



1956



THE
PACKERS CENTURY

P R O J E C T

ALL THE GAMES. ALL THE STORIES.

1919-2019

BY JIM RICE

packerscentury.com



THE
**PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT**

1919-2019

1956

Record: 4-8-0 5th (last place tie) - Western Conference

Coach: Lisle Blackbourn

- This was the last season at City Stadium, the Packers' home since 1925. A referendum for a new stadium was approved on April 3, 1956, by a 2-to-1 margin.
- Tobin Rote led the league in passing yards and passing touchdowns. He was also Green Bay's leading rusher for the third time in seven years. Billy Howton led the league in receiving yards and touchdown catches.
- Ticket sales dropped as Green Bay's performance slipped. The defense gave up the most points in the league (342).
- During the season, tension increased between Coach Blackbourn and the Executive Committee.
- CBS Television signed a three-year contract to televise all Packer home games, including those in Milwaukee.



1919-2019

DETROIT
LIONS
PACKERS

20
16 9.30.1956

The Lions held the Packers to 10 first downs and 160 total yards. They took control early 10-0 and led 10-9 in the fourth quarter.

In the final 15 minutes, a costly penalty by Green Bay kept a 97-yard drive alive for the Lions. Bobby Layne finished the drive with a field goal for a 13-9 lead early in the fourth. On their next possession, the Lions kept rolling with Layne scoring from the one to make it 20-9. After the Packers retaliated with a Tobin Rote to Billy Howton touchdown, hopes rose for an opening game upset, but it was not to be.

Detroit	3	7	0	10	20
Green Bay	0	3	6	7	16

Attendance: 24,668

Total Yards: GB 170 DET 381

“More than 600 Press-Gazette carriers were guests of the newspaper at the game. They included newsboys from the Greater Green Bay area and from 71 smaller communities scattered over an 11 county area throughout northeastern Wisconsin.”¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/1/56, Rimmel, p. 19



1919-2019

CHICAGO
BEARS
PACKERS

37
21

10.7.1956

No Halas?

John 'Paddy' Driscoll temporarily replaced George Halas as the coach of the Chicago Bears. Al Carmichael greeted him with a 106-yard kickoff return, a Packers record, that tied the game at seven. Carmichael's record stood until 2011.

The Bears controlled the game by "scoring twenty-seven points the first five times they had the ball."¹ Trailing 27-14 in the fourth quarter, Green Bay fought back. Quarterback Tobin Rote and Billy Howton connected for their second touchdown to pull within six. But the last rivalry game at City Stadium went to the Bears. George Blanda's third field goal and Ed Brown's second touchdown pass won it for Chicago.

Chicago	10	10	7	10	37
Green Bay	7	7	0	7	21

Attendance: 24,668

"When the Packers played at City Stadium from 1925-1956, players used to take children in through the back gate so they could watch the game for free."²

1 Packers vs. Bears, Swain, p. 172

2 Green Bay Press Gazette, 11/23/13, p. A3



BALTIMORE
COLTS
PACKERS

33
38 10.14.1956

A 31-point second quarter fueled the excitement of the fans. Quarterback Tobin Rote did it all for Green Bay. He threw two touchdown passes to Gary Knafelc, and he passed for 192 yards overall. He also scored on two one-yard touchdown runs in the first half. The first came when the Lions failed to cover the opening kickoff, and Green Bay recovered it on the 10. Tobin Rote took it in three plays later for a quick 7-0 lead.

Rookie Lenny Moore starred for the Colts with two touchdown runs, and a touchdown pass to second-year halfback L. G. Dupre. All three scores came in the first half. In the final 30 minutes, Green Bay's defense didn't give up an offensive touchdown! The Colts scored on a 90-yard punt return and a fumble recovery that was returned for a touchdown. Bobby Dillon's 42-yard pick-six in the fourth quarter gave the game to the Packers!

Baltimore	6	14	6	7	33
Green Bay	7	17	14	9	38

Attendance: 24,214

Milwaukee County Stadium

Turnovers: GB BAL 4

School was virtually out Sunday in the village of Token Creek, Wis., which has a population of 90. Thirty-seven of them chartered a bus to Milwaukee and were on hand to watch the wild proceedings at County Stadium.”¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/15/56, Rempel, p. 20



LOS ANGELES
RAMS
PACKERS

17
42

10.21.1956

Howton Wows!

Another exciting win in Milwaukee with lots of yards gained! The Rams scored first, but two touchdown tosses from Tobin Rote helped the Packers to a 21-10 halftime lead.

The game belonged to Billy Howton who broke Don Hutson's team record with 257 receiving yards. Howton caught seven passes, two for touchdowns, for a powerful offense that put up 498 yards! A happy coach Blackbourn praised the Rote-Howton combination after the game. What "Rote and Howton did together was one of the greatest things I've ever seen," said a happy Blackbourn. "It was a real fine team deal too, but individually, that was something to see."¹

L. A. generated 385 yards, but two turnovers inside Green Bay's 15-yard line helped kill their comeback hopes.

Los Angeles	7	3	7	0	17
Green Bay	7	14	7	14	42

Attendance: 24,200

Milwaukee County Stadium

Total Yards: GB 498 LA 385

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 10/22/56, Rimmel, p. 21



PACKERS

BALTIMORE

COLTS

21

10.28.1956

28

This was the first pro start for quarterback Johnny Unitas, and he led Baltimore to a win with two touchdowns passes.

Green Bay had trouble holding on to the ball with six fumbles, and the ground game generated just 20 yards. Tobin Rote had a three-touchdown day, and he opened the scoring with a 66-yard bomb to Billy Howton. Unitas came right back with his two touchdowns, and Lenny Moore sprinted 72-yards from scrimmage for 21-7 halftime lead.

The Packers tied it in the second half. Tobin Rote scored on a five-yard run, and Bobby Dillon's interception of Unitas led to Rote's second touchdown to Howton. Lenny Moore had the last word, however, when he took a pitch-out and bolted around right end for 79 yards and the winning points.

After the game, Blackburn was concerned, "I've got 33 men, and 15 of them are injured. They took a real physical going over. I hope we can get most of them ready in time for the Browns. We'll need them all."¹

Green Bay	7	0	7	7	21
Baltimore	0	21	0	7	28

Attendance: 40,086

¹ packershistory.net/1956Packers (News & Notes, Oct. 31)



1919-2019

CLEVELAND
BROWNS
PACKERS

24
7

11.4.1956

Green Bay dropped to 2-4 after this loss. Twenty-eight thousand fans, the largest home crowd of the season for the Packers, watched them lose to their former quarterback, Babe Parilli.

The Browns controlled the game by running the ball 54 times for 222 yards. They threw just four passes all game, completing two, with one interception. The Packers tossed 29 and completed 14, but they couldn't find the end zone until the fourth quarter.

The scoring began when the future coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers Chuck Noll recovered a fumble and took it 39 yards to the end zone. Just before halftime, Parilli completed one of his passes to Ray Renfro for a 14-0 lead. Trailing 17-0 in the fourth quarter, Green Bay's only points came on a Tobin Rote to Billy Howton touchdown.

Cleveland	7	7	0	10	24
Green Bay	0	0	0	7	7

Attendance: 28,590

Milwaukee County Stadium

"St. Aloysius, defending West Allis parochial school champions, defeated St. Matthias, also of West Allis, in an abbreviated grade school game between halves."¹

¹ Green Bay Press-Gazette, 11/5/56, Rummel, p. 22



1919-2019

PACKERS

CHICAGO

BEARS

14

11.11.1956

38

Bombed out

Six turnovers by the Packers along with a very potent Chicago offense (492 total yards) made this no contest. Even without him on the sidelines, "Old Halas U. wasted no time in taking command of the situation"¹ the Milwaukee Sentinel reported.

Chicago built a 21-0 lead by the second quarter. Quarterback George Blanda threw three touchdowns in the game with two coming in the first half. Those touchdowns went for 23 and 69 yards. Along with a 52-yard pick-six by J. C. Caroline, the Bears led 28-7 at the break.

Blanda's third touchdown pass was a 70-yard bomb to Harlon Hill. For Green Bay, Tobin Rote threw touchdowns to Gary Knafelc and Billy Howton, but Bears were never threatened. Coach Blackburn had high praise for his team's chief rival. "The Bears are a real great ball club – maybe the greatest offensive team of all-time,"²

Green Bay	0	7	7	0	14
Chicago	7	21	7	3	38

Attendance: 49,172

Chicago's defensive back, Ken Gorgal, was involved in early union activities and was waived by the Bears. When the Packers claimed him, he refused to sign before they played Chicago. "I have too many good friends on the Bears. I didn't want to get up to Green Bay and get pumped (for information) from the coaches." Gorgal signed with the Packers after the Chicago game, and played the last five games. He never played in the NFL again.

1 packershistory.net/1956Packers (Milwaukee Sentinel)

2 Green Bay Press-Gazette, 12/12/56, Rummel, p. 24

3 Packers vs. Bears. Swain, p. 312



SAN FRANCISCO

49ers
PACKERS

17
16

11.18.1956

After 32 years, this was Green Bay's final game at the original City Stadium. In front of only "17,000 frozen and disgusted customers,"¹ the Packer wilted. It was also George Calhoun Day to honor one of the franchise's founders, and Bart Starr started his first game at quarterback.

On Green Bay's second possession, Starr led a 73-yard touchdown march, but the extra point was blocked. A field goal made it 9-0 Green Bay, but just before halftime, Y. A. Tittle's touchdown pass cut it to 9-7. An 86-yard run from scrimmage by Hugh McElhenny put the Niners in front 14-9. A field goal stretched it to 17-9.

Tobin Rote, who had replaced Starr, scored on the ground to cut the 49ers lead to one. In the final six minutes though, three fumbles by Rote, Al Carmichael, and Howie Ferguson did in Green Bay.

San Francisco	0	7	7	3	17
Green Bay	6	3	0	7	16
Attendance:	17,986				

*Tobin Rote: "I stayed there (Green Bay) longer than anywhere else, but the people were real warm, and they lived and breathed football all year long. I think Green Bay fans are the best-educated professional football fans in the country. If they knew you put out all you had, that's all they asked of you."*²

¹ packershistory.net/1956Packers (Milwaukee Sentinel)
² Greatest Packers of them All, Johnson, p. 50



PACKERS
DETROIT
LIONS

24
20

11.22.1956

Who's the Turkey?

A Thanksgiving Day comeback for Green Bay nearly waited until the last minute! After the defense put on a solid performance for the first 45 minutes, Tobin Rote directed three three touchdown drives in the final 15 minutes to stun the 7-1 Lions.

For the first 45 minutes, the Lions held the Packers to a field goal. Detroit led by 10 points at the start the fourth quarter (13-3) when Rote and the Packers caught fire. He "got hotter than a pistol, completing 11 passes for 166 yards in a furious fourth-quarter explosion."¹ Rote scored the first touchdown on a two-yard run, and he followed that with two drives touchdown drives of 86 and 82 yards. Touchdowns went to Fred Cone and Billy Howton, with Howton's coming with less than two minutes left to complete the stunning upset. The win damaged the Lions' hopes for another championship.

Green Bay	3	0	0	21	24
Detroit	7	0	6	7	20

Attendance: 54,087

¹ packershistory.net/1956Packers (News & Notes, Nov. 24)



PACKERS

CHICAGO

CARDINALS

24

12.2.1956

21

Two straight

The Packers dashed the championship hopes of the Cardinals thanks to another classic Tobin Rote performance in the second half.

In this exciting comeback, Rote topped off three drives with three touchdown runs to put away the Cardinals. After another first half where the Packers scored just three points, Rote took care of business after halftime.

The Packers outdid the Cardinals on the ground with Fred Cone leading the way with 92 yards on 12 carries. Rote came next with 63 big yards that included three touchdown runs. The Packers' ground game set the pace with 194 yards while the aerial attack produced 157.

"One play and you blow the game" said Detroit's coach Ray Richards regarding Gary Knafelc's only catch of the contest. The reception put Green Bay on Chicago's two-yard line to set up Rote's third touchdown and the win!

Green Bay	0	3	14	7	24
Detroit	7	7	0	7	21
Attendance:	22,620				



PACKERS
 SAN FRANCISCO
49ers

20
38

12.8.1956

*Photo caption: "A 102-foot telegram dispatched to the Packers in San Francisco today.....bearing nearly 4,000 signatures....."Although the home season is over and we won't see most of you again until next year, be assured the fans are still behind their team. We hope this message will give strong evidence of our confidence in each of you. Let's make this win Number 5, good luck."*¹

The 49ers turned the tables on Green Bay and came from behind with 21 points in the final quarter. They pounded the Packers with 246 yards on the ground.

After Tobin Rote's second-quarter touchdown made it 14-10 Green Bay, it was all San Francisco. The 49ers had little trouble with Green Bay's defense with 427 total yards. Y. A. Tittle threw touchdown passes to rookie Clyde Connor and Bill Wilson while halfback Hugh McElhenny led the round game with 132 yards.

With the Niners leading 24-14 after Wilson's touchdown, a pick-six by safety Dicky Moegle went for a 31-yard touchdown and an insurmountable 31-14 lead. For Green Bay, this loss ended any hope of a 6-6 season.

Green Bay	7	7	0	6	20
San Francisco	10	7	0	21	38
Attendance:	32,436				



PACKERS

LOS ANGELES

RAMS

21

12.16.1956

49

Tough ending

The Rams ran for 314 yards and passed for another 297 in this whipping of Green Bay. Norm Van Brocklin cut up the Packers' secondary completing 17 of 22 passes for 289 yards. The Rams gained 611 yards, the most ever given up by a Green Bay team.

After Tobin Rote opened the scoring with a touchdown run, L. A. scored the next 35 points to blow it open. It started with a Joe Marconi touchdown run, and the Rams poured it on after a 95-yard pick-six by safety Will Sherman.

The loss ended a disappointing season for the Packers who "took two steps backward from the year before."¹

Green Bay	7	0	7	7	21
Los Angeles	14	21	14	0	49
Attendance:	45,209				

Reflecting on the Rams and the Packers: "A team may even seem to take on the personality of its city. To watch their team play, Green Bay Packers fans in the 1950s proudly endured asphalt-cracking cold, frigid temperatures that would keep Rams fans home. But because the players had also endured that cold, the shared suffering gave Packers fans the sense that they too were in games with the players, struggling with them."²

¹ History of the Green Bay Packers, Vol 4, Names, p. 186

² Hollywood's Team, Hock, p. 51



THE

**PACKERS CENTURY
PROJECT**

1919-2019

1956 Team Statistics

FINAL STANDINGS - Western Conference

	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>I</u>
Chicago	9	2	1
Detroit	9	3	0
San Francisco	5	6	1
Baltimore	5	7	0
Green Bay	4	8	0
Los Angeles	8	3	1

TEAM LEADERS

Passing	Rote
Receiving	Howton
Rushing	Rote
Scoring	Cone, Howton
Interceptions	Dillon

ALL-PRO

Dillon	Defensive Back
Howton	End
Rote	Quarterback
Zatkoff	Linebacker

NOTEABLE DRAFT PICKS (Round, Position)

Forrest Gregg (2, T)
Bob Skoronski (5, T)
Hank Gremminger (7, E)
Bart Starr (17, QB)



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