

PACKERLAND™

RODGERS' 2018 OPENER: HIS GRITTIEST, GREATEST COMEBACK



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers prepares to throw a pass in the NFC Championship Game Jan. 24, 2021, with Tampa Bay nose tackle Vita Vea (50) giving chase. **File photo**

BY THOM GERRETSEN
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

As you watch New York Jets' quarterback Aaron Rodgers try to come back from a nearly season-long Achilles' injury, just know you can never really count him out.

Rodgers — who earned four National Football League MVP awards and a Super Bowl title in 18 years with Green Bay — saved his grittiest performances for the Packers' 100th season in 2018.

In a dramatic Sunday Night opener against Chicago, Rodgers was carted off in the second quar-

ter with knee injuries after being sacked.

But he only missed about 15 minutes of playing time before returning to lead the Pack to what was then its greatest fourth quarter comeback in team history.

Green Bay emerged from a 20-3 deficit at the start of the final period to beat the Bears 24-23 at Lambeau Field.

Media reports compared the Rodgers' comeback to New York Knicks' star Willis Reed.

He tore a thigh muscle in Game 5 of the 1970 NBA Finals but hobbled back in Game 7 to make two jump shots. That was enough to

inspire the Knicks to win their first championship.

With Rodgers out, the Bears' key free agent pickup from the previous spring — 2016 Defensive Player of the Year Khalil Mack — picked off backup QB DeShone Kizer for a touchdown that sent Chicago to the half with a 17-0 lead.

In the fourth quarter, Rodgers became the first in Packers' history to have three TD passes in the final 15 minutes — all on what he later confirmed was a broken upper shinbone at his left knee joint, plus a sprained MCL ligament in the same knee.

My vantage point that night was in Section 105, in the north end zone with seats allotted for Bears' fans.

Some wore Mitchell Trubisky's No. 10 as he began his second year as Chicago's starting quarterback. Others wore new Mack jerseys, testing them out for his Bears' debut.

He did not disappoint.

Besides his 27-yard Pick-6, the former Oakland Raiders' linebacker forced Rodgers to fumble, recovered the loose ball, and had three total tackles.

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Travel platform

BY TORI WITTENBROCK
SPORTS EDITOR

GREEN BAY — In an effort to boost fans' game day experience, the Green Bay Packers have recently launched a new game day travel platform known as Packers Travel to allow fans to book seats and craft custom game day packages for both home and away games.

The BookSeats Experience will allow fans to make the most of each game with travel needs such as hotels, restaurants, game day packages and more.

When using the Packers Travel platform, fans will have access to exclusive discounts that allow them the ability to create their desired travel experience according to their affordability and financial needs.

Through the new platform, fans will also have the ability to bundle various services or hospitality needs. These options will make more discounted rates available and allow for up to 30% discounts on certain packages.

Fans can access more information than just game day package building on Packers Travel as well. Information about the Packers organization, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), the Packers Newsletter and major cities pertaining to their schedule are featured on the site.

Vice President of Sales and Business Development, Craig Benzel said that his hope is to show gratitude to dedicated fans willing to travel around the country — or world — to show their support for the Packers organization through the newly accessible platform.

“From traveling around the country to cheer on the team on the road to celebrating Packers games at historic Lambeau Field, we know our fans enjoy making lifelong memories in conjunction with football season. We're excited to provide this innovative way for fans to plan trips to see the Packers wherever they take the field,” said Benzel.

BookSeats

The BookSeats venue is a new technological medium that combines and organizes various services and amenities so that football fans can include or exclude options according to their own personal preferences and budgets.

The “live marketplace” forum is intended to connect people with an efficient way to coordinate plans to make the most out of the football season.

“We are honored and excited to have been chosen as the fan travel technology partner of the Green Bay Packers, bringing ‘Packers Travel’ to Packers fans globally,” said Joseph DeMarinis, founder and CEO of BookSeats.

Packers fans can craft their travel experiences and learn more about Packers Travel at packers.bookseats.com.

Stories to tell

Lambeau tour guide shares his most valuable memorabilia

BY KRIS LEONHARDT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GREEN BAY — Lambeau Field tour guide Tom Pigeon has been providing visitors with a glimpse into the historic stadium for two decades.

And who better to provide that look into the past than someone with roots that go back to the beginning.

“Tom honestly knows more about Packers history than just about anyone I know,” Hall of Fame Curator Brent Hensel said during the “History of the Green Bay Packers Certificate” offered by UW-Green Bay.

“My dad was at the first game in 1919. He was 11 years old. He lived just a short distance from Hagemeister Park, where the team first started. He told me that one Sunday afternoon, he was playing in the backyard of a neighbor next door along with his brother, Ray — my uncle Ray — and a kid comes running over and says, ‘There’s a game over at the park.’” explained Pigeon.

See PIGEON page 6



The passion fueled by that bond with his dad, Norman, led to Pigeon collecting pieces of Packers history since he was a teenager. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

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Ahman Green receives Most Memorable Moments Award



Green

FROM THE PACKERS HALL OF FAME

GREEN BAY – During the 53rd Hall of Fame Induction Banquet, held Aug. 29 at Lambeau Field, Ahman Green received the Most Memorable Moments Award for his “Record Setting Day.”

As the 2003 regular-season finale approached, no one was thinking about a record.

At 9-6, Green Bay was tied with Minnesota for first place in the NFC North. In order for the Packers to get into the playoffs, they had to beat the Broncos at home, and the Vikings had to lose to the Cardinals on the road.

What ultimately unfolded was one of the most surreal scenes in the storied history of Lambeau Field.

Green Bay jumped out to a 7-0 lead on the opening drive. Running back Ahman Green contributed a modest 17 yards on five carries.

In the second quarter, the Packers extended their lead with a field goal and entered halftime up 10-0.

At this point, Green had 52 yards on 14 attempts.

The second half is when things got a little nuts. Green gained 19 yards on his first three runs in the third quarter.

Then after the Broncos cut the deficit to 10-3, Green ripped off a 47-yard run and finished that drive with a 2-yard TD plunge.

The Packers were up 17-3 heading into the fourth, and Green was at 120 yards.

The Packers' star tailback had just set the franchise's single-game rushing record seven weeks earlier, when he piled up 192 yards on 29 carries in a 17-14 loss at Philadel-



During the 53rd Hall of Fame Induction Banquet, held Aug. 29 at Lambeau Field, Ahman Green received the Most Memorable Moments Award for his “Record Setting Day.”

Kris Leonhardt photo

phia on Nov. 10.

That topped Dorsey Levens' 190-yard game against Dallas in 1997.

Earlier in December, Green also already had broken Jim Taylor's 41-year-old team record for rushing yards in a season (1,474).

But little did anyone know what his next carry would bring.

The Broncos blew their chance to get back into the game, with the Packers defense putting together an impressive goal-line stand.

The change of possession put the ball officially on the Green Bay two-yard line, and on the very first snap, Green burst through a hole on the right side and was off to the races.

He went 98 yards for the score, the longest run in franchise history, one yard longer than Andy Uram's 97-yard TD run vs. the Chicago Cardinals way back in 1939.

It gave him 218 yards for the game on just 20 carries, topping his own single-game mark, and 1,883 for the season, more than 400 beyond Taylor's single-season record that had stood for so long.

When the Broncos fumbled the ensuing kickoff at the goal line and Marcus Wilkins recovered for a touchdown to put the Packers up 31-3, Lam-

beau Field was in a tizzy.

The game was decided, and Green's record-setting day was done.

Although Packers fans had just witnessed history, the incredible day was about to get even better.

Minnesota was up by a score of 17-6 over the 3-win Arizona Cardinals, but the Cardinals didn't quit.

Arizona QB Josh McCown threw a TD pass to get the score to 17-12 with 1:54 left on the clock.

The game hinged on an onside kick. Remarkably, Vikings fullback Jim Kleinsasser muffed the onside recovery, and the Cardinals got the ball back.

With 31 seconds left they managed to get within Minnesota's 10 yard line.

Ultimately the game came down to fourth-and-25 from the 28-yard line.

As McCown got the snap off with 4 seconds left, he found Nate Poole in the right back corner of the end zone for the unbelievable win.

Lambeau Field erupted, and miraculously, the Packers were in the playoffs.

And oh yeah, Green had broken his own franchise single-game rushing record, and no one has come within 40 yards of it since. 🏈

COMEBACK

from page 1

Packers' right tackle Bryan Bulaga mostly succeeded in keeping Mack in check.

By late in the fourth quarter, though, the pressure on Rodgers was so intense that A-Rod hobbled between plays.

Al Michaels, who called the game on NBC, said Mack kept the pedal-to-the-metal so much it was like “watching a horror movie for Bulaga.”

Meanwhile, the Green Bay defense made certain that Trubisky received the same kind of heat.

He was sacked four times and threw for 171 yards without a scoring pass.

After the Packers took the late lead, the Bears benefited from a fourth-down roughing-the-passer penalty by Clay Matthews that gave Chicago a fresh set of downs.

Nick Perry then sacked Trubisky on the ensuing fourth down and forced a fumble which sealed the Pack's victory.

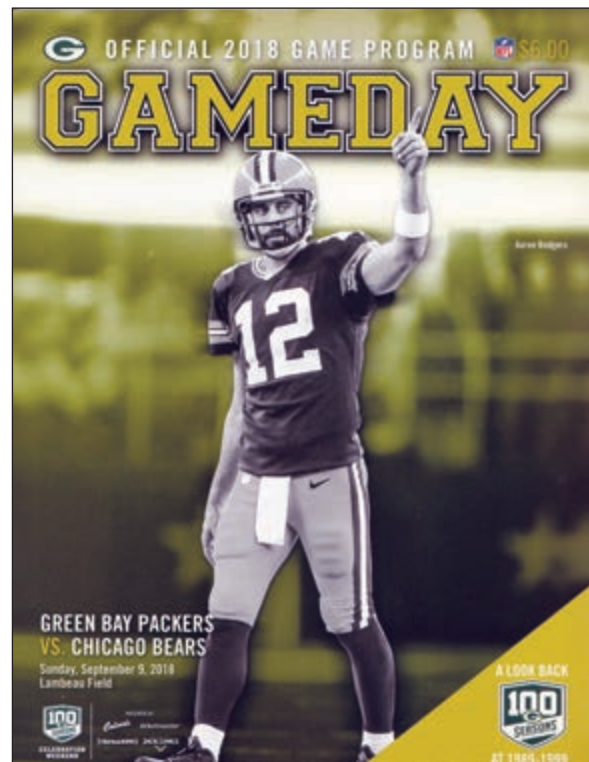
Trubisky's passer rating was 77.2 while playing all 33 minutes that Chicago held the ball.

Rodgers, in about 15 minutes of possession, amassed a passer rating of 130.7.

He threw for 286 yards with fourth-quarter touchdowns to Geronimo Allison, Davante Adams and Randall Cobb.

The decisive 75-yard score to Cobb was a backbreaker for the Bears; a short pass up the middle in which Cobb ran for 45 yards in an open field with only one potential tackler getting close.

Rodgers later told ESPN Radio-Milwaukee that his



The cover of the Packers' official program for this game could have hardly been more appropriate. **Thom Gerretsen photo**

return was “very painful.”

And he couldn't sneak up on the Bears — No. 12 received a standing ovation from the moment he left the tunnel and walked past the south end zone early in the second half.

As he joined his huddle with 9:10 left in the third quarter, Rodgers looked as if he had a confident stroll.

He played in all 16 games in the 2018 season while not at 100% at any point.

Rodgers said he reinjured the knee in Week 5 at Detroit.

And while he was “proud” not to miss a game, the injuries limited his mobility and created a more disjointed offense as he had to throw away more passes.

Rodgers' season ended

with a concussion early in the finale, affecting his vision in a home loss to the Lions.

Green Bay ended their 100th season at 6-9-1, while the Bears won the NFC North crown at 12-4.

Five years later in September 2023, the Packers matched their team-record fourth quarter recovery from 17 down to beat New Orleans 18-17.

It was a huge win at Lambeau for new starting QB Jordan Love, who had both a passing TD and a rushing score.

Still, it didn't have the flair of Green Bay's 2018 opener which Michaels called “one of the most dramatic wins in the venerable history of Lambeau Field.” 🏈

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Putting a focus on farms

2025 Draft Local Organizing Committee partners with Wisconsin family farms

2025 NFL DRAFT NEWS

FOR PACKERLAND

GREEN BAY – In a blend of sports and agriculture, the 2025 Draft Local Organizing Committee is partnering with family farms across Wisconsin to celebrate the upcoming 2025 Draft, scheduled for April 24-26, in Green Bay.

“This partnership aims to spotlight Wisconsin’s rich agricultural history while building anticipation for the biggest event in our state yet,” a Discover Green Bay release stated.

“The Draft Local Organizing Committee is joining forces with Wisconsin farms to create special Draft-themed corn mazes across the state. These unique attractions will be available to the public this fall, offering a festive and engaging way to celebrate both football and farming.”

“We’re thrilled to see the 2025 Draft create energy and anticipation not only in Green Bay but throughout Wisconsin, and this collaboration with family farms adds a unique local touch to the celebration,” said Discover Green Bay President/CEO Brad Toll.

The 2025 Draft is anticipated to draw over 250,000 fans and generate an estimated economic boost of \$20 million for Brown County and \$94 million for the state.

Each maze will feature a distinctive design celebrating the 2025 Draft, and farms will host additional activities and programming throughout the season,” the release added.



Feltz’s Dairy Store will debut its 12-acre maze on Saturday, Sept. 21, featuring “DRAFT 2025 GREEN BAY.”

Feltz’s Dairy Store image

PARTICIPATING FARMS

Petals and Plows Green House, Ripon

Petals and Plows will show off its 18-acre maze on Saturday, Sept. 7, showcasing “DRAFT 2025 GREEN BAY.” The farm will also offer pumpkins, squash, and a playground with Gravity Bin Basketball. A Fall Bash and Customer Appreciation Corn Roast will take place on Sept. 14.

Polly’s Pumpkin Patch, Chilton

Polly’s Pumpkin Patch opens its 17-acre maze on Friday, Sept. 13. This long-standing family farm, with a history dating back to 1889, will feature “DRAFT Pick is Polly’s,” along with a sunflower field, pumpkin patch and delicious food offerings.

Feltz’s Dairy Store, Stevens Point

Feltz’s Dairy Store will debut its 12-acre maze on Saturday, Sept. 21, featuring “DRAFT 2025 GREEN BAY.” The store will also provide a kid’s fun zone, complete with a bounce mat, slide and pumpkin patch.

Porter’s Patch, Bonduel

Porter’s Patch opens its maze on Friday, Sept. 27. The seventh-generation family farm will feature a maze design with 32 scarecrow football players, adding an interactive challenge for visitors.

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Jerry Kramer

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PACKERS OF THE PAST

Paul Coffman #82

BY MIKE WARREN
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

GREEN BAY — Forty years ago, Green Bay Packers tight end Paul Coffman was named to his third consecutive Pro Bowl.

Ten years later, Coffman was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame, along with early 80s teammate Gerry Ellis.

Coffman joined the Packers in 1978, the same year the team drafted wide receiver James Lofton and linebacker John Anderson in the first round, linebacker Mike Hunt in the second round, defensive back Estus Hood in round three and linebacker Mike Douglass in round five.

“I had broken my leg in ‘77 and he was getting ready to be a rookie in ‘78. So, he calls me one night and I don’t know who he is,” recalled Packers former quarterback Lynn Dickey told Packerland.

“Of course we both went to Kansas State, but seven years apart. He calls me and says, ‘Mr. Dickey, my name’s Paul Coffman. I’m a tight end at Kansas State and I just signed as a free agent tight end for the Green Bay Packers. Is there any advice you could give me?’ I said, ‘Well, how big are you?’ He said, ‘I’m six-three.’ I said, ‘How much you weigh?’ ‘Oh, about 212.’ I went, ‘212?’ I said, ‘Son, you’re a little light in the shorts here. You’re gonna have to put on some weight.’ He played at about 223 on a good day, but his legs were so strong. Guys would come up to hit him and he’d bring his legs up and they would bounce off of him.

“He was mentally and physically tough and smart. I worked with him individually. I sat with him in meetings and I tried to explain why we’re doing this and this and this. He wanted to learn. I could tell he was all ears.”

Coffman was a student of the game, studying hours of film at a time when not too many players – or teams for that matter – did that sort of thing.

“I grew up in a town of five hundred people (Chase, KS). My mom and dad were both school teachers and my dad was a farmer, and I felt like I had the best combination of hard work and education, and film study, remembering your plays, knowing the tendencies of the defense, helped so much when you’re running routes,” said Coffman. “You know where the hole is. You know what the quarterback’s reading and what the defense is trying to do to stop us. And then plus the hard work of my dad getting up at five in the morning, going out and plowing in the field until seven, coming back, putting on his suit and tie, teaching biology, chemistry and physics. As soon as school was over, he was back out in the field until dark. So, I felt like I could win every sprint after practice and I could hustle



Coffman Packers photo

downfield when somebody else caught the ball. I didn’t look at what I didn’t have. I looked at what I did have and tried to capitalize on it.”

Lofton would lead the Packers in 1978 with 46 receptions for 818 yards and six receiving touchdowns, while averaging 17.8 yards per catch.

Coffman, meanwhile, did not catch a pass, in a backup role to ninth-year veteran tight end Rich McGeorge, who as a rookie and second-year player in 1970 and 1971 was catching passes from now-Head Coach Bart Starr.

“Bart was an encourager,” recalled Coffman. “He would challenge you as a man. He’d say, ‘You’re better than this. I expect more out of you than that.’ When Bart Starr says something like that to you, you’re like, ‘Yes, sir. I’ll do everything I can to let you know you’ve made the right decision in picking me for your starting tight end.’”

In his second season with the Packers, Coffman beat out McGeorge for the starting job and led the team in receptions with 56, besting Lofton’s 54 and equaling him in touchdowns with four.

His 56 grabs were the most by a tight end in 23 years (Billy Howton, 1956) and stood as the benchmark for that position for 33 years, when – in 2012 – Jermichael Finley hauled in 61 passes from Aaron Rodgers.

Coffman’s best season as a pro was 1983, also one of the best in the team’s storied history. That year, Dickey led the NFL in passing, with 4,458 yards.

Coffman was a big part of that success, grabbing 54 receptions for a career-best 814 yards and 11 touchdowns, while averaging 15.1 yards per catch. His best game as a professional came during that same season as well, when — in front of a national television audience and against defending champion Washington on ABC’s Monday Night Football — Coffman hauled in six catches for 124 yards and two touchdowns, all in the first half.

The most catches by Coffman in a game came in 1980, when he snagged nine passes for 109 and a touchdown, in a 14-14 tie with Tampa Bay.

He eclipsed the 100-yard mark six times during his career, all as a Packer.



Paul Coffman, center, poses for a photo with the Arians team at this year’s Packers Hall of Fame Golf Classic held at Green Bay Country Club. **Tori Wittenbrock photo**

After eight seasons, Coffman was waived by the Packers six days before the start of the 1986 season. He returned to his home state a week later, signing a free agent contract with the Kansas City Chiefs, where he played for two different head coaches over two seasons (1986-87) and where he

games for the Packers between 1978 and 1985, going from an undrafted rookie to a three-time Pro Bowl selection (1982-84).

“You know, it’s not all about me,” the Kansas State graduate told us. “It was about my teammates. It was about Coach Bart Starr, who believed in me. I’d sit

Green Bay, Wisconsin.”

During his time as a Packer player, Coffman caught 322 passes for 4,223 yards and 39 touchdowns – leading the team three different times in that category (1979, 1983-84).

“The love the Packer fans have for their team, and if I can come back and give to the community, why not?”

“I didn’t look at what I didn’t have. I looked at what I did have and tried to capitalize on it.” – Paul Coffman

reunited with his college roommate, former Kansas State linebacker Gary Spani.

Coffman caught 17 passes for 117 yards in two seasons with the Chiefs.

He ended his pro career in Minnesota, where he played in eight games for the Vikings during the 1988 season without recording a catch.

Coffman appeared in 119

by Lynn Dickey in the meetings. I learned what I was doing. He’d explain to me why I was doing it, what the defense was trying to do to stop me. I watched how hard Larry McCarren worked. I watched how smooth James Lofton ran routes. I was put in a position to succeed. I was definitely in the right place at the right time in

Coffman said, when asked why he keeps coming back to the Packers Hall of Fame golf outing each July.

“This is a heck of a time. Get to see some of the old teammates, meet some new people and have a lot of fun, tell the stories — and of course they get better every year — so (I) love coming back to Green Bay.”



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PIGEON
from page 1

“It was the first Packer game, and he says it was like a grade school game. There weren’t bleachers, so you could just follow the action up and down the sidelines, which Dad was doing. All of a sudden this pass comes flying through the air and hits Dad in the back. One of the players comes and picks the ball up and says, ‘Son, you better get out of here. You’re going to get hurt.’ And the guy that threw that pass was Curly Lambeau.”

“So then Dad started taking me to the games in the mid-40s. So, I’ve seen every coach we’ve had from Curly Lambeau right up to Matt LaFleur today. I’ve seen Hutson play. I remember those uniforms so well, with the blue jerseys and the gold on the shoulders; that’s what I grew up with.”

And the passion, fueled by that bond with his dad, Norman, led to Pigeon collecting pieces of Packers history since he was a teenager.

His collection now spans the life of the Green Bay Packers and fills a large room in his home.

But, though a collector of memorabilia, his most valuable collection is his memories — memories that he continues to share with the thousands of people that visit Lambeau Field to tour the facilities.

His favorite game

“I snuck into one game, and it’s my all time favorite game. And I’ve told this story. I mean, I have a lot of stories to tell, but I’ve told this story to a number of people,” Pigeon recalled.

“The 1955 season opener against the Detroit Lions at the old stadium,

and a cousin of mine, Clayton, and myself went to the game.

“We get to the ticket window and the game is all sold out, at least for the kids section. They had a kids section back in those days. Couldn’t get in, so we left the ticket window, and we walked between the East High School and the stadium and there was a big alleyway that went to the back where the practice fields were.

“All of a sudden, there were hundreds and hundreds of kids back there, adults and some other cousins of mine were there, and they said to me, ‘Hey, Tom, stick with us. We’re going over the wall, which was about a 12-foot wall. So, all of a sudden my cousin clasps his hands together. I step in. He boosts me up to the top and I look down, there’s a cop right below me. You know what he said? He said, ‘Son, get down. Don’t get hurt. Find a place to sit.’

“So (we) sat on the grass on the east end zone almost the whole game, and if you look at old pictures, that’s where tons of kids are. They’re all on the grass. None of them bought a ticket. They all climbed over the fence. That’s how they got into the gate. That morning over breakfast, Tom had asked his dad, ‘Do you think we have a chance?’

“Because Detroit had beat us 11 straight times going into that game and they were really good back in the 1950s with all the great players they had. They won three championships in the 50s,” Tom explained.

“He said, ‘You always have a chance.’

“So, we go to the game, sitting in that end zone, watching the game and Detroit’s winning 17-13.

About five minutes to go, we have the ball up on the west end of the stadium towards Baird Street, and we fumble. They’ve got the ball on our five-yard line, five minutes to go. I said to Clayton, ‘We’re gonna lose again. They got it. So we got up and walked onto the cinder track, which was around the field. Actually, we were right behind Detroit’s bench. You could touch the players.

“It so happens, we held them and then they tried a field goal. And back in those days, now, the hash marks were a lot wider than they are today. So, if you tried a field goal, if you ran to the right, it would be put on the hash mark. You had a big angle. It wasn’t straight on. Doak Walker was a really good kicker, but the Lions missed. It still was 17-13.

“So, Tobin Rote was the Packers quarterback; (he) drove the team down the field, two minutes to go, threw a touchdown pass to Gary Knafelc with 20 seconds to go. Beat the Lions 20-17.

“My all-time favorite game.

“Everybody came piling out of those stands on the east end, picked up Gary Knafelc and carried him off the field. Some kids stuck 50 cents in his hand, and they had an article in the paper about it. That week, they were looking for the kid. That’s his money, he should get it back. But the kid didn’t come forward.

“I talked to Gary Knafelc years and years later about that incident, and he said that they had called their last time out with 25 seconds to go.



Though a collector of memorabilia, his most valuable collection is his memories — memories that he continues to share with the thousands of people that visit Lambeau Field to tour the facilities. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

They go over the sidelines, talk to [Coach Lisle Blackburn], and he said, ‘I was in the group, and Billy Howton was there — he was our best receiver — and then some other guys. So, they’re talking about what play to run, and he said, ‘Well, I was pretty young, so I didn’t get my mouth shut.’ And finally, Blackburn says

to him, ‘Knafelc, what do you think we should run?’ He says, ‘Well, they’re going to be looking for Howton.’ He says, ‘I’ll be wide open.’

“So, Blackburn says, ‘Okay, let’s run it.’ And Rote looked at me, and he said, ‘You better catch it.’ And he threw him a bullet. “Caught it with three lines trying to tackle him

— burst into the end zone. “That’s how we won the game.”

For more information on Lambeau Field tours, visit www.packershofandtours.com/plan-your-visit/admission-tickets.

Hear more memories from Pigeon on Spotify by searching for “Packerland” under podcasts. 🏈

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The Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame generously opened their vault to share pieces of Packers history with the Press Times to be highlighted each week for our readers. For more information on the hall of fame, visit www.packershofandtours.com. If you would like to donate Green Bay Packers memorabilia to the Packers Hall of Fame, contact Katie at 920-965-6986 or katief@gbphof.com.

An autographed copy of Arch Ward’s *The Green Bay Packers*, which was published in 1946. The book is signed by many players, including Curly Lambeau, Don Hutson, Walter Kiesling and Bruce Smith. It was signed on Dec. 3, 1946, en route to California. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

Green Bay youth introduce Ravens to tradition



Kris Leonhardt photos



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CHEESEHEAD NATION

MICHELLE PETERSON

BY TORI WITTENBROCK
SPORTS EDITOR

GREEN BAY – Unlike most Packers fans who were born and raised to bleed green and gold, Michelle Peterson — a Chicago Bears fan convert — said that her experience falling in love with the Packers was a bit unconventional.

“It literally started because my new boyfriend had a striking resemblance to Aaron Rodgers and at that time — we’re going back like 15 or 16 years ago — I’m ashamed to admit it now, but I didn’t know who Aaron Rodgers was at that time,” said Peterson.

“So everywhere we went people were doing double-takes and he’s a die-hard Packers fan born and raised in Northeast Wisconsin so he absolutely knew who Aaron Rodgers was.”

Peterson said her boyfriend at the time, now her husband, would often play into the role and make the most of people’s confusion.

“He had people convinced that he was related. We would actually go places and he was Googling on his phone Aaron Rodgers’ family and who he could pretend to be to get people to believe this story even more. He came up with this story about how he moved here from Chico, California, and his brother Aaron lives in the area,” said Peterson.

“It was always funny and then we would go to Packers games and it would happen there. We went the year the Packers won the Super Bowl. We traveled to Atlanta for the NFC Championship game. I think it was in Atlanta and everyone there thought that he was legitimately Aaron Rodgers’ brother. It all was born out of this resemblance of my now husband to Aaron Rodgers but then it just took me in a totally different direction because it’s not so much that he cared about that, but he just loves football and I think because it is so much of the culture here and it’s ingrained in this community,” said Peterson.

As Peterson’s relationship with her husband grew, so did her relationship with the Packers.

“Our first Christmas together I bought Packers stock for him so he could be a part-owner and it hangs on the wall in our house now,” said Peterson.

Being native to the Chicago area, Peterson said that the unique experience of being a Packers fan in Northeast Wisconsin is really what drew her into the community.

“Coming from Chicago we’re spoiled. It’s a big city and you have all these different sports teams. It’s easy to get lost in that in a bigger city but then to come here and see how the whole community is so connected to the Packers and it’s really the culture here. Sunday mornings you go to the grocery store and everybody is wearing their jerseys on Packers Sunday and the game is like broadcast overhead — every radio station tunes into the Packers game,” said Peterson.



Peterson with her husband and brother on a beautiful game day at Lambeau Field. Submitted photos

“That doesn’t happen in Chicago. You get to go to a Packers party and hang out with your neighbors and hang out with the community and come to Lambeau and have the tailgating experience.”

Although she’s converted to the Wisconsin way, Peterson said she enjoys getting the best of both worlds from her family’s dedication to the Bears.

“I love how I can bring my family from Chicago who love the Bears to have that fun-loving rivalry in a beautiful space. It’s a lot of fun and I just really embraced it to the point where I learned about the sport and am into it now. My husband enjoys that aspect, too because I can guess plays now and kind of have a clue about certain things that are going to happen and he’s like ‘huh, you didn’t know that 15 years ago,’” said Peterson.

Peterson said that she has even worked her passion for the Pack into her work life now.

“The new business that we just started is just another way to tie into the community. I try carrying the same thing that I learned from the Manitowoc grocery store on game day to our Hospital on Packer Sundays — my staff wears green and gold jerseys or scrubs to hope that we extend that level of comfort to the community and even the Packers game is on in the ER,” said Peterson.

According to Peterson, her work’s football obsession goes even further than just their Sunday attire.

“From my football ignorance to now having graduated to participating in my first fantasy football league, it’s really funny. Our hospital, the Green Bay Area Hospital, is having a fantasy football league and they asked me to participate and I was a little bit hesitant, but also like what the heck why not. I have my first draft this weekend. It’s a ‘snake draft’ — whatever that means. I’m excited to navigate this for the first time. I had to come up with a team name so I have the Peterson Pounders as my team name and it’s just a fun way for our little community to engage in the season and have some involvement,” said Peterson.

Like most Packers fans from the area, Peterson said that she has a few favorite memories from Lambeau Field.

“I would say over the years I’ve probably been here at least like a dozen or more times because my husband also owns a business in the community, and often from his vendors will get tickets. We’re spoiled a little bit — we’ve had like the outdoor experience where it’s freezing cold and you have to sit in the bleachers to the box seats which are arguably not the true experience, but I’m a person who doesn’t necessarily want to freeze outside, so it’s kind of nice to have the option to come in. We have like several family photos taking the elevator up and we’re taking that picture from above the stadium and things like that,” said Peterson.

Peterson said that her family’s game day experiences have been unforgettable.

“My whole family was here for a Bears vs. Packers game and we were outside at Stadium View participating in different games they had going on before we actually came into Lambeau. We were across the street but I just have a crazy memory of how they singled out my brothers because they were wearing Bears jerseys and got them to participate in a flashing contest where they had to raise their shirts to get beads. It was sort of like a Mardi Gras thing but they were spinning it on the males. My brothers did participate and then they got green and gold beads to wear over their Bears jerseys and they were like good sports about it,” said Peterson.

According to Peterson, your first game day experience at Lambeau Field is unlike any other sporting event.

“The first time I brought my daughter here, it was really cool because for her first Packer game they have buttons and like this whole experience. They recognize that maybe



Peterson said her husband’s passion for the Packers is the main reason she has converted from being a lifelong Bears fan.



Michelle’s daughter Emily, right, and Tim’s daughter, Tristan, left, have become best friends and enjoy watching games together despite supporting different teams.

you haven’t been here and if you stop at the desk they outfit you and they are so excited that it’s your first time here and they kind of embrace you. At the time my daughter was probably 12 years old and is now 22, but she had her jersey on and they make sure you hit all the key places within the stadium and where to take pictures and things like that and they gave her swag and a neat experience that I don’t think you would ever get in Chicago,” said Peterson.

Although she has been a converted fan for many years now, Peterson said their is one player she will never abandon as her all-time favorite.

“I have to go with Aaron Rodgers just because that’s kind of where my love affair began. Although, last season we also met Jordan Love and he was really cool. We were actually in Milwaukee for a Bucks game and I believe he was also attending the Bucks game, but beforehand we were out at a bar where you can throw darts and play games ahead of time. He came in and was completely awesome. My daughters recognized him and my husband approached him and asked if he would say hello to my daughters and take a picture and he was so gracious. My husband sent them a round of drinks and he took a picture and then my daughters posted it on social media, so that was really cool. He is very, very kind and sweet and then before they left, he came over and thanked my husband for the round of drinks so he was very genuine,” said Peterson.

As the regular season begins, Peterson said she can’t wait to see how the team performs this year.

“I’m hoping that they have a very successful winning season. With my family and the rivalry between the Packers and the Bears it’s always fun to see that and I believe they will have a very successful, winning season because with my family and the rivalry between the Packers and the Bears, that’s always fun to see and for the Bears-Packers game, we’ll be there for that. That’s always a game of more significance than just the rivalry, too. I hope we do well and it turns into something,” said Peterson.



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PACKERS vs. RAVENS

AUG. 24, 2024

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GB	3	17	10	0	30
BAL	0	7	0	0	7



Bo Melton celebrates his touchdown with a Lambeau Leap in the Packers' final preseason game against the Baltimore Ravens. **Tori Wittenbrock photos**



Running Back Emmanuel Wilson leaps through the pile as he hopes to get the Packers as many yards as possible.



Running Back Ellis Merriweather heads for the endzone in Green Bay's 30-7 win against the Ravens.



Emmanuel Wilson launches himself forward and through the pile.



Tight End Joel Wilson heads for the end zone.



Packers 2023 Backup Quarterback Sean Clifford throws a pass in their last preseason game before roster cuts.



The Packers captured the preseason game with a 30-7 win.



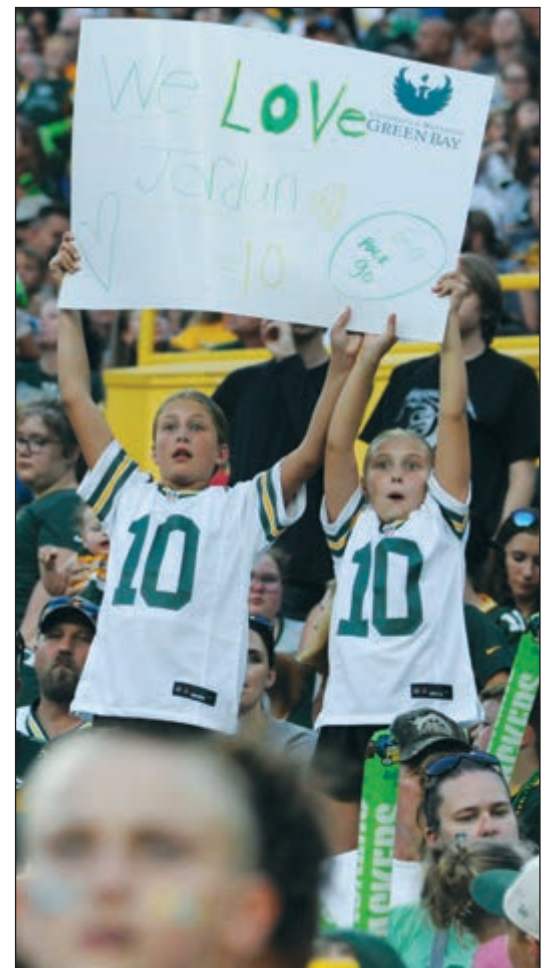
Wide Receiver Malik Heath scoops up a dead ball.

Putting the cheese in cheesehead


Fan Photo Gallery



Green Bay Packers fans flocked to Lambeau Field for a sold out Family Night to kick off the 2024 season.
Tori Wittenbrock photos





A few words from
Lombardi 

“The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.”
 -Vince Lombardi



Fan Photos Wanted!



Submit your Packer fan photos for a chance to have them published in Press Times Packerland. Email them to the editor, Kris Leonhardt at kleonhardt@mmclocal.com.

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