



1968



THE
PACKERS CENTURY

P R O J E C T

ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.

1919-2019

BY JIM RICE

packerscentury.com



1968

Record: 6-7-1 (3rd Place)

Coach: Phil Bengtson

- On February 1, 1968, Vince Lombardi announced his decision to step away from coaching and handle just the General Manager duties. He picked Phil Bengtson, his defensive coordinator to succeed him.
- In the franchise's 50th season, the Packers finished below .500 for the first time in a decade.
- The average age of Green Bay's starting lineup was 29.
- The league recognized the NFL Players Association as the legal representative of the players. A brief work stoppage in the summer lasted just 12 days.
- Due to injuries, Bart Starr missed two games and parts of six others.
- On defense, the Packers gave up the fewest points in the division (227), and they lost five games by seven points or less. The kicking game suffered dramatically with Don Chandler's retirement.



1919-2019

PHILADELPHIA
EAGLES
PACKERS

13
30 9.15.1968

Strong start!

Green Bay's first regular-season game without Vince Lombardi on the sidelines went smoothly. An 80-degree day greeted the defending champions who were 17-point favorites in the opener.

Bart Starr had a fine game (14-18-220-2-1) for his new coach. A touchdown run by Jim Grabowski followed by Starr's first touchdown to Carroll Dale, gave Green Bay a 14-3 lead in the second quarter. Dale's touchdown came after an interception by Bob Jeter. After Philadelphia's second field goal, they tried an onside kick that was recovered by Green Bay. Starr connected with Boyd Dowler a few plays later for a 55-yard touchdown that made it 21-6 at halftime.

Green Bay controlled the last 30 minutes with three Jerry Kramer field goals. Donny Anderson ran for 92 yards which led a very productive ground game that pummeled Philly for 185 yards. The defense intercepted one pass, held the Eagles under 100 yards rushing, and gave up a lone touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Philadelphia	3	3	0	7	13
Green Bay	7	14	6	3	30

Attendance: 50,861

"Happiness is when someone calls you on Sunday morning and asks if you can use two Packer tickets."¹

¹ Green Bay Press Gazette, 9/16/68, Larson, p. 11



1919-2019

MINNESOTA
VIKINGS
PACKERS

26
13 9.22.1968

The upstart Vikings shut out the defending champions for the first 30 minutes. Minnesota scored on two Bill Brown touchdown runs, and Jim Marshall's sack of Bart Starr for a safety gave them 16-0 lead at intermission.

The turning point arrived in the second half after when Bart Starr's touchdown run cut the lead to 16-6. On the Vikings next series, coach Bud Grant gambled on fourth-and-inches on Minnesota's 26-yard line. A quarterback sneak by Joe Kapp worked, but not without being contested by Green Bay. "He was stopped standing up wasn't he?"¹ asked coach Phil Bengtson. The placement gave Minnesota a first down, and it kept the 74-yard drive going. A touchdown run running back Clint Jones clinched it 23-6.

After the game, Ray Nitschke questioned the call, "We didn't think he (Kapp) made it. It seemed like he stood up before he moved. He never did move forward."¹

Minnesota	7	9	10	0	26
Green Bay	0	0	6	7	13
Attendance:	49,346				

¹ Green Bay Press Gazette, 9/23/68, Wagner, p. 17

² Green Bay Press Gazette, 9/23/68, p. 17



DETROIT
LIONS
PACKERS

23
17 9.29.1968

1-2

With three straight home games to open the season, Green Bay's 1-2 start officially got the worrying underway.

Green Bay got going behind two touchdown passes from Bart Starr to Carroll Dale. The first, on the fifth play of the game, was a 63-yard strike for a 7-0 lead. The Lions came right back after Lem Barney's interception with a touchdown. At halftime, Green Bay had outgained the Lions 236-95 and led 10-7.

Detroit turned the tables in the second half, and they outgained Green Bay 248-98. A tying field goal, and a 65-yard touchdown drive that Mel Farr's touchdown run finished off made it 17-10 Lions. Five minutes into the fourth quarter, Starr and Dale connected again to knot it at 17. It topped off Dale's outstanding day with 205 receiving yards, the third highest in Packers history to date.

With an assist from "Dame Fortune,"¹ Detroit pulled it out. With under two minutes left, quarterback Bill Munson fumbled at Green Bay's 25-yard line. Detroit recovered its fumble, and along with a penalty on Green Bay, the ball was put at the Packers 14. With under two minutes left, Munson threw his second touchdown to diminutive Billy Gambrell to win it.

Detroit	0	7	10	6	23
Green Bay	10	0	0	7	17

Attendance: 50,861

Bart Starr was sacked 4 times and he threw 3 interceptions.

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 9/30/68, Christl, p. 18



PACKERS

ATLANTA

FALCONS

38

10.6.1968

7

Too Old?

With concerns about a 1-2 record building, the Atlanta game couldn't have come at a better time. The Packers defeated an old critic, Norm Van Brocklin, making his coaching debut with the Falcons. With fans already worrying about the Packers being a bit on the older side, the team hit the road. Bart Starr's first quarter touchdown to Boyd Dowler and Chuck Mercein's field goal gave them a 10-7 first-half jump over the Falcons.

The Packers scored the next 28 straight points. The ground game bulldozed the Falcons all game with 158 yards, and Starr threw two more touchdown passes in the third quarter to Marv Fleming and Claudis James. They rolled over Atlanta's defense for 470 yards. The defense allowed only 154, and they picked-off four passes. Starr had an outstanding game (21-31-275-3-0), and the Packers ran 28 more plays!

Green Bay	7	3	21	7	38
Atlanta	0	7	0	0	7

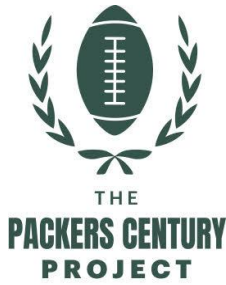
Attendance: 58,850

*"Wisconsin football fans have donated enough tickets for the October 13 Green Bay Packers - Los Angeles Rams game here so that 35 wounded Vietnam veterans may attend."*¹

*Protestors at a Catholic Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, protested the elimination of a sermon and a special prayer "for victims of the Vietnam War. "But Father William Mahoney said he knew of no agreement concerning the prayer, did not call for the prayer and offered no sermon."*²

1 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/7/68, p. 19

2 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/7/68, p. 11



1919-2019

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

PACKERS

16

10.13.1968

14

The Packers came right back to Wisconsin with this game in Milwaukee. Bart Starr sat out the game with a pulled muscle that he suffered during warmups.

A defensive battle ensued with L. A. quarterback Roman Gabriel completing just seven passes. Green Bay turned the ball over five times, and neither team gained more than 200 total yards. Donny Anderson's touchdown gave the Packers a 7-3 lead at halftime.

The Rams took the lead back in the third quarter. But Tom Brown's 52-yard punt return made it 14-13 Green Bay with five minutes left. With two minutes left, a controversial pass interference call against Herb Adderley – "I didn't touch him"¹ – brought the ball to Green Bay's 25. Bruce Gossett kicked the winner from the 27-yard line with 55 seconds left.

After the game, a dejected Bart Starr, on being questioned about his pre-game injury said, "I'd rather not talk about it, at all. I really don't know if it's serious or not."²

Los Angeles 0 3 10 3 16

Green Bay 0 7 0 7 14

Attendance: 49,646

Milwaukee County Stadium

1 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/14/68, p. 21

2 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/14/68, p. 21



1919-2019

PACKERS

DETROIT

LIONS

14

10.20.1968

14

Bart Starr was still nursing a sore right bicep, and Zeke Bratkowski led the team. There were eight fumbles in this Central Division battle, four by each team.

While they shut out the Packers in the first 30 minutes, the Lions jumped out to a quick 14-0 lead on two Bill Munson touchdown passes to Earl McCullouch. In the third quarter, the Packers began "one of the most stirring revivals in their long history."¹ A fumble by the Lions led to Zeke Bratkowski's touchdown to Carroll Dale that cut the lead to 14-7. In the fourth quarter, with eight minutes left, a fumble by Munson was recovered by Willie Davis. Green Bay drove to Detroit's three-yard line where Zeke Bratkowski was shaken up after being tackled. Bart Starr came off the bench and threw one pass, a touchdown to Boyd Dowler to tie it!!

With two minutes left, Herb Adderley recovered a Mel Farr fumble, and Bratkowski came back into the game. But after a completion deep inside Detroit territory to Claudius James, James fumbled the ball, and the tie held.

Green Bay	0	0	7	7	14
Detroit	14	0	0	0	14

Attendance: 57,302

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/21/68, Rimmel, p. 15



PACKERS

DALLAS

COWBOYS

28

10.28.1968

17

1919-2019

Even though they were 2-4, the Packers went to Dallas and upset the undefeated Cowboys on a Monday night! This win temporarily restored the hopes of many that the Packers would be alright.

After Dallas took a 10-0 lead, Bart Starr's triumphant return to full-time action got started. He completed 17 of 25 passes for 260 yards and four touchdowns! Carroll Dale and Boyd Dowler caught touchdowns, and tight end Marv Fleming caught two. Three of the touchdowns came in the second half as the Packers took control 21-10.

For Dallas, Don Merideth threw two touchdown passes, one to Bob Hayes, and three interceptions. One of the interceptions helped set up a Green Bay touchdown. Ray Nitschke also recovered a fumble in the fourth quarter, and Starr-to-Dowler put the game away.

Green Bay	0	7	14	7	28
Dallas	7	3	0	7	17

Attendance: 74,604

Starr was sacked 5 times.

"The Green Bay Packers received a huge telegram from Milwaukee. A Western Union spokesman said slightly more than 7,100 signatures were on the telegram. The message, described by a CBS television commentator as 'two city blocks long,' took between 3.5 to 4 hours to send."¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/29/68, p. 21



1919-2019

CHICAGO

BEARS

PACKERS

13

10

11.3.1968

Besides each team's new coach, Phil Bengtson and Jim Dooley, the news was that Bears ran all over Green Bay. Gale Sayers had a fantastic afternoon, rushing 24 times for a team-record 205 yards. Overall, they pounded their way to 291.

After a 3-0 lead at halftime, Chicago pushed it to 10-0 when rookie quarterback Virgil Carter scored from the two-yard line. The Packers responded with a 50-yard touchdown strike from Bart Starr to Carroll Dale to make it a three-point game. A fourth-quarter field goal by Chuck Mercein tied it at 10.

It stayed tied until Donnie Anderson's short punt was fielded with a fair-catch by Cecil Turner on Green Bay's 43-yard line. Just like the Packers had done in 1964, the Bears invoked the "free kick" rule*. Mac Percival nailed the winner from 43 yards away.

Chicago	0	3	7	3	13
Green Bay	0	0	7	3	10

Attendance: 50,861

GB missed three field goals.

** An NFL rule at the time permitted a free kick, punt or placement, without opposition, after one team makes a fair catch of a punt.*

George Halas did not attend this rivalry game in Green Bay for the first time since 1945. His brother, Frank, did, and his resemblance to George caught the crowd's attention. "Frank Halas acknowledged the crowd's cheers."¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/4/68, Wagner, p. 22



1919-2019

PACKERS

MINNESOTA

VIKINGS

10

11.10.1968

14

The Vikings swept their season series with the Packers for the first time. Fullback Bill Brown scored twice in the first half on short runs for 14-3 lead. On Brown's second score, Minnesota's big defensive end, Carl Eller, blocked for the offense!

Eller led Minnesota's aggressive defense line that pounded both Green Bay quarterbacks Bart Starr and Zeke Bratkowski. They were sacked five times five times, and the Vikings defense forced four turnovers. Eller knocked Starr out of the game, and Minnesota held on for the win in the second half.

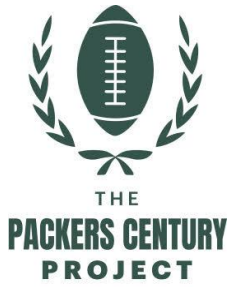
The Packers marched deep into Vikings territory five times, but they came away with just one touchdown. Donny Anderson scored it midway through the third quarter. But in the fourth quarter, after Starr was hit hard and replaced by Zeke Bratkowski, Anderson fumbled on Minnesota's 18-yard line. With just over a minute left, another fumble at midfield killed another promising drive. After the game, a battered Starr told the reporters "I'm having trouble remembering much about the second half."¹

Green Bay	3	0	7	0	10
Minnesota	7	7	0	0	14
Attendance:	47,644				

Bob Lurtsema, former Viking: "I know people always say the Packers-Bears rivalry is the best in football. But I'd have to say the Packers-Vikings rivalry is even better. That border battle is the best. I was five years playing in New York, and we'd play the Redskins and Eagles, but that was nothing compared to when the Vikings and Packers played. The fans are so similar and so devoted to their teams, and they were always good games. And it's still a great, great rivalry."²

¹ Black & Blue, Berghaus, p. 229

² Facing the Green Bay Packers, Carlson, p. 15



1919-2019

NEW ORLEANS

SAINTS

PACKERS

7
29

11.17.1968

Saints go home

This was the first game in Wisconsin for the New Orleans Saints. The Packers weren't cordial hosts, turning two first-quarter fumbles into 10 quick points. Green Bay led 17-0 after the first quarter.

The Saints offense produced just 136 total yards, and they turned the ball over four times. Tom Brown had an outstanding game for Green Bay with a fumble return for a touchdown and an interception. Bart Starr threw for 208 yards and a touchdown.

Kicking continued to be a problem for the Packers as Mike Mercer had a field goal attempt and an extra point blocked. A second extra-point attempt hit the upright and bounced back. Ray Nitschke was also ejected from an NFL game for the first time after an altercation with Monte Stickles.

New Orleans	0	7	0	0	7
Green Bay	17	6	0	6	29

Attendance: 49,644

Milwaukee County Stadium

Starr was sacked 5 times; once in the second half.



PACKERS

WASHINGTON

REDSKINS

27

11.24.1968

7

Go Zeke!

With Bart Starr out with bruised ribs, Zeke Bratkowski started game with a bang! He led the Packers to touchdowns the first two times they had the ball with eight straight pass completions. Leading 14-7 in the third quarter, a 47-yard bomb touchdown bomb to Donny Anderson topped off a great day for Bratkowski, "who began his pro career back in 1954 about the same time Anderson was entering the fifth grade."¹

Green Bay's defense never allowed the Redskins to go anywhere. They allowed just 33 yards rushing and 167 total yards overall. With the win, Green Bay crept to within a ½ game of the first-place Vikings.

Green Bay	7	7	10	3	27
Washington	0	7	0	0	7

Attendance: 50,621

¹ packershistory.net/1968Packers



PACKERS

SAN FRANCISCO

49ers

20

12.1.1968

27

Ouch!

A win would have given Green Bay the division lead. But Bart Starr injured his ribs in the first half, and the Packers lost the lead in the fourth quarter. Zeke Bratkowski replaced Starr and two Jim Grabowski touchdown runs gave Green Bay an early lead. Mike Mercer booted two 47-yard field goals for a 20-7 halftime lead.

But in a rally reminiscent to 1965, John Brodie directed a stirring comeback to damage Green Bay's postseason hopes. In the fourth quarter, he threw two of his three touchdown passes. Brodie capitalized on an interception for the first touchdown, and the second was a 59-yard strike. Both aerals went to halfback Bill Tucker, and they gave the Niners a 21-20 lead. Two field goals by Tommy Davis provided insurance.

The 49ers' defense had seven sacks, and the Packers managed just 217 yards. In the final minutes, Bratkowski was also knocked out the game, and he was replaced by Billy Stevens. "We're still a ½ game behind the Vikings and Bears. So, I guess they'll have to lose their last two if we hope to win it"¹ said Bengston.

Green Bay 7 3 10 0 20

San Francisco 0 7 0 20 27

Attendance: 47,218

Brodie threw for 301 yards.

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/2/68, Rummel, p. 19



BALTIMORE
COLTS
PACKERS

16
3 **12.7.1968**

Turnovers told the tale here. Thirteen of Baltimore’s 16 points came after Green Bay fumbles. With five minutes gone in the first quarter, Donny Anderson’s fumble led to Earl Morrall’s touchdown to Willie Richardson. Two other fumbles, one by Zeke Bratkowski and a second by Donny Anderson, led to field goals.

The Packers offense sputtered all game with four fumbles, nine first downs, and 163 total yards. This loss eliminated Green Bay from the postseason, and ended their run of three straight NFL championships. After the game, a dejected Jerry Kramer sat at his locker. “What a heartache to end it like this. We knew it was the last game here for a lot of guys. I’m telling you it was really emotional.”¹

Baltimore	7	3	6	0	16
Green Bay	3	0	0	0	3
Attendance:	50,861				

Thank You!

“With only moments left in the game, Packer Band Director Wilner Burke called over his microphone. ‘For four years these wonderful Packers have given some great thrills. How about a standing ovation for them.’ And the 50,861 Packer-Backers rose without hesitation and roared their love for the team.”²

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/8/68, Wagner, p. 33

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/8/68, Wagner, p. 33



PACKERS

CHICAGO

BEARS

28

12.15.1968

27

Bring on 1969

The Packers were out of the playoffs and they took the Bears with them. It didn't look that way at first when the back-up quarterback, and a former Chicago Bear, Zeke Bratkowski was knocked out of the game after his first-quarter touchdown pass.

But rookie Don Horn came in and had his way with Chicago's secondary. In the only appearance of his rookie season, Horn sparkled with 187 yards and two touchdowns! At halftime, Green Bay had the lead 21-10. They stretched it to 28-10 when Horn and Boyd Dowler hooked up for a touchdown.

Chicago quarterback Jack Concannon rallied the bruins. They scored the next 17 points to cut it to 28-27 with 3:58 left. After the Packers were forced to punt, the Bears were driving in Green Bay territory when Concannon was intercepted by Ray Nitschke with 1:07 left. The win so "stirred the football juices of Packers-Backers enough so that 1969 can now be looked forward to with optimism rather than pessimism."¹

Green Bay 7 14 7 0 28

Chicago 10 0 0 17 27

Attendance: 46,435

Horn: 10-16-187-2-0

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/16/68, Wagner, p. 21



THE
**PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT**

1919-2018

1968 Team Statistics

FINAL STANDINGS – Central Division / Western Conference

	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Minnesota	8	6	0
Chicago	7	7	0
Green Bay	6	7	1
Detroit	4	8	2

Team Leaders

Passing	Starr
Receiving	Dowler
Rushing	Anderson
Scoring	Dale
Interceptions	T. Brown

All-Pro

Dale	Cornerback
Gillingham	Guard
Jeter	Cornerback
J. Kramer	Guard
Robinson	Linebacker
Wood	Safety

Notable Draft Choices (Round, Position)

Fred Carr	(1a, LB)
Bill Lueck	(1b, G)



1919 - 2019

PACKERS CENTURY

with Jim Rice

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