



1959



THE
PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT

ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.

1919-2019

BY JIM RICE

packerscentury.com

1959

Record: 7-5-0 3rd (Tie) - Western Conference

Coach: Vince Lombardi

- On February 2nd, Vince Lombardi was named head coach and general manager of the Packers. He was given complete control of the franchise. Lombardi was the assistant coach in charge of the offense for the New York Giants.
- To change the losing attitude throughout the organization, Lombardi preached, "We are going to relentlessly chase perfection, knowing full well we will not catch it, because perfection is unattainable. But we are going to relentlessly chase it because in the process, we will catch excellence."¹
- The final 10 days of training camp were closed to the public. Players brought their families, the team continued to work hard, and it was ready for the opener.
- Sixteen veterans from 1958 were gone. The defense improved significantly, giving up 136 fewer points and 1,000 fewer yards. To help the defense, Lombardi purchased the contract of defensive back Emlen Tunnell from the Giants. On offense, receiver Boyd Dowler was named Rookie of the Year.
- Picked for last-place by most experts, the Packers opened the season with three straight wins. The *power sweep* by Paul Hornung and Jim Taylor became the bread-and-butter of the offense. Even though opponents knew the play was coming, they had trouble stopping it.
- This was Green Bay's first winning season since 1947.

¹ That First Season, Eisenberg, p. 76



1919-2019

CHICAGO

BEARS

PACKERS

7
9

9.27.1959

Great debut

What a fantastic way to begin a new era of Packers football. Wind and rain greeted new coach Vince Lombardi as he took on the Chicago Bears and George "Papa Bear" Halas for the first time.

A low-scoring battle ensued on a soggy field as both teams stayed with their ground games. They ran the ball 78 times compared to 37 passes. Starting quarterback Lamar McHan of Green Bay completed just three passes, but the Packer defense was impressive. The Bears gained just 171 yards, and running backs Rick Casares and Willie Galimore were held to just 57!

By the fourth quarter, two field goals by John Aveni had put the Bears in front 6-0. With just over eight minutes left, Richie Pettibone fumbled a punt that gave Green Bay the ball on Chicago's 29. Six plays later, they scored on Jim Taylor's power sweep around left end for a 7-6 lead. They held on tight, and with 47 seconds left, Dave "Hawg" Hanner took down quarterback Ed Brown in the end zone for a safety and the win!

Lombardi was carried off the field with the first of 13 wins in 18 tries against the "Papa Bear."

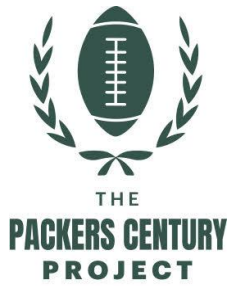
Chicago	0	3	0	3	6
----------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Green Bay	0	0	0	9	9
------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Attendance: 32,150

"That was a tremendous victory for the Packers over the Bears last Sunday. It is difficult to think of anything in the long history of the Bays that caused as much excitement or gave the state's pro football fans a bigger lift."¹

1 packershistory.net/1959Packers (News & Notes, 9/29)



1919-2019

DETROIT
LIONS
PACKERS

10
28 10.4.1959

It's two in a row for the Packers as quarterback Lamar McHan threw four touchdown passes! The first two went to Gary Knafelc and Don McIlhenny for a 14-0 first-quarter lead. After Detroit narrowed it to 14-10 in the third quarter, the Packers pulled away in the fourth. McHan and Max McGee hooked up twice to finish-off the tamed Lions.

Detroit turned the ball over five times, and two of the turnovers led to McHan's touchdown passes. Green Bay's defense stood tall, and they sacked quarterbacks Tobin Rote and Earl Morrall seven times. "They were tough all right,"¹ said Rote, a former Packer, who had his nose broken in the third quarter!

Detroit	0	7	3	0	10
Green Bay	14	0	0	14	38

Attendance: 32,150

*Mary Durocher, Lombardi's administrative assistant: "I still remember my first day on the job. Coach Lombardi came in and asked me to type up his itinerary. I can't remember how many copies he asked for, but he gave me the list of names he wanted the schedule to be given to, and his mother and father were on the list. I laughed and said something like, 'Oh, sure,' because I thought he was kidding. He said, 'No, it's true. My parents are elderly, and I like them to know where I am all the time.' I thought that was really nice."*²

¹ packershistory.net/1959Packers (News & Notes, Oct. 4)

² For Packers Fans ONLY!, Wolfe, p. 24



SAN FRANCISCO

49ers
PACKERS

20
21

10.11.1959

With a third straight win in front of another sellout crowd, the Packers were the talk of the league and the only undefeated team remaining!

In this battle, Green Bay ran the ball 55 times for 284 yards! They struck first, however, on a 30-yard touchdown strike from quarterback Lamar McHan to Max McGee. A touchdown run by Paul Hornung in the second quarter made it 14-6 at the half.

The 49ers roared back. An interception by Dave Baker deep in Green Bay territory set up their first score. Quarterback Y. A. Tittle threw a 13-yard pass to Billy Wilson who made a leaping catch in the end zone. After Hornung shanked a field goal, Tittle came right back with a 75-yard touchdown bomb to R. C. Owens to take a 20-14 lead.

Early in the fourth quarter, a fumble by the Niners was recovered by Dave Hanner. The Packers marched into 49ers territory where McHan found an open Gary Knafelc for a 21-yard touchdown pass. Hornung's extra point made the difference 21-20. The Niners had one more opportunity with 1:06 left, but Tommy Davis missed a 37-yard field goal.

After three straight wins, there was high praise waiting for Lombardi. "In one of the most fantastic coaching jobs of all time, Vince Lombardi has transformed a miserable loser into an unbeaten contender."¹

San Francisco	3	3	14	9	20
Green Bay	7	7	0	7	21
Attendance: 32,150					

Total Yards: GB 371 SF 239

“A full staff at the Packers' Stadium ticket office has been busy from morning to night. Everybody wants in. They'll be coming from all sections of the state” for the Rams game.²

¹ packershistory.net/1959Packers (New & Notes, Oct. 12)

² packershistory.net/1959Packers (News & Notes, Milwaukee Sentinel, Oct. 15)



LOS ANGELES

RAMS

PACKERS

45
6

10.18.1959

Reality check

Green Bay's offense went nowhere, and it's top-ranked defense was cut apart for 456 total yards.

Two Paul Hornung field goals kept Green Bay close in the first half 14-6. The final 30 minutes were a disaster for Green Bay as the Rams scored 31 unanswered points. Billy Wade threw for three touchdowns and 186 yards and the ground game, led by Ollie Matson, produced 258.

While the Rams felt they had put on their best performance of the year, the Packers felt just the opposite. They squandered opportunities with dropped passes and penalties. Lombardi didn't dwell on the loss, preferring to look forward. There's "no reason why they shouldn't bounce back," he said about the next game, but his words included a warning, "and they dam well better."¹

Los Angeles	11	3	7	24	45
Green Bay	0	6	0	0	6

Attendance: 36,174

Milwaukee County Stadium

Turnovers: GB 4 LA 0

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/19/59, Rummel, p, 17



1919-2019

PACKERS

BALTIMORE

COLTS

21

10.25.1959

38

The defending champion Baltimore Colts broke open a tight game in the third quarter.

Green Bay lit up the scoreboard in the second quarter with a 55-yard touchdown dash by Lew Carpenter. Though the touchdown momentarily shocked the Baltimore fans, the Colts struck back before halftime on a Johnny Unitas touchdown pass to Raymond Berry and an Alan Ameche touchdown run.

When John Symank of the Packers fumbled the second-half kickoff, Ray Nitschke fortunately recovered. On third down, quarterback Lamar McHan found Max McGee for an 81-yard touchdown. McGee caught the pass at midfield and blew past the Baltimore secondary to tie the game at 14 all.

In the next five minutes, Baltimore hit back with 21 points. Alan Ameche's touchdown run started the onslaught, and Bill Pellington's 30-yard pick-six stretched the lead to 28-14. On their next possession, McHan threw his third interception of the game. The Colts capitalized with a Unitas to Raymond Berry touchdown pass to essentially put matters to rest. Berry, Unitas' favorite target, caught 10 passes for 117 yards. "The best game of my career,"¹ Unitas called it at the time.

Green Bay	0	7	7	7	21
------------------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------

Baltimore	0	14	21	3	38
------------------	----------	-----------	-----------	----------	-----------

Attendance: 57,557

Turnovers: GB 6 BAL 2

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/26/59, Daley, p. 16



1919-2019

PACKERS

NEW YORK

GIANTS

3

11.1.1959

20

Coach goes home

Vince Lombardi went home to play at Yankee Stadium against his former team. It was the site of his last game with the Giants, the 1958 Championship Game against Baltimore.

New York was a formidable opponent. Even without an injured Frank Gifford, the defending Eastern Conference Champions handled Green Bay easily. "We were just overpowered on offense,"¹ Lombardi concluded as the Packers were held to their lowest rushing output of the season, and 161 yards overall.

When quarterback Lamar McHan proved ineffective with a bad shoulder, Lombardi turned to second-year quarterback Joe Francis, and not Bart Starr, to jump-start the offense. On his first series, Francis' energy briefly got the Packers moving, and Paul Hornung's field goal put them on the scoreboard. But that was it, as Green Bay completed just seven passes all game, and gained just 42 yards in the entire second half.

All of New York's points were scored by Alex Webster and Pat Summerall. On Webster's first touchdown run, New York quarterback Charlie Conerly, "knelt in the Giant huddle and called for a left sweep, still using Lombardi's terminology."²

Green Bay	0	3	0	0	3
New York	7	3	10	0	20
Attendance: 68,837					

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/2/59, Daley, p. 17

² That First Season, Eisenberg, p. 204



1919-2019

PACKERS

CHICAGO

BEARS

17

11.8.1959

28

3-4

Green Bay's opportunity to sweep the season series from the Bears for the first time since 1935 vanished quickly. It disappeared so fast that many Packer fans wondered if 1959 would be just another losing season.

This game stalled early for Green Bay as two fumbles in the first quarter by Paul Hornung (he had three) helped the Bears to a 14-0 lead. Green Bay made it 14-7 on Jimmy Taylor's touchdown run, but just before halftime, injured quarterback Lamar McHan was replaced by Bart Starr.

With the Packers trailing 21-7 in the third quarter, two goal-line stands by Chicago, and a dropped pass by Max McGee on the one-yard line did in Green Bay. The Packers were shutout in the second half until there were 27 seconds left. Billy Butler returned a kickoff 61 yards for a touchdown to help soften the blow of this decisive win by the Bears.

Green Bay	0	10	0	7	17
------------------	----------	-----------	----------	----------	-----------

Chicago	14	7	7	0	28
----------------	-----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------

Attendance: 46,205

"For the first time in five years, the Lumberjack Band went to Chicago!"¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/9/59, Rummel, p. 17



BALTIMORE
COLTS
PACKERS

28
24

11.15.1959

3-5

Three weeks later, these teams met again on a cold day in Milwaukee and put up 964 yards of offense! Bart Starr started his first game at quarterback for the Packers, but Baltimore's quarterback Johnny Unitas put on quite a show.

After the Packers took a 3-0 lead on a Paul Hornung field goal, Bart Starr was intercepted by Dick Szymanski. Halfback Lenny Moore cashed-in with a 26-yard touchdown run. Unitas then took charge throwing two of his three touchdown passes. The first completed an 11-play drive and the second put Baltimore up 21-3 with 1:19 left in the half. Both of the touchdowns went to Raymond Berry.

In the third quarter, Starr led the Packers back on their first possession with Jimmy Taylor scoring on a two-yard run. Two minutes later, Henry Jordan recovered an Alan Ameche fumble on Baltimore's 34. Starr and Taylor connected on a 20-yard touchdown pass to trim the deficit to four 21-17.

In the fourth quarter, Green Bay threatened again after Hornung's 62-yard burst off tackle put them on the 10-yard line! The Colts defense stopped the threat, and Hornung's field goal attempt went wide. After this defensive stand, the inspired Colts drove downfield, and Unitas threw his third touchdown pass to Jim Mutscheller. With three minutes left, Taylor ran for his third touchdown of the contest, but it was too late.

Baltimore	7	14	0	7	28
Green Bay	3	0	14	7	24

Attendance: 25,521

Milwaukee County Stadium



WASHINGTON

REDSKINS
PACKERS

0
21

11.22.1959

The Packers snapped their losing streak, Bart Starr won his first game, and Green Bay's defense pitched a shutout for the first time since 1949!!

Green Bay was led by an impressive performance by Starr who won his first game as the starting quarterback. He threw two touchdown passes in the second quarter to Gary Knafelc and Max McGee for the lead.

After the break, Paul Hornung's five-yard touchdown run finished the scoring. Without their starting quarterback Eddie Le Baron, back-up Ralph Guglielmi had trouble getting the Redskins into the end zone. Four times they threatened inside Green Bay's 20-yard line, but the Packers defense stepped up each time. For the game, they recorded three sacks, grabbed two interceptions, and allowed just 69 yards rushing.

With a smile on his face after snapping the four-game losing streak, Lombardi summed it up with, "I think we played a better ball game against Baltimore last week and against the Bears the week before – we just made too many mistakes against them. We didn't make as many today."¹

Washington	0	0	0	0	0
Green Bay	0	14	7	0	21

Attendance: 31,853

Early in Lombardi's tenure as Packers' coach, he asked Green Bay's "Golden Girl" Mary Jane Van Duyse to come up with a new cheer for the team. 'Go Pack Go!' began, and it's still cheered at Lambeau Field today and at many road games.

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/23/59, Rummel, p. 19



1919-2019

PACKERS

DETROIT

LIONS

24

17

11.26.1959

In a tradition that he'd eventually prefer to do without, Lombardi won his first Thanksgiving Game in Detroit. In a battle where all of the points were scored in the first half, the Packers fumbled the kickoff, and the Lions took an early 3-0 lead.

Green Bay came right back with two touchdowns from Paul Hornung. On the kickoff after Hornung's first touchdown, Ray Nitschke separated Terry Barr from the ball and Hornung took it in a few plays later for the 14-0 lead. Another Lions fumble led to Hornung's second field goal, and after just 15 minutes, it was Green Bay (Hornung) in front 17-3. In the third quarter, Jimmy Taylor got in on the scoring with a touchdown run for a 24-3 lead.

The Packers then got lackadaisical, and the Thanksgiving Day crowd whooped it up as the Lions struck twice before halftime to trail by just seven 24-17. Though Lombardi went ballistic in the locker room about the letdown, he had to be pleased overall as the defense held the Lions in check throughout the second half. The win was the first of three straight to close out the season!

Green Bay	17	7	0	0	24
Detroit	3	14	0	0	17

Attendance: 49,221

*The Packers could now "run over you, bloody your nose, and beat you. They weren't losers anymore. Back in Green Bay several thousand got in their cars and drove to Austin Straubel Field to greet the team plane, adjusting holiday plans to show support."*¹

¹ That First Season, Eisenberg, p. 24



1919-2019

PACKERS

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

38

12.6.1959

20

The Packers hadn't won in Los Angeles since 1947!

Behind a maturing Bart Starr and an explosive Paul Hornung who threw two touchdown passes, Green Bay led 28-7 after the first half. Both of Hornung's touchdown passes went to Boyd Dowler on halfback option plays that would become a staple of Lombardi's offense. "Hornung is working the option like Frank Gifford,"¹ Lombardi said with a smile thinking of his former star in New York.

The Rams cooperated with five turnovers including an early interception by Emlen Tunnell that led to Green Bay's first points. The Packers built their lead to 28-7, but L. A. got back in the game with two quick touchdowns in the second half. Leading now by just eight 28-20, Starr's poise and leadership really shined. He controlled the ball and ended any comeback ideas with a short touchdown pass to Don McIlhenny, and drive that Paul Hornung completed with 32-yard field goal.

Green Bay	14	14	0	10	34
------------------	-----------	-----------	----------	-----------	-----------

Los Angeles	7	0	13	0	20
--------------------	----------	----------	-----------	----------	-----------

Attendance: 61,044

"Many Green Bay and area people stopped at the (Packers) dressing room door. They all appeared so happy that the Packers were winning again. Like finding a long-lost friend – Mr. Win!"²

¹ packershistory.net/1959Packers (New & Notes, Dec 6)

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/7/59, Daley, p. 24



1919-2019

PACKERS

SAN FRANCISCO

49ers

36

12.13.1959

14

For the first time since 1950 when the schedule makers began having Green Bay finish its seasons on the west coast, the Packers won their final two games against the Rams and 49ers. Under Lombardi, it was another *first* for the Packers.

After falling behind 14-0, quarterback Bart Starr and halfback Paul Hornung led Green Bay's comeback. In the second quarter, Hornung scored on the ground and Starr connected with Gary Knapfel for a 14-14 tie at the half.

The offense went into high gear after intermission. The defense started the scoring in the second half when Bill Forrester trapped Y. A. Tittle in the end zone for a safety. The offense went into high gear with Hornung scoring on the ground and Starr hooking up with Boyd Dowler for six. Hornung finished the blowout with his third touchdown run.

Starr finished the season with 249 yards passing on 20 for 25 and two touchdowns. It completed Green Bay's best season since 1945!! After the game, ecstatic defensive back Hank Gremminger asked, "Why do we have to quit playing now?"

Green Bay	0	14	16	6	36
San Francisco	14	0	0	0	14

Attendance: 55,997

*"Packers Return Tonight; Huge Welcome Planned"*²

*"Suddenly, out of the night, a huge silver and blue plane, droned into view from the west and a thunderous, ear-splitting ovation went up from 7,500 throats with a single voice."*³

¹ That First season, Eisenberg, p. 256

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/14/59, p. 1

³ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/15/59, Rempel, p. 25



THE
**PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT**

1919-2019

1959 Team Statistics

FINAL STANDINGS - Western Conference

	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Baltimore	9	3	0
Chicago	8	4	0
Green Bay	7	5	0
San Francisco	7	5	0
Detroit	3	8	1
Los Angeles	2	10	0

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Starr
Receiving	Dowler
Rushing	Hornung
Scoring	Hornung
Interceptions	Four tied w/2

ALL-PRO

Dillon	Defensive Back
Forrester	Linebacker
Gregg	Tackle
Hornung	Halfback
Ringo	Center

NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

Boyd Dowler (3, E)
Dick Teteak (15, G)
Bill Butler (19, HB)
Tim Brown (27, HB)