-yard field goal try by the Rams was blocked, and Green Bay clinched at least tie for the division title!

|                  |          |          |          |          |          |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>7</b> |
| <b>Cleveland</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>6</b> |

**Attendance: 30,691**

*Largest crowd to date in Cleveland!*



**PACKERS**  
DETROIT  
**LIONS**

**12**  
**7**

**12.3.1939**

### **Division Champs!**

On a muddy field in the rain, Green Bay clinched its second straight Western Division title. They did it in front of the entire Chicago Bears coaching staff that traveled to Detroit to scout the Packers. A Green Bay loss would have forced a playoff game with the Bears.

A fumble by Detroit's halfback Dwight Stone led to a Green Bay field goal. The Packers returned the favor when Clarke Hinkle fumbled on the Green Bay 29-yard line. On Detroit's third play, Dwight Sloan went around right end for a 15-yard touchdown and redemption.

In the third quarter, Baby Ray of the Packers narrowed the lead to 7-5 when he blocked a punt out of the end zone for a safety. A short time later, after a quick-kick, Green Bay took over on Detroit's 46-yard line. On the ninth play of the drive, Hinkle powered through left guard for a 12-7 Packer lead. That was all Green Bay needed. They played conservatively the rest of the way and, "the Lions never got beyond their own 35-yard line in the second half."<sup>1</sup>

|                    |                |          |          |          |           |
|--------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Green Bay</b>   | <b>0</b>       | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Detroit</b>     | <b>0</b>       | <b>7</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Attendance:</b> | <b>30, 699</b> |          |          |          |           |

<sup>1</sup> The Scrapbook History of the Green Bay Packer Football, Zimmerman, Vol. 1 p. 38

## 1939 NFL Championship Game



1919-2018

NEW YORK

**GIANTS**  
**PACKERS**

**0**  
**27**

**12.10.1939**

Who moved this game, dubbed the *Dairy Bowl*, out of Green Bay to a larger stadium on the west side of Milwaukee? Curly Lambeau and the Packers, that's who! It made sense financially with a larger stadium available (8,000 more seats). Coupled with higher ticket prices, it was a financial winner for everyone. They charged "a top of \$4.40 (per ticket), an unprecedented high in professional football."<sup>1</sup> The tickets were gone in 48 hours, and devoted Packer fans back home faced a road game.

A packed house of 32,279 rabid Packers fans wanted revenge. They had not forgotten the bruising loss to the Giants in last year's championship game. They remembered the "bad" calls, and they were eager to see Green Bay's passing game to carve-up New York's #1 ranked defense.

The Giants played without their Head Coach, Steve Owen. Owen's mother had passed away, and his assistant, Bo Molenda, a former Packer, led the Giants.

Twenty-eight degrees and wind gusts of 35mph caused problems for the passing game. The wind also swayed the temporary wooden press box atop the grandstand which frightened some reporters. The locker rooms were also inadequate.

The only points in the first half came near the end of the first quarter. On an 11-play drive, quarterback Arnie Herber completed passes to Larry Craig, Milt Gantenbein and Don Hutson. On the touchdown, he zipped a six-yard pass to Milt Gantenbein between two Giant defenders for a 7-0 lead.

New York threatened before halftime after quarterback Ed Danowski and Tuffy Leemans drove the Giants to the Green Bay eight-yard line. An interception by Charley Brock preserved the first half shutout.

In the second half, quarterback Cecil Isbell and running back Clarke Hinkle led the Packers downfield for a 29-yard field goal by Tiny Engebretsen. Minutes later, an interception by Gantenbein gave the ball back to Green Bay. As he was being hit, Isbell uncorked a pass to a wide open Joe Laws. Laws made a nice, over the shoulder catch for a touchdown. Both Herber and Isbell had now thrown touchdown passes!

Green Bay's defense forced the Giants to play most of the game in their end of the field. They were held to 70 yards rushing and 98 passing yards. Six interceptions – two by Charley Brock – stopped them at every turn. Earl Svendsen's interception led to the final touchdown by Milwaukee native Ed Jankowski.

As the clock wound down, Packer fans came down from the grandstand to be closer to the action. Good-natured rooting got a little out of hand. Insults were hurled at the Giants, and it continued as their buses began leaving the parking lot. New York linebacker Jim Lee Howell tried to lighten the mood. "Come on, smile. We're lucky we got out alive." Just then a Packer fan threw a bottle at the bus, shattering a window."<sup>2</sup>

|                  |          |          |           |           |           |
|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>New York</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>  |
| <b>Green Bay</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>27</b> |

**Attendance: 32,279**  
**Milwaukee**

### **CHAMPIONSHIP STORIES!**

*A humiliating defeat? Not so, said Tim Mara, Giant Owner, "If we had to lose, there's no team I would rather lose to."*<sup>3</sup>

*"The Packers, arriving on the Milwaukee Road Chippewa at 4:47 this afternoon, will be escorted through town in parade fashion."*<sup>4</sup>

*“Somehow we couldn’t help but feel yesterday, that this little old city deserves an awful lot of credit for what the Packers have accomplished. Thousands of upturned faces waiting at the station for a team which played only a little more than 100 miles away, represent a great community spirit. Green Bay is indeed writing for itself a glorious athletic history.”<sup>5</sup>*

- 1 Green Bay Packers, Johnson, p. 85
- 2 [goldenrankngs.com/nflchampionship1939](http://goldenrankngs.com/nflchampionship1939)
- 3 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/11/39, Flatley, p. 13
- 4 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/11/39, p. 13
- 5 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/11/39, Walter, p. 14



## 1939 Team Statistics

### FINAL STANDINGS - Western Division

|           | <b>W</b> | <b>L</b> | <b>T</b> |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Packers   | 9        | 2        | 0        |
| Bears     | 8        | 3        | 0        |
| Lions     | 6        | 5        | 0        |
| Rams      | 5        | 5        | 1        |
| Cardinals | 1        | 10       | 1        |

### TEAM LEADERS

|           |        |
|-----------|--------|
| Passing   | Isbell |
| Receiving | Hutson |
| Rushing   | Isbell |
| Scoring   | Hutson |

### ALL-PRO

|                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Larry Craig        | End         |
| Buckets Goldenberg | Guard       |
| Clarke Hinkle      | Fullback    |
| Don Hutson         | End         |
| Cecil Isbell       | Quarterback |
| Russ Letlow        | Guard       |
| Baby Ray           | Tackle      |

### NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

Larry Buhler (1, RB)  
 Charley Brock (3, C)  
 Larry Craig (6, E)



1919 - 2019

# **PACKERS CENTURY**

*with Jim Rice*

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