



1951



THE
PACKERS CENTURY

P R O J E C T

ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.

1919-2019

BY JIM RICE

packerscentury.com



1951

Record: 3-9-0 5th Place – National Conference

Coach: Gene Ronzani

- Coach Ronzani angered fans when he moved training camp to Minnesota.
- Veteran fullback Ted Fritsch was released. Several Packer players also began serving in Korea.
- The Packers unveiled a new offense that featured only one running back in the backfield with the quarterback. They also ran it with both backs flanked out beyond the tackles.
- Green Bay passed more than any team. They threw for 26 touchdowns and ran for just eight. They passed for 2,846 yards which stood as a Packer record into the 1970s.
- Quarterback Tobin Rote led the team in passing and rushing. Halfback Billy Grimes also starred on the offense.
- The defense improved very little, and the team lost its last seven games to finish with the same record as 1950.



CHICAGO
BEARS
PACKERS

31
20 9.30.1951

Ronzani's debut

Green Bay's new coach faced his old team in the opener! Over 200 yards in penalties made this an exciting grudge match. The Bears jumped in front 17-0 before Bob Mann's second-quarter touchdown catch got the Packers on the board. Green Bay's new one-back offense started slowly and looked more cohesive in the second half.

Chicago scored first in the second half, but the Packers kept coming back. They had trouble running the ball, however. While the Bears ran for 163 yards, Green Bay generated just 64. The Packers threw the ball 38 times for 238 yards compared to 174 passing yards for Chicago. In the second half, the teams traded touchdowns, and fullback Jack Cloud scored a second touchdown for Green Bay, but it wasn't enough.

After splitting the series with Chicago in 1950, this loss irked fans who didn't like Gene Ronzani because of his previous connection to the Bears. Defensive end Dan Orlich also didn't like him. As he tells it, "I didn't think a lot of him. He would get up and talk. He'd look at the floor, at the ceiling, at the windows. He wouldn't look at you. I think he was very self conscious."¹

Chicago	10	7	7	7	31
Green Bay	0	6	7	7	20

Attendance: 24,666

"In my rookie season, we were getting ready to go up there, and Halas tells us that in Green Bay you keep your helmet on while on the bench. We played at old Green Bay East High School, and the Bears' bench was very close to the stands. People will throw beer cans at you."²

¹ Dan Orlich: The last survivor of the Lambeau Era, Christl

² Packers vs. Bears, Swain, p. 146



1919-2019

PITTSBURGH

STEELERS

PACKERS

33

35

10.7.1951

Only 8,000 fans showed up on this wet, rainy afternoon to watch one of the most exciting games ever played in Milwaukee.

The Packers jumped in front 21-0 behind touchdown catches by Billy Grimes, Bob Mann, and Ray Pelfrey. Tobin Rote's second-quarter touchdown run made it 28-0. Green Bay's new offense was clicking, and it produced 393 yards. Shockingly, the Steelers recovered from the onslaught and ran off 33 unanswered points. By halftime, the lead was down to 28-23.

In the opening minute of the second half, a pick-six by Jim Finks gave Pittsburgh the lead 30-28. In the fourth quarter, after the Steelers added a field goal, Green Bay countered with a Tobin Rote to Bob Mann touchdown pass. The 11-yard touchdown pass was called back because Green Bay was offsides. On a second try, Rote and Mann connected from the 16-yard line for the win.

Pittsburgh	0	23	10	0	33
Green Bay	21	7	0	7	35

Attendance: 8,324

Milwaukee

Total Yards: GB 393 PGH 283



1919-2019

PHILADELPHIA
EAGLES
PACKERS

24
37

10.14.1951

The points started early as Green Bay's Bob Mann and Pete Pihos of the Eagles caught first-quarter touchdowns passes. It would be the first of three touchdown catches for Bob Mann!

A 7-7 game blew up in the second half. Green Bay quarterback Bob Thomason threw three touchdowns passes, and Tobin Rote added another. The Packers took control with 27 unanswered points. They put it away in the fourth quarter after an 88-yard pick-six by Bob Summerhays and Bob Mann's third touchdown catch for a 37-10 advantage.

Though the Eagles scored twice in the final minutes, they struggled running the ball (66 yards) against a strong Packer defense. They also turned it over five times.

Philadelphia	0	7	3	14	24
Green Bay	7	0	10	20	37
Attendance:	18,489				

*"I've never seen such spirit as the fans give this team," said an Eagles' equipment man.*¹

*"St. Mary, defending champion and present leader of the Parochial Football League defeated St. Joseph 6-0 in an abbreviated game played between halves. Peter Cegelski scored St. Mary's touchdown on a short plunge."*²

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/15/51, Rimmel, p. 26

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/15/51, Rimmel, p. 26



LOS ANGELES
RAMS
PACKERS

28
0 **10.21.1951**

A much bigger crowd than two weeks ago, but the all-night rain kept many fans at home.

Packer fans came to see not only their team but also the stars from the west coast. Quarterbacks Bob Waterfield and Norm Van Brocklin excited the crowd along with Wisconsin's own Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch!

On a muddy field, the Packers missed two chances to take an early lead. After a scoreless first half, the game quickly turned into a rout. A third-quarter sprint of 79 yards by fullback "Deacon" Dan Towler started L. A.'s scoring. Both L. A. quarterbacks threw touchdowns, and their 21-point fourth quarter put it away. The Rams moved the ball very easily with 323 yards rushing and 502 overall.

Near the end of the game, an angry Ronzani and the Packers bench were slapped a 15-yard penalty for excessive protesting!

Los Angeles	0	0	7	21	28
Green Bay	0	0	0	0	0

Attendance: 21,393

Milwaukee

GB threw 50 passes, completed 22 for 243 yards.

*"Over 500 employees and distributors of the Miller Brewing Company, together with the Miller Band, were guests of the firm at the game. The band and its drum majorettes also contributed to the festivities with a between halves performance."*¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/22/51, Rimmel, p. 18



1919-2019

PACKERS

NEW YORK

YANKS

29

10.28.1951

27

"It was all New York for the first three periods."¹ Quarterback Bob Celeri threw two touchdown bombs of 52 and 75 yards for a 21-6 lead at intermission. Green Bay's only points came on a Bob Mann touchdown catch.

The Packers roared back for the biggest fourth-quarter comeback in team history prior to 2018! They rode the arm of quarterback Bob Thomason who had replaced Tobin Rote late in the third quarter. In the fourth quarter, Thomason threw three fourth-quarter touchdown passes in five minutes! Ray Pelfrey caught the first to complete an 80-yard drive. Jug Girard's 75-yard touchdown catch came next, and a 15-yard pass to Tony Canadeo put Green Bay on top 26-21.

After a short punt by the Packers, the Yanks scored again. Bob Celeri's third touchdown pass, his second to end Dan Garza, reclaimed the lead 27-26. On the game's final drive, the Packers moved quickly from their 47, and with 11 seconds Fred Cone won it with a 16-yard field goal!

Green Bay 0 6 0 23 29

New York 14 7 0 6 27

Attendance: 7,351

This was Green Bay's last win of the season.

¹ Associated Press, 10/29/51, p. 19



DETROIT
LIONS
PACKERS

24
17 **11.4.1951**

On a windy, 17-degree day, passing still ruled the gridiron. The Packers threw 44 times for nearly 300 yards and one touchdown. Detroit launched 15 aerials for 162 yards and three scores.

The game started slowly with field goals by Fred Cone and the great Doak Walker. After a 3-3 first half, Bobby Layne and big Leon Hart connected for two touchdowns. The first came after the Lions stole the football from Tony Canadeo after the whistle. The second came after another Packer fumble.

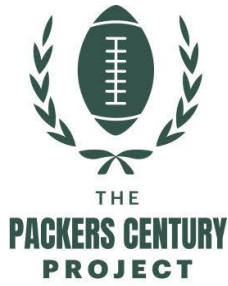
Green Bay's late comeback attempt fell short when Lane threw his second touchdown to Hart and a 47-yard touchdown bomb to Walker to put it beyond reach. Ronzani summed it up with, "You can't make mistakes and not feel the blow."¹

Detroit	0	3	7	14	24
Green Bay	3	0	0	14	27
Attendance: 18,800					

"West High School's colorful band, under the direction of Lester Slornicka, entertained between halves, presenting a variety of formations. Nearly 1,000 northeastern Wisconsin carrier boys 675 of the Press-Gazette's and 300 from the Appleton Post-Crescent, were guests of the two newspapers at the game."²

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/5/51, Rimmel, p. 17

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/5/51, Rimmel, p. 17



1919-2019

PACKERS

PITTSBURGH

STEELERS

7

11.11.1951

28

This was a nasty battle with two ejections and 19 penalties. Infractions totaled 186 yards with the Steelers called for 126.

Pittsburgh ran the ball 51 times for 176 yards and three touchdowns. The winning margin came when they capitalized on an interception for a 14-0 lead. The Packers were outgained 324-218. They scored with two minutes left in the game on quarterback Tobin Rote's touchdown pass to Bob Mann.

Green Bay	0	0	0	7	7
Pittsburgh	14	7	0	7	28

Attendance: 20,080

Seventeen Packers were injured in this game.



1919-2019

PACKERS

CHICAGO

BEARS

13

11.18.1951

24

Green Bay's offense featured both running backs spread out as receivers. Quarterback Tobin Rote led the Pack on the ground (150 rushing yards) and in passing (88 yards).

Green Bay surprised everyone in the first half. Don Moselle ran for six, and Tobin Rote's touchdown pass to Tony Canadeo gave them a 13-10 lead. But in the second half, the Packers were unable to capitalize on several scoring opportunities.

Chicago's comeback started on the opening drive of the second half. Tobin Rote fumbled on the Bears' 11-yard line after being hit by George Connor. Chicago recovered, and Lujack led them 89 yards for the go-ahead score 17-13. Green Bay was then stopped twice inside the Bears' 10-yard line without points. "What they didn't do with a couple of touchdowns in their grasp will undoubtedly be talked about on cold winter evenings in Green Bay."¹

Green Bay	0	13	0	0	13
Chicago	3	7	7	7	24

Attendance: 36,771

Penalty Yards: GB 130 CHI 108

¹ packershistory.net/1950Packers (Milwaukee Journal)



1919-2019

PACKERS

DETROIT

LIONS

35

11.22.1951

52

This was the first of a long Thanksgiving Day game tradition between the Packers and the Lions. This holiday classic continued through 1963.

Twenty-four million viewers watched. The 12 touchdowns provided riveting entertainment for fans on both sides, and the 52 points were the most ever scored against Green Bay to date.

The Packers led early 21-10 before the stronger Lions got going. Detroit dominated the rest of the way as Bobby Layne caught fire and threw four touchdown passes. Two punts were also returned for touchdowns, and a kickoff was returned for six more! The 87 points were topped only by the 946 total yards of offense! Green Bay's bright spot? Tobin Rote starred with 131 yards rushing, 200 yards passing, and three touchdowns.

Green Bay	14	7	7	7	35
Detroit	10	21	21	0	52
Attendance:	32,247				

“A great story was when Bobby Layne and the Lions were in town,” said Chuck Layne, former Packers director of public relations. “Bobby was drinking martinis, and after about the third pail, his teammates had to carry Bobby home. With that Wally (the owner) went and called his bookie and loaded up on the Packers. The next day, of course, Bobby Layne threw for about five (touchdowns) and murdered the Packers. Wally’s only comment after losing his shirt was, “I don’t mind losing the bet, but the son of a bitch never paid his bill.”¹

Tony Canadeo & Ed Neal: “Coming back to the huddle, big Packer offensive tackle Ed Neal told Tony Canadeo “Run it up my butt.” Neal was sure he could move Detroit’s big defensive tackle Les Bingamen out of the way. On the play, Canadeo got hammered. After two

unsuccessful tries, Neal insisted on one more try. After getting beaten up by Bingamen twice, Canadeo told Neal, 'You come back here now, and I'll go up there, and you can run it up my butt.'"²

1 Packers Heritage Trail, Christl, p. 21

2 What a Game They Played, Whittingham, p. 217



1919-2019

NEW YORK
YANKS
PACKERS

31
28 12.2.1951

Homecoming & Don Hutson Day

The Packers retired Don Hutson's #14. Arnie Herber and Johnny Blood were among a number of former stars that returned to congratulate the great Hutson. Along with Herber, Hutson completely revolutionized pro football's the passing game.

After touchdowns by Tony Canadeo and Ray Pelfrey, Tobin Rote's 55-yard touchdown run made it 21-7 Packers. The team collapsed in the fourth quarter against the winless Yanks (0-7-2). Quarterback Bob "Celery Head" Celeri brought the Yanks back with three touchdowns in six plays. Two came within 15 seconds of one another. Celeri threw touchdowns from 53, 31, and 41-yards away.

The Packers turned the ball over seven times. They couldn't slow down New York's big-play offense, and the Yanks passed for 303 yards. It was not a good Homecoming.

New York	0	7	3	21	31
Green Bay	7	0	14	7	28

Attendance: 14,297

"Only in Green Bay would a professional football fan be treated to an old-fashioned, college-style homecoming."¹

¹ History of the Green Bay Packers, Names, Vol 4, p. 64



PACKERS

SAN FRANCISCO

49ers

19

12.9.1951

31

An exciting game that had six lead changes. Two touchdown passes by Tobin Rote and two field goals by Fred Cone had Green Bay in the lead 19-17 going into the fourth quarter. San Francisco turned it around with quarterback Frankie Albert directing two quick scoring drives to win it.

Green Bay ran for just 42 yards, and they were outgained by more than 200 yards (448-223). Tobin Rote also threw three interceptions.

Green Bay	3	10	6	0	19
San Francisco	3	7	7	14	31
Attendance:	15,121				

Former Packer Dan Orlich, on the train ride West: "We'd make another stop in Wyoming and practice. All the people on the train would watch us. Then we'd stop in the middle of Nevada and work out for 45 minutes. It seemed like we'd stop in the middle of the damn desert. People would get out and watch us. They didn't care if we were a little late."¹

¹ Dan Orlich: Last survivor of the Lambeau Era, Christl



PACKERS

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

14

12.16.1951

42

It's over

Both quarterbacks, Tobin Rote and Bob Waterfield, fired two touchdown passes in the first half. The Rams took over in the second half as Waterfield threw three more. The Packers outgained the Rams 424-407, but they turned the ball over five times. The Packers finished 3-9 season for the second straight season.

Green Bay	7	7	0	0	14
Los Angeles	14	0	14	14	42
Attendance:	23,698				



THE

**PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT**

1919-2019

1951 Team Statistics

FINAL STANDINGS – National Conference

I

Los Angeles	8	4	0
Detroit	7	4	1
San Francisco	7	4	1
Chicago Bears	7	5	0
Green Bay	3	9	0
New York	1	9	2

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Rote
Receiving	Mann
Rushing	Rote
Scoring	Cone
Interceptions	Girard

ALL-PRO

Rhodemyre	Center
-----------	--------

NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

- Bob Gain (1, T)
- Fred Cone (3, FB, K)
- Ray Pelfrey (17, RB)



1919 - 2019

PACKERS CENTURY

with Jim Rice

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