



1955



THE
PACKERS CENTURY

P R O J E C T

ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.

1919-2019

BY JIM RICE

packerscentury.com



1955

Record: 6-6-0 3rd Place – Western Conference

Coach: Lisle Blackbourn

- The team made \$69,594 in 1954, the most in its history.
- For the first time, hash marks graced the middle of the field.
- Green Bay started the season 3-1 with wins over the defending champion Lions, the Bears and the Rams. Optimism rose as they stayed in contention until November.
- Tobin Rote tied for the NFL lead with 17 touchdown passes. Howie Ferguson finished second in rushing with 859 yards. Billy Howton led the team in receiving for the fourth straight season.
- The defense came up short. The Packers gave up the most rushing yards in the league.



1919-2019

DETROIT
LIONS
PACKERS

17
20 9.25.1955

The Packers upset the defending NFL Champions with an exciting comeback. Green Bay trailed the entire game until they pulled it out at the end. This fantastic win for the Packers snapped an 11-game losing streak to the Lions.

In the first half, Green Bay produced just two field goals to trail 7-6. Just before the half, Packers quarterback Tobin Rote was hit in the backfield, and the ball popped loose. Gil Mains fell on it in the end zone, and Detroit led 14-6.

The Packers trailed (17-13) with 1:45 left in the game when they got the big break they needed. The great Doak Walker of the Lions missed a 16-yard field goal. Green Bay took over on the 20, and Tobin Rote completed five of six passes to put them on Detroit's 18-yard line with 20 seconds left. Rote's next pass was a bullet to Gary Knafelc who picked it out of the air and beat four Lions to the end zone to complete the upset.

In their exuberance, fans stormed the field. With a few seconds remaining, the police had to clear the field for the extra point and the ensuing kickoff. On the kickoff, former Packer, Jug Girard, couldn't break off a long return. Game Over.

Detroit	7	7	3	0	17
Green Bay	0	6	7	7	20

Attendance: 22,217

Watson Spaelstra, veteran Detroit sportswriter, called the on-field celebration near the end of the game, "The greatest thing I've ever seen. The fans in most cities are blasé, but they certainly aren't blasé here."¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 9/26/55, Rummel, p. 19



1919-2019

CHICAGO
BEARS
PACKERS

3
24 10.2.1955

A great effort by Green Bay's defense held Chicago to 217 total yards! The Bears never put together back-to-back first downs, and their only points came on George Blanda's 47-yard field goal. They also turned the ball over six times.

Green Bay quarterback Tobin Rote took advantage of two Chicago turnovers with touchdown passes to Billy Howton and Gary Knafelc. In one of the best days of his career, Rote also ran for a touchdown. Fullback Howie Ferguson led the Green Bay ground game as he bulled his way over the Bears for 153 yards. The Packers ran for 223 of their 411 yards.

This easy win put Green Bay at 2-0 for the first time since 1947!

Chicago	0	0	3	0	3
Green Bay	0	10	7	7	24
Attendance:	24,662				

"Two Green Bay parochial league entries, St. Mary of the Angels and St. Patrick, played to a 7-7 tie in an abbreviated game staged between halves."¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/3/55, Rimmel, p. 20



1919-2019

BALTIMORE
COLTS
PACKERS

24
20 10.8.1955

In a nationally televised game on a Saturday night, a big Milwaukee crowd welcomed home Baltimore's rookie running back Alan Ameche. Ameche grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin!

Fans were treated to a riveting 35-point first half. Between touchdowns by Green Bay's Billy Howton and Howie Ferguson, the Colts scored three times. Alan Ameche scored on the ground, and quarterback George Shaw threw two touchdown passes. Baltimore led at the break 21-14.

In the second half, field goals reigned. Fred Cone kicked two for Green Bay, and though it wasn't enough, the crowd appreciated how hard the Packers played. Baltimore coach, Weeb Ewbank, also felt the Packers represented themselves well. "They hit harder than anybody we've played. Our scouting reports were right; the Packers are a real good football team."¹

Baltimore	21	0	0	3	24
Green Bay	7	7	3	3	20

Attendance: 40,199

Milwaukee County Stadium

Richard "Ike" Eisenhower, Member, Packers FAN Hall of Fame *

*"Ike" went on a blind date to this game with Alice, the woman who would become his wife. Though they already knew of each other in high school, a friend set up the date. They sat in the last row of County Stadium to watch Green Bay lose a tough one to the Colts. The Packers lost, but Ike found his sweetheart for the rest of his life.
R. I. P. Ike.*

* Interview: 2/27/16

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/10/55, Rimmel, p. 19



1919-2019

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

PACKERS

28

30

10.16.1955

The rain-soaked fans who remained until the very end were rewarded. Green Bay got out to a 17-7 first-half lead and they stretched to 24-7 with the opening drive of the second half. Quarterback Tobin Rote threw three touchdown passes (two in the first half) to Veryl Switzer, Gary Knafelc and Billy Howton. He also tossed five interceptions.

Receiver Ron Waller started the comeback for the undefeated Rams. He caught a 15-yard touchdown pass from Billy Wade, and he also ran for a five-yard touchdown. With under four minutes to play, a pick-six by Jim Cason of the Rams put them in front 28-27.

On Green Bay's next series, Cason intercepted his third pass of the game with just 2:13 left. When Green Bay's defense stiffened, Norm Van Brocklin's punt was returned to L. A.'s 30-yard line. After Rote gained 11 yards, Fred Cone won it with his third field goal of the game with 24 seconds left!

Green Bay moved into a first-place tie with the Rams and the Colts at 3-1.

Los Angeles	7	0	7	14	28
Green Bay	10	7	7	6	30

Attendance: 26,960

Milwaukee County Stadium



PACKERS
CLEVELAND
BROWNS

10
41

10.23.1955

A.W.O.L. offense

A total blowout. Green Bay's offense went nowhere the entire game with just 161 yards. They scored their 10 points in the first half on a field goal by Fred Cone and a 100-yard kickoff return by Al Carmichael!

After intermission, the defending champs beat up Green Bay. After Carmichael's kickoff return made it 10-7 Packers, the Rams scored the next 34 points. They overpowered Green Bay with 454 total yards, and the Packers passed for just 42 yards. Coach Blackbourn was upset and disappointed. He summed it up with "Everybody played a bad game with the exception of Martinkovic, and we can be thankful he made as many tackles as he did."¹

Green Bay	3	7	0	0	10
Cleveland	0	14	7	20	41

Attendance: 51,482

Fifty U.S. citizens of Ukranian descent caused quite a disturbance outside a Cleveland hotel. "The Packers are easily the first in pro grid history to witness an anti-Communist demonstration less than two hours before kickoff."²

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/24/55, Daley, p. 17

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/24/55, Daley, p. 17



PACKERS

BALTIMORE

COLTS

10

10.29.1955

14

The Packers could not stop Baltimore's fullback, Alan Ameche. The Colts completed just five passes all game as they rode "The Horse" for 117 of their 202 yards on the ground. An interception by Don Shula led to Baltimore's only touchdown in the first half.

In the next 30 minutes, Green Bay took the lead on Tobin Rote's passing and his one-yard touchdown run. Later in the quarter, L. G. Dupre's 23-yard run put the Colts back in front 14-10. The Packers had two more chances in the final minutes. On their second drive, they failed to score from inside the eight-yard line on four tries.

Green Bay	0	3	7	0	10
Baltimore	7	0	7	0	14
Attendance:	34,411				

"The Green Bay Packers offer conclusive proof that pro football isn't for huge metropolitan centers only. These small-town representatives are up +35,000 in home attendance for four games over last year and very likely will wind up with an all-time record."¹

¹ packershistory.net/1955Packers



PACKERS
CHICAGO
BEARS

31
52

11.6.1955

52

The Bears tied the record for the most points ever scored against Green Bay. It was also the most points ever scored in a Packers-Bears rivalry game!

Everything went so well for the Bears that they never punted. Leading 21-3 in the second quarter after a touchdown, the ensuing kickoff went to Veryl Switzer of the Packers. Switzer was hit so hard on the return by linebacker George Connor of the Bears, "many in the hushed Wrigley field crowd thought Veryl Switzer might have been dead."¹ Fortunately, that wasn't the case.

After a second-quarter field goal, the Packers didn't score again until it was 45-3. The Bears trampled all over the Pack for 399 yards rushing, and 497 total yards.

Green Bay	0	3	0	28	31
Chicago	14	14	10	14	52

Attendance: 48,890

Turnovers: GB 4 CHI 5

"Even a heart attack didn't keep Alec Lewis veteran Superintendent of Service at the Knickerbocker Hotel in Chicago from seeing his beloved Packers play Sunday. Lewis, who hasn't missed a Green Bay game in Chicago in 25 years, also was on hand to greet them when they arrived at the hotel."²

¹ Packers vs. Bears, Swain, p. 168

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/7/55, Rummel, p. 20



1919-2019

CHICAGO

CARDINALS

PACKERS

14

31

11.13.1955

Old friends!

These two old rivals hadn't played since 1949 when the Cardinals won both games. In the renewal, the Packers snapped a three-game losing streak with a convincing win.

In the first half, they built a 24-0 lead behind two touchdown passes from quarterback Tobin Rote. Touchdowns went to Gary Knafelc and Billy Howton, and Rote also scored on a one-yard touchdown run.

While Green Bay's offense was clicking, the defense held the Cardinals to just 75 total yards. The Packers cruised to victory with Rote's third touchdown pass to Al Carmichael. They led 31-0 before the Cards scored in the fourth quarter.

After back-to-back games against the Bears and Cardinals, Blackburn said, "I'd say the Bears right now are a truly great team. I honestly thought before today's game that we could beat the Cardinals. Sometimes you have that feeling, and I felt that way."¹

Chicago	0	0	0	14	14
Green Bay	7	17	7	0	31
Attendance:	20,104				

¹ packershistory.net/1955Packers (News & Notes, Nov. 15)



1919-2019

SAN FRANCISCO

49ers
PACKERS

21
27

11.20.1955

Laterals!

In the first half, Y. A. Tittle's 33-yard touchdown pass to Carroll Hardy gave the 49ers a 14-13 edge at intermission. Green Bay's points came on two Fred Cone field goals, and Tobin Rote's pass to Billy Howton who lateraled to halfback Joe Johnson who took it home!

In the second half, the Packers "put on their greatest come-from-behind show"¹ of the season! After Tittle's second touchdown pass to Carroll Hardy stretched their lead to 21-13 in the third quarter, the final 15 minutes belonged to Green Bay! Tobin Rote and Howie Ferguson showed the way on a 91-yard drive that cashed-in with Rote's 39-yard touchdown to Gary Knafelc. After a 49ers fumble by Joe Perry, Rote took a lateral from Breezy Reid and hustled 49 yards to the six-yard line. On the next play with 4:39 left, Ferguson scored, and the Packers stayed one game behind the first-place Bears.

San Francisco	7	7	7	0	21
Green Bay	0	13	0	14	27

Attendance: 32,897

Milwaukee County Stadium

Total Yards: GB 452 SF 411

Though the Packers played just 90 miles south in Milwaukee, "nearly 1,000 persons waited out the Packers at the North Western Depot Sunday. The train was one hour late in arriving."²

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/21/55, Daley, p. 21

² Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/21/55, p. 21



PACKERS

DETROIT

LIONS

10

11.24.1955

24

Two fumbles by the Lions in the first quarter proved costly. The Packers cashed-in with a Fred Cone field goal, and a 90-yard drive with quarterback Tobin Rote and Gary Knafelc hooking up on a five-yard touchdown pass.

In the second quarter, Green Bay center Jim Ringo was taken off the field on a stretcher with a back injury. Rookie linebacker Tom Bettis replaced him. Bettis had no experience playing center which caused problems for the offense.

Trailing 10-0, the Lions roared for the next 24 points. They tied it before halftime on Bobby Layne's touchdown pass to Lew Carpenter and Doak Walker's 25-yard field goal. In the fourth quarter, Lew Carpenter's 49-yard touchdown run off right tackle gave them a 17-10 lead. They clinched it with a block of a field goal attempt that was returned 46 yards for a touchdown by defensive end, Sonny Gandee. Game over.

Green Bay	10	0	0	0	10
Detroit	0	10	0	14	24

Attendance: 51,685

Turnovers: GB 7 DET 6



PACKERS

SAN FRANCISCO

49ers

28

12.4.1955

7

Since 1950, this was Green Bay's first win on the west coast in 10 tries! It did not look that way early when Y. A. Tittle capitalized on a Green Bay fumble with a touchdown pass to flanker Billy Wilson.

In the second quarter, the Packers sprung back with the 28 points! An interception by Roger Zatkoff led to Tobin Rote's one-yard touchdown run after a 67-yard march. A blocked punt by former 49er Pat O'Donghue was picked up by big Len Szafaryn who rumbled 28 yards for six more!

Breezy Reid closed out the scoring with two touchdowns! The first, at the end of the half, was a short touchdown run. In the third quarter, he caught a 60-yard touchdown pass from Rote!

While the Niners won the statistical battle, the Packer defense kept Y. A. Tittle contained with 104 yards passing, and they intercepted four passes.

Green Bay	0	21	7	0	28
San Francisco	7	0	0	0	7

Attendance: 32,897



PACKERS

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

17

12.11.1955

31

Big Crowd!

Ninety-thousand fans turned out for this one in the Los Angeles Coliseum! The Rams dominated, and the Packers never led. L. A. scored on their third play from scrimmage and never stopped.

A 55-yard touchdown run was the first of three scores by Ron Waller that paced the Rams. For Green Bay, Tobin Rote threw two touchdown passes to Gary Knafelc, but it was not nearly enough. The second touchdown came after the Packers had already fallen behind 31-10.

The victory clinched the Western Conference for Los Angeles. Green Bay finished 6-6, a two-game improvement over 1954. But after a 3-1 start, they sputtered to a 3-5 finish.

Green Bay	3	7	0	7	17
Los Angeles	7	7	14	3	31
Attendance:	90,535				

“They’ll remember this one for the attendance – 90,535 fans – the largest crowd ever to watch the Packers play a National Football League game.”¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/12/55, Daley, p. 25



1955 Team Statistics

FINAL STANDINGS - Western Conference

	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Los Angeles	8	3	1
Chicago	8	4	0
Green Bay	6	6	0
Baltimore	5	6	0
San Francisco	4	8	0
Detroit	6	5	1

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Rote
Receiving	Howton
Rushing	Ferguson
Scoring	Cone
Interceptions	Dillon

ALL-PRO

Dillon	Defensive Back
Ferguson	Fullback
Howton	End
Rote	Quarterback
Zatkoff	Linebacker

NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

Tom Bettis (1, LB)
 Jim Temp (2, DE)
 Hank Bullough (5, G)
 Norm Amundsen (6, G)
 Nate Borden (25, E)



1919 - 2019

PACKERS CENTURY

with Jim Rice

NOTICE:

You may print out a copy for your own personal use.

Not for republication or resale.

Do not forward.

©2019 Jim Rice / Packers Century Project

All rights reserved.

packerscentury.com