

SEASON  
**35**

**1953**



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)



## 1953

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**Record: 2-9-1 (6th Place - last)**

**Coach: Gene Ronzani**

- A relative optimism prevailed after a 6-6 finish in 1952. Ronzani agreed to a new three-year contract, and many fans looked forward an improved defense and fewer turnovers.
- The Executive Committee began looking into Ronzani's decisions after the team lost four games in the preseason and three straight when it counted. They started talking directly to players about the team's performance and the coaches.
- The defense gave up the second-most points in the league. Quarterbacks Babe Parilli and Tobin Rote led the NFL with 34 interceptions.
- The offense struggled after Billy Howton was injured early in the season. They scored 95 fewer points than in 1952.
- After the Thanksgiving loss in Detroit, the Packers fired Ronzani and replaced by his assistants Hugh Devore, Scooter McLean, and Chuck Drulis.



1919-2018

CLEVELAND  
**BROWNS**  
**PACKERS**

**27** 9.27.1953  
**0**

### **New Digs!**

The new Milwaukee County Stadium welcomed the Green Bay Packers and their fans for the first time. Green Bay played games here until 1995.

The Packers were shutout in their home opener. Otto Graham scored two touchdowns on the ground, and he passed for 292 yards. The Browns shut down Green Bay's passing game (eight completions), and the Packers turned the ball over four times. After this lopsided defeat, rumors started about Ronzani's future as head coach.

<b>Cleveland</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Attendance: 22,604**

**Milwaukee County Stadium**



1919-2018

CHICAGO  
**BEARS**  
**PACKERS**

**17**  
 10.4.1953  
**13**

There were nine turnovers and 15 penalties in this sloppy rivalry game. Tobin Rote’s touchdown pass to Bob Mann and Gib Dawson’s 60-yard punt return put Green Bay ahead 13-3. Packer fan Tom Pigeon recalls “when Gib Dawson ran back the punt for a touchdown it was called back on a penalty. Then he returned it again on the next play for a 60-yard touchdown.”<sup>1</sup>

The Bears came back with a long drive before halftime to cut the lead to 13-10. In the fourth quarter, a fumble deep inside Bear territory ended a Green Bay threat. A short time later, George Figner intercepted Tobin Rote. Quarterback George Blanda capitalized with a touchdown pass to Jim Dooley with 3:35 left for the win.

During this time, according to former Packer Bob Forte, “Every Tuesday in Green Bay after practice the whole team would have lunch with the Executive Committee at the YMCA. The committee members would question the coaches carefully. When lunch was over, each of the thirteen men on the committee would corner two, or three or four of the players and try to find out what was wrong with the coaches, the other players, and the team.”<sup>2</sup>

<b>Chicago</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>24,835</b>				

*It’s not unusual for a child to be lost at City Stadium, but when 24 fans are, that’s news. Milwaukee’s Ray Stanley, member of a 25-fan party, grew concerned when his companions failed to appear. So early in the first quarter, Tom White, assistant to P.A. announcer Jim Cofeen,*

*announced for the benefit of Mr. Stanley's friends that: "Ray is in Section J. He's not lost – you are!"<sup>3</sup>*

1 The Scrapbook History of Green Bay Packer Football, Zimmerman, p. 29

2 The Green Bay Packers, Johnson, p. 100

3 Green Bay Pres-Gazette, 10/5/53, Rimmel, p. 19



1919-2018

LOS ANGELES

**RAMS**

**PACKERS**

**38**

10.11.1953

**20**

### **Too Much Offense!**

This action-packed game produced a third straight loss. For the first time in its history, the Packers started the season 0-3. The losses came at the hands of three future Hall of Fame quarterbacks – Otto Graham (Browns), George Blanda (Bears), and Norm Van Brocklin (Rams).

After Green Bay took a 3-0 lead, the Rams led the rest of the way. L. A. quarterback Norm Van Brocklin picked apart Green Bay's defense. He threw 23 times for 250 yards, and his passing set up rushing touchdowns by Brady Myers (2), and one each by Tank Younger, and Rudy Bukich. Crazy Legs Hirsch caught eight passes for 168 yards. "The Dutchman" also threw a 59-yard touchdown pass to Skeets Quilan.

For Green Bay, Fred Cone provided all the offense with one touchdown run, two field goals, and two extra points.

<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>

**Attendance: 23,352**

**Milwaukee County Stadium**

*GB was outgained 412-278.*

*"Sgt. William Geyer, Green Bay soldier who was a prisoner of war in Korea for 33 years, was featured in a pre-game ceremony. Geyer stood at attention on the field as the Packer Lumberjack Band played "Stars and Stripes Forever."<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/12/53, Rimmel, p. 18



1919-2018

BALTIMORE  
**COLTS**  
**PACKERS**

**14**  
**37**  
10.18.1953

### Easy Win!

The Packers ran all over Baltimore for 303 yards. They beat the Colts “virtually without the aid of the forward pass, their favorite weapon for years and years.”<sup>1</sup> The offense was led by the backfield of rookie Al Carmichael and Howie Ferguson who produced led 126 of the 303 yards.

The scoring started when the Packers picked off a pass and recovered a fumble. Both of turnovers led to touchdowns. By the third quarter, Green Bay led 27-0. The Colts finally got on the scoreboard in the third and fourth quarters with two touchdown passes by quarterback Fred Enke.

<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>37</b>

**Attendance: 18,713**

*An unhappy Packer fan “leaped from the stands, traversed the cinder track surrounding the field in a twinkling and struck Haines (the referee) with his jacket. At this point, he was gang-tackled by six city gendarmes, who unceremoniously rushed him from the premises.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/19/53, Daley, p. 17

<sup>2</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/19/53, Rimmel, p. 8



**PACKERS**  
PITTSBURGH  
**STEELERS**

**14**  
**10.24.1953**  
**31**

### **Not a Prayer!**

“The local fans gave the Packers a parade before the team left for the nationally televised Saturday night game in Pittsburgh. The players were impressed with the support, but it didn’t help them much on the field.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first half, the Steelers grabbed a 17-0 lead, and the Packers managed just one first down. Green Bay fell behind 31-0 before recovering a fumble on the Pittsburgh one-yard line and scoring.

After the game, Ronzani explained that six or seven players had become ill with the flu and couldn’t play. The entire offense produced just 125 total yards.

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>22,918</b>				

<sup>1</sup> History of the Green Bay Packers, Vol. 4, Names, p. 99





**PACKERS**

BALTIMORE

**COLTS**

**35**

**10.31.1953**

**24**

## **Big Win!**

An emotional win for the Packers and the players carried Coach Ronzani off the field in the celebration!

In the first half, both Tobin Rote and Babe Parilli hooked up with Billy Howton to give Green Bay a 21-14 halftime lead. In the second half, Rote and halfback J. R. Boone connected for a touchdown. Breezy Reid scooted around right end for a 41-yard sprint to make it 35-17. In the final 30 minutes, the Colts were held to a field goal and a late touchdown.

The Packers outgained the Colts 404-268, and they picked up 25 first downs compared to 11 for Baltimore. When the team returned to Green Bay, "a five-player committee gave Coach Gene Ronzani a vote of confidence."<sup>1</sup> The committee consisted of Bob Forte, Clayton Tonnemaker, Dick Wildung, Tobin Rote, and Gus Cifelli.

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>33, 797</b>				



1919-2018

**PACKERS**

CHICAGO

**BEARS**

**21**

**11.8.1953**

**21**

Eighty passes were thrown – 35 by Green Bay, 45 by Chicago – as the Packers and Bears put up 471 passing yards. In the first six minutes, a pick-six by Bobby Dillion of Green Bay and a 41-yard touchdown run by Fred Cone put the Packers in front 14-0. The Bears rallied behind a pick-six of Babe Parilli by cornerback Don Kindt. In the second quarter, George Blanda's touchdown pass to Jim Dooley tied it at halftime.

It stayed 14-14 until early in the fourth quarter when Blanda's second touchdown pass put Chicago on top 21-14. As time ran down, the Packers drove into Chicago territory. For the first 49 yards, Tobin Rote steered the ship. Babe Parilli finished the drive with a 23-yard touchdown pass to Billy Howton to tie it with under two minutes remaining!

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chicago</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>39,889</b>				

*“About 1,000 fans greeted the Packers at the North Western Depot last night at 11:10 p.m. when they arrived from the Bears game in Chicago. The Packer Lumberjack Band added pep with a few selections.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/9/53, p. 20



DETROIT  
**LIONS**  
**PACKERS**

**14** 11.15.1953  
**7**

The last home game of the season ended in a tough loss to the defending champs. The Lions went out in front in the second quarter on an 83-yard bomb from quarterback Bobby Layne to Doak Walker. In the fourth quarter, big Leon Hart held onto a deflected pass from Layne for six more.

In between, the Packers were inside Detroit's 30-yard line six times with drives ending on the 4, 6, 7, 12, 15 and 26-yard lines. Two interceptions and a fumble stopped three of the drives, and two others ended on fourth down. They had little trouble moving the ball (394 yards), but they didn't convert until late it was too late. They also had a touchdown called back due to an offside penalty.

<b>Detroit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>20,834</b>				

*"The appearance of the Iron Mountain (Michigan) High School Band, which performed before the game and between halves, was well received."<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/16/53, Rimmel, p. 20



1919-2018

SAN FRANCISCO

**49ers**

**PACKERS**

**37**

11.12.1953

**7**

The Packers fell behind 20-0 in the first half before scoring their only points. They turned the ball over six times, and all of San Francisco's points came after the turnovers. Quarterback Y. A. Tittle threw a touchdown pass to end Billy Wilson and ran for two scores in the second half. Joe Perry led the 49ers with 153 yards rushing and a touchdown.

Quarterback Babe Parilli scored Green Bay's only touchdown. Overall, the Packers gave up 389 yards while the offense produced just 244.

**San Francisco 13 7 10 7 37**

**Green Bay 7 0 0 0 7**

**Attendance: 16,378**

**Milwaukee County Stadium**



**PACKERS**

DETROIT

**LIONS**

**15**

**11.26.1953**

**34**

On Thanksgiving, the Packers led 15-7 at halftime against the first-place Lions. But the home team roared out of the locker room in the second half and scored 27 unanswered points to completely knock out the Packers.

The turnaround was sudden. With a 15-7 lead, Al Carmichael fumbled a lateral from Babe Parilli on the Detroit three-yard line. Moments later, Bobby Layne connected with Cloyce Box for a 97-yard touchdown that started the rout.

"This was a perfect game for millions of the nation's grid fans who saw the game on television. The ball changed hands 12 times on intercepted passes or fumble recoveries; the tackling and blocking was vicious; tempers were short, and some of the individual performances were record-breaking."<sup>1</sup>

In an overall pitiful performance that included six turnovers, Coach Gene Ronzani resigned the next day after almost four years.

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Detroit</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>52,607</b>				

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/27/53, Daley, p. 49



**PACKERS**

SAN FRANCISCO

**49ers**

**14**

**12.7.1953**

**48**

Coach Ronzani was replaced by his three assistants Hugh Devore, Ray "Scooter" McLean, and Chuck Drulis. After a few days, Drulis stepped away.

The 49ers scored the first time they had the ball and were never threatened. Y.A. Tittle led San Francisco with 197 yards passing and two touchdowns. The Packers threw five interceptions, and they didn't score until they had fallen behind 21-0.

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>San Francisco</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>48</b>

**Attendance: 33,887**



**PACKERS**

LOS ANGELES

**RAMS**

**17**

**12.14.1953**

**33**

This was another nationally televised loss for the Packers on a hot day in Southern California. The Rams jumped out to a 26-0 first quarter lead behind quarterback Norm Van Brocklin. "The Dutchman" threw for two touchdowns in the first quarter and for 195 yards overall.

At the start of the fourth quarter, the Packers trailed by 19 points. Their only points came on a fumble they returned for a touchdown and an 80-yard touchdown strike from Tobin Rote to Billy Howton. For the game, the Packers completed just five passes while also tossing four interceptions. They were also outgained 463-239.

<b>Green Bay</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Los Angeles</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>

*The Rams threw five interceptions.*



## 1953 Team Statistics

### FINAL STANDINGS - Western Conference

	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Detroit	10	2	0
San Francisco	9	3	0
Los Angeles	8	3	1
Chicago	3	8	1
Green Bay	2	9	1

### TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Rote
Receiving	Howton
Rushing	Reid
Scoring	Cone
Interceptions	Dillon

### ALL-PRO

Dillon                      Defensive Back

### NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

Al Carmichael (1, HB)  
 Bill Forester (3, LB)  
 Roger Zatkoff (5, T)  
 Jim Ringo (7, C)





1919 - 2019

# **PACKERS CENTURY**

*with Jim Rice*

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