

# PACKERLAND™

## Keeping the tradition alive

BY TORI WITTENBROCK  
SPORTS EDITOR

GREEN BAY – One of the most iconic and storied traditions around the Green Bay area has been the ever-changing fences that dawn the yards of houses across from Lambeau Field.

The infamous Lombardi Avenue fence murals have long been one of the many features that fans associate with the uniqueness of Lambeau Field's location in the middle of a quaint midwestern neighborhood — yet the story is much bigger.

Handyman Christopher Handler has dedicated more than two decades of his life to keeping the fence painting tradition and passion for the Packers alive.

“Back in 2003, I picked up a *Green Bay Press Gazette*, and I saw an article that said that they sold that home — the gentleman and his wife that owned it had moved. I had always seen it and it was in the paper often. I thought, ‘Cool. I hope that will be mine one day.’ They sold it to an older gentleman from New Jersey that was an avid Packers fan and a very smart gentleman,” Handler.

“A few weeks later I saw an ad in the paper that said, ‘If you want to donate paint or pick up a paint brush, contact Patty, the real estate agent.’ I doodled it down on my hand, I called her up and I drove down to her office.

“One other girl from Oshkosh saw the same article. We met at the fence and I basically sold myself really well to the owner and the real estate agent and we just took it over. No charge or anything — we just kept the tradition going,” said Handler.

Not only has the fence been painted annually to commemorate that year's Packers team, but there has been a tradition of a new slogan each year as well.

Handler said that his first-ever slogan, back in 2003, was a tribute



Handler keeps mementos from each of his fences, such as these cutouts of Running Backs AJ Dillon and Aaron Jones, hanging in his garage.

Tori Wittenbrock photos

### Call for slogans!

Packers fence painters, Christopher Handler and Matt Yahnke, are actively looking for slogan submissions for the 2025 NFL Draft. Please keep submissions between 24-28 letters. Submissions are to be sent to Christopher Handler at [thepackerfencepainter@gmail.com](mailto:thepackerfencepainter@gmail.com) or (920) 265-3929, by Jan. 31. The selected slogan writer will receive a one-year subscription of the Press Times and one year of free self-service dog washes from Pet Supplies Plus.



to running back Ahman Green that stated, “Other teams are Green with envy.”

Twenty-one slogans later, Handler said he is proud to still be an

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Handler stands with one of the famed boards from the original fence he painted across from Lambeau Field. It now dons the signatures of several players, including Tucker Kraft and Jordan Love.



Lambeau Field offers stadium tours — a guided behind-the-scenes tour where guests get an opportunity to explore areas typically off-limits to the public — including the players' tunnel and locker rooms.

Mike Warren photo

## Creating a year-round destination

BY PACKERLAND STAFF

GREEN BAY – “The Green Bay Packers have played their home games at Lambeau Field for longer than any other team in the league. But, Lambeau is so much more than just a football stadium. It's a shrine to professional football in the NFL's smallest city — but most iconic team,” the Discov-

er Green Bay website states.

Lambeau Field is the longest continuously occupied stadium in the NFL — opening in 1957 and still serving its team today.

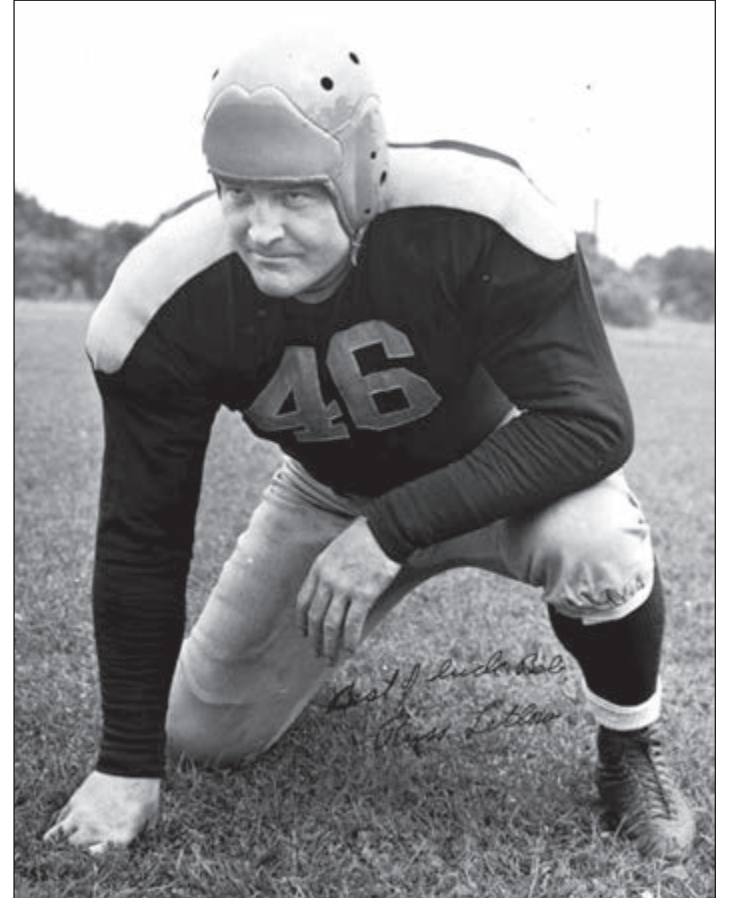
The stadium has become a year-round destination and the Packers say the “key to making Lambeau Field a year-round destination venue is the 376,000-square-

foot Lambeau Field Atrium.”

That Atrium includes the Packers Pro Shop and 1919 Kitchen & Tap restaurant.

It also plays host to Lambeau Field Stadium Tours — a guided behind-the-scenes tour where guests get an opportunity to explore areas

See DESTINATION page 4



Russ Letlow was the very first player ever drafted by the Green Bay Packers, in 1936. The four-time All-Pro selection (1937-40) and two-time Pro Bowler (1938-39) was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame in 1972.

Packers HOF photo

## Packers build championship legacy through NFL Draft

BY MIKE WARREN  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

*Continued from last week*

GREEN BAY – If you are measuring success in the NFL simply by the number of championships won, then Bart Starr is arguably the best Draft pick the Green Bay Packers have ever made.

If your measuring stick is individual accolades and franchise records, then Aaron Rodgers is probably your pick.

Either way the Packers will make the argument they are a draft-and-develop franchise, and that will eventually lead to championships. And while the team has made some impact acquisitions via trades and free agent signings over the years — as we highlighted last month — that is by and large accurate.

The Packers began to lay that foundation nearly ninety years ago, in the very first year of the NFL Draft.

On Feb. 8, 1936, the Packers selected nine hopefuls as part of the inaugural Annual Player Selection Meeting.

With the seventh pick of the first round, Russ Letlow, a guard out of the University of San Francisco, became the Packers' first Draft selection. Letlow was an impact player and was named to the NFL All-Decade Team of the 1930s, despite playing only five of the ten years. He helped the Packers win the NFL Championship his rookie year and again in 1939, and was a key member of the 1938 team which lost to the New York Giants in that season's title game. Letlow was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame in 1972.

However, as NFL Drafts go, the other eight players taken by the Packers that first year never did materialize into mainstays, or they never even made the team.

Now, this is not a deep dive into every draft in team history. This is intended to show that most impact players — and playoff and championship teams — over the years have been drafted.

Last year's team is a good example. The 2023 squad was the youngest team ever to qualify for the NFL postseason — and the lion's share of that roster (24 players) was acquired through the past two drafts, with the foundation of that team established in prior drafts.

Aaron Jones was a fifth-round selection in 2017 (182nd overall). Defensive standouts Kenny Clark and Jaire Alexander were first-round draft picks in 2016 and 2018, respectively, while Rashan Gary, Darnell Savage and Elgton Jenkins were taken in rounds one and two in 2019. Jordan Love, the team's latest franchise quarterback, was selected 26th overall in 2020. Also taken that year were AJ Dillon, Josiah Deguara and Jon Runyan. Eric Stokes, Josh Meyers, Royce Newman, T.J. Slaton and Isaiah McDuffie were impactful additions in 2021.

Some of the best examples in NFL history of building winning teams using the Draft are the rosters Vince Lombardi had the luxury of coaching during the 1960s.

Of the thirteen players drafted by the Packers who eventually landed in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, OH, ten were selected between 1952 and 1958, under the guidance of lead scout Jack Vainisi.

The 1958 NFL Draft alone produced three future HOF inductees — Jim Taylor, Ray Nitschke, and Jerry Kramer — and eventual All-Pro Dan Currie.

The year before Heisman Trophy winner and future Hall of

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# ICONS OF GREEN BAY

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**PAINTER**  
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important part of the Packers legacy.

"I had a blast. Three to four years into it, there was a gentleman who called me up. He was a photographer for the Packers. He said, 'Chris, we're doing a book for the fans. Can I come over and film you at the fence?' and I agreed. Later, they invited me to the stadium to kick off that book, Green, Gold and Proud," said Handler of one of his favorite experiences from his early years as the Fence Painter.

**Where it all began**

According to Handler, although his experience as the Fence Painter has lasted for 21 years, his love for the Green Bay Packers began long before that.

"Back when I was a little kid, I used to hop the fence to get into the games for free. I've always told people, 'If you want to become something in your life — go for it. Give it all you've got.' That's what I did. I used to climb the snowbanks and hop the fence and run my butt off to go and watch the third and fourth quarter from inside," said Handler.

**It's a process**

While Handler said he enjoys his role as an iconic member of the community, the task is by no means a simple one, and he has learned over the years about ways to improve his process.

"The first three to four years when I started, the real estate agent's husband helped me do it. We took two inch tape to make the letters. Every year I did that I realized how time consuming it was. I said heck with it and got some stencils. When my daughter was in fifth grade, her art teacher helped me make stencils for the size I needed for the fence, and that's what I use now. From the start to now, we have learned a lot and are more artistic. We don't charge, we just keep the tradition going," said Handler.

In addition, there are a lot of details Handler says must be taken into account before picking up his brush.

"There's a process of what you have to do. You



Though he is a full-time handyman, Handler also doubles as the Original Packers Fence Painter. He is entering his 23rd year holding the title.  
**Tori Wittenbrock photo**

have to wait for the 53-man roster to come out to know who is going to be on the team. Then you see what would look good on the fence. Love is our quarterback so he's going to be our No. 1 choice to make the slogan look better. You pick a team member. Sometimes I'll do a contest and I'll write to the local newspapers and say that I'm looking for my new slogan. Give me 24-28 letters. Some of the ones I get mailed to me I just cannot put on the fence — I just get a kick out of what people send me," said Handler of how he has selected each year's slogan.

"This is my 23rd year, and it's just been a blast. I usually do it the day before the home opening game. What's really fun is when you're doing it on that Saturday before the season, and suddenly you're gasping for air. Sometimes you're in the middle of drawing up a player and they stop by to look at it and I'll say to my partner who is helping me, 'Look who's here!'"

Handler has honored dozens of players on the fence over the years, but according to him, there was one year in particular that holds a special place in his heart.

"My favorite slogan is from when Brett Favre re-

tired. I just felt that when he retired it was all community related. Everybody loved the guy. It was just amazing how many people were watching us do it that day from across the street on Lombardi," said Handler.

The 2010 fence commemorating Favre's retirement featured his picture, the trophy and a special plaque.

"It just turned out beautiful," said Handler.

**Over the years**

As time has passed, Handler said that he now only paints the middle of the four standing fences.

"All the other fences that you see now — the other three — are all done by somebody else now. I did those also, but over my 21 years, the people that owned those homes would change their minds and move on with someone else. It's nice to have a contract. The second time around I had a five-year contract, though, that owner decided to sell his house two and a half years into it," said Handler.

Aside from the physical and creative struggles of painting the fence, Handler said he has encountered countless other obstacles along the way.

"One year I had to call the Packers marketing people

because I painted helmets on the fence and I put the 'G' on it. I had to get clearance to use it and found out that as long as I'm not selling it for profit I can use it," said Handler.

Being creative and finding new ways to keep the community engaged in the fence each year has also posed some creative challenges over the years.

"On the letters we use stencils, but the other stuff that's on there like the players, we just doll it up. My buddy and I buy all the materials, cut them out, and paint them. We don't really know what they are going to look like until we put them all together. Sometimes I'll

say, 'Hey, Matt, how about some glitter to make it pop?'"

"We'll make things look 3D by putting a 2x4 behind it to make it pop out. This year I had some miniature helmets that I had bought over the years. I used them to make the schedule for this year so I put them on there from the Colts to the Bears and had these nine miniature helmets on the fence to make it more attractive for the fans," said Handler.

**The 2025 NFL Draft**

Handler said he has exciting plans in the works for the upcoming event of the century for the community — the 2025 NFL Draft.

"For the Draft, the cur-

rent slogan will be erased and taken down. I don't know what the slogan will be but I know there's going to be a new one there. It's a great opportunity. Green Bay, Wisconsin. The 2025 NFL Draft. How cool is that? I cannot wait," said Handler.

"I'll be in my outfit talking to people from all over the world and won't get sleep for three days. It's a once in a lifetime experience."

**Dedicated to his craft**

According to Handler, becoming the Lombardi Avenue Fence Painter has been one of the greatest experiences of his life.

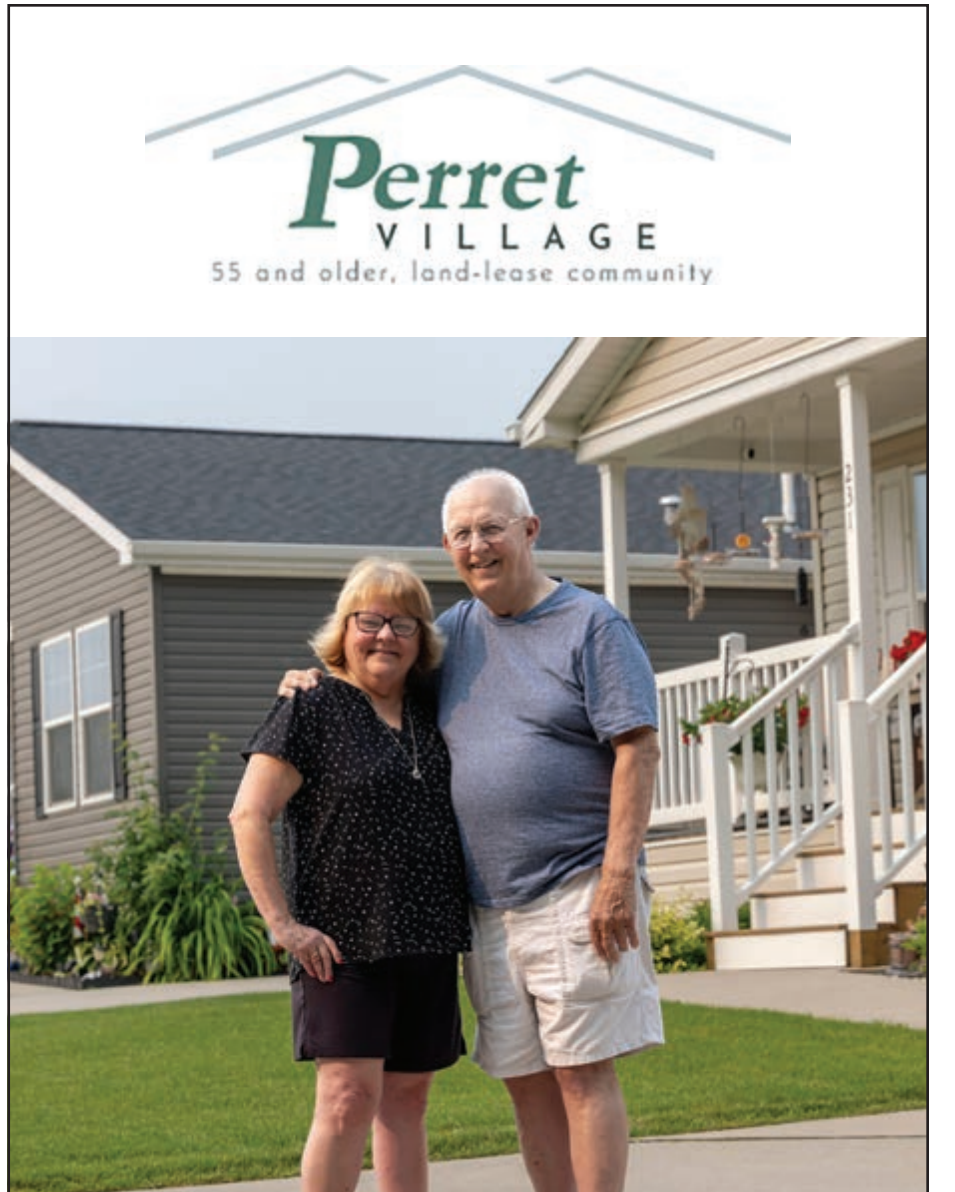
"The love and the passion for what I do is in my blood and I just have to do it. I'll be walking around and having fun and getting pictures, and I always say I'm going to be doing this from my wheelchair one day. I'm going to be painting this fence when I'm 95 years old," said Handler.

"When I got this job, I made it bigger and better and more creative. Each year I always try to come up with something different for the fans. You wouldn't believe what the fans say when I'm walking around. It's amazing."

Despite being a die-hard Packers fan, Handler said that he would never pass up the opportunity to expand his work across state lines.

"I'd like to one day become the NFL Fence Painter for all 32 teams," said Handler.

However, for now, Handler said he is just proud to be a part of such a loving and passionate community and fanbase. 🏈



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Lambeau Field is the longest continuously occupied stadium in the NFL — opening in 1957 and still serving its team today. **Kris Leonhardt photo**

**DESTINATION**  
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typically off-limits to the public — including the players' tunnel and locker rooms.

While Lambeau averaged 77,830 paying fans per game for the 2023 season the visitor numbers go well beyond that with both the Hall of Fame and the stadium tours already reaching their one millionth visitors.

The stadium also plays host to many events including concerts — Paul McCartney, Billy Joel and Kenny Chesney have performed there — as well as offering meeting rooms and other gathering spaces.

The Packers make multiple spaces available for public use.

Their website lists the following for community events:

**The Atrium**

The Atrium is an option for large events as it can accommodate over 400 guests. The four-story windows flood the 376,000-square-foot space with natural light.

**Legends Club Room**

This upper-level space has floor-to-ceiling windows and an adjoining pre-function space for social gatherings. The Legends Club Room includes access to an MVP Box overlooking the field, and it can be sectioned off or expanded as needed.

**Indoor Club Levels**

For smaller gatherings, the indoor club levels provide an upscale atmosphere with views of the field.

**Outdoor Options**

Lambeau's outdoor event options put guests right in the heart of the action. Locations include the North Loft, Miller Lite Deck, 1919 Patio, Oneida Nation Gate Platform and the Titledown-Tech Rooftop.

Titletown — sitting adjacent to Lambeau Field — has also taken on a life of its own with ice skating in Hy-Vee Plaza and tubing on Ariens Hill in the winter and outdoor play spaces in the winter which offer ping pong, shuffleboard, horseshoe, foosball, bocce ball on game courts; a football field; playground and more.

For more information on Lambeau Field, visit [www.packers.com/lambeau-field](http://www.packers.com/lambeau-field).

**DRAFT**  
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Fame halfback Paul Hornung fell into the Packers' lap, when they landed the top overall pick under a lottery system used from 1947 to 1958. Hornung is one of 20 Heisman winners to be taken with the No. 1 overall pick in the NFL Draft. He still holds or shares five franchise records, including most points in a season (176), most points in a game (33), and most touchdowns in a game (5).

Then there is Bart Starr, perhaps the shiniest of all the diamonds in the rough there ever were.

Selected by Green Bay in the 17th round (200th overall) of a 30-round NFL Draft in 1956, Starr sat for most of that first season, attempting just 44 passes behind starter Tobin Rote. In 1957 and '58, Starr split time with Babe Parilli, then platooned with Lamar McHan in 1959 and '60, as new head coach Vince Lombardi assessed his roster.

On Nov. 6, 1960 — after McHan had led the Packers to four straight victories following a loss by Bart in the first game of the season — Starr took over the starting job and never looked back. Over the following seven seasons, Starr missed just seven starts and led small-market Green Bay to five NFL Championships, including victories in the first two Super Bowls, of which he was named Most Valuable Player.

Starr played 16 seasons for the Packers, and until 2007 held the franchise record for most games played (196), which has since been eclipsed by Donald Driver, Aaron Rodgers, Brett Favre, and the current record-holder, Mason Crosby (258).

That 1956 draft also produced tackles Forrest Gregg and Bob Skoronski, whom the Packers selected in the second and fifth rounds, respectively, and Willie Davis, taken by Cleveland in the 15th round (181st overall), whom Vince Lombardi traded for in 1960.

Fearing he still didn't have the leader of his offense on the roster, Lombardi in 1959 used his first draft pick as Packers' head coach — and the first overall pick of the entire Draft — to take quarterback Randy



Drafted in the 17th round of the 1956 Draft, QB Bart Starr led the Green Bay Packers to five NFL Championships and became one of the lowest drafted players to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame (1977). **Public domain photo**

Duncan, who had led Iowa to the National Championship in 1958. Duncan never played for the Packers, and instead signed with the BC Lions of the CFL, where he played just two seasons. Duncan washed out of professional football in 1961, after just one season with the AFL's Dallas Texans.

An Iowa pick that did stick was added in 1960, when Lombardi chose halfback Bob Jeter in the second round (17th overall) after selecting halfback Tom Moore in the first round (5th overall).

Lombardi kept adding to his eventual championship rosters in 1961, when he took future Hall of Fame defensive back Herb Adderley with the 12th overall pick, followed by tackle Ron Kostelnik in the second round (26th overall). Halfback Elijah Pitts was also added in the 13th round (180th overall).

Coming off back-to-back NFL Championships in 1961 and '62, Lombardi in 1963 added to a roster that would give him and Green Bay three straight titles in the coming years.

Lombardi used the 14th overall pick of the 1963 NFL Draft to take future Hall of Fame linebacker Dave Robinson in the first round. Fourteen picks later, Lombardi took defensive back Tom Brown 28th overall in round two.

Robinson and Brown would combine on a game-saving play in the 1966

NFL Championship game that sent the Packers to Super Bowl I against Kansas City.

On fourth down from the Green Bay two-yard line and with time running out, the Dallas Cowboys — trailing by 7 — attempted a rollout pass. Robinson burst into the Cowboy backfield and enveloped QB Don Meredith, who somehow got off a wobbly pass, which was intercepted by Brown in the end zone to seal the win.

But seemingly never content, Lombardi kept adding to his championship-caliber rosters.

Longtime center Ken Bowman was taken in the 8th round of the 1964 draft, while first-round selections Donnie Anderson and Jim Grabowski were backfield additions in 1965 and '66, followed by running back Travis Williams in 1967.

What followed throughout the 1970s were a number of top draft picks — including back-to-back NFL Rookie of the Year Award winners — but just one division title and one playoff game.

The 1980s brought more of the same — great individual talent that could never be molded into a championship-caliber team. The end of the decade also brought us arguably the biggest bust in NFL Draft history.

To be concluded in the next edition of Packerland





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# PACKERS OF THE PAST

## Ahman Green #30

BY MIKE WARREN  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

GREEN BAY – From the time he joined the Packers in 2000 through the end of the 2004 season, no one in the NFL gained more yards from scrimmage or rushed for more yards than Green Bay’s No. 30.

“I wasn’t a big stat guy when I was playing,” Ahman Green told Packerland during a July 2024 visit to Green Bay, for the annual Packers Hall of Fame golf outing. “Between Coach (Mike) Sherman and Edgar Bennett, my head coach and my position coach, those guys were always telling me, ‘A.G., you’re right here to this record and to that record,’ and I’d be like, ‘I just want to know if we won the game or not.’ But now I can smell my flowers and look back on my career and just kind of take a notice of my body of work,” Green added.

Green’s body of work has forever cemented his place among Green Bay’s all-time greats. He holds or shares 18 franchise records, including most yards rushing in a season (1,883), most career rushing yards (8,322), most seasons with 1,000 or more rushing yards (6), most yards rushing in a game (218), most career rushing attempts (1,851), most rushing attempts in a season (355), most touchdowns in a season (20), the team’s longest run from scrimmage (98) and the most yards from scrimmage (11,048).

Green, who turns 48 on Feb. 16, gives much of the credit for his individual success to the guys up front who cleared the pathways to daylight.

“Those guys were my bread and butter,” Green told us. “Marco (Rivera), Mike Wahl, Mark Tauscher, Chad Clifton, Kevin Barry, Mike Flanagan, and Bubba Franks, you count him in there, too. And then the wide receivers — Donald Driver, Robert Ferguson, Javon Walker, Greg Jennings, James Jones, Jordy Nelson — those guys, they’re all a part of it. But that line, though, you talk about those five guys with Kevin Barry rotating in



From the time he joined the Packers in 2000 through the end of the 2004 season, no one in the NFL gained more yards from scrimmage or rushed for more yards than Green Bay’s No. 30.

Gilbert Brown Foundation photo

as our sixth man off the bench that would help out with some of the power plays, me and those guys had good camaraderie, we hung out a lot, so I think that was our glue right there, knowing each other, watching film with one another, where we could pick out plays and then talk about how they were going to set the blocks for me, then I could just see it and make it real easy,” said Green. “And one thing they liked about the way I hit the hole, I hit it fast, so they were like, ‘The way you keep hitting the hole, we don’t have to hold our blocks long, so keep doing that and you’ll make us look good.’”

On Dec. 28, 2003, the night he set the team’s single-game rushing record, Green also established the franchise record for the longest run from scrimmage, when he ripped off a 98-yarder against Denver at Lambeau Field, erasing Andy Uram’s 64-year-old franchise record (97 yards vs. Chicago Cardinals, Oct. 8, 1939) on his final carry of the regular season.

“The play was H-2 Bob and it was a slight counter play where I take a false step to the left and make it look like I’m going left and then swing it back right by the time I get the handoff, and it’s a double-team on the play side up to the middle linebacker and then any garbage left, that’s where Kevin Barry or anybody on the right side

would pick up the garbage and clean it up, and if it’s blocked perfectly, everybody saw what happens,” Green told Packerland.

The 2003 campaign was, by far, Green’s best as a pro. He became the first and only player in NFL history to record at least 1,850 rushing yards, average 5.0 yards per carry, score 20 touchdowns and catch 50 passes in one season. He also broke Jim Taylor’s 41-year stranglehold on the team’s single-season rushing record, covering 1,883 yards on 355 carries, averaging 5.3 yards per rushing attempt. And his 120 points scored were the most by a Packers position player (non-kicker) since Paul Hornung scored 146 in 1961.

The following season, Green scored on a 90-yard run against Dallas on Oct. 24, 2004, the league’s longest rush that year. In doing so, he joined Bo Jackson in becoming the only players in NFL history to have two touchdown runs of 90 or more yards. They have been joined in recent years by Lamar Miller, Chris Johnson and Derrick Henry.

The week prior to the Cowboys game, Green threw for a touchdown at Detroit Oct. 17, a 20-yard, left-handed toss to Donald Driver. In doing so, Green became the first Packer in 21 years to record rushing, receiving and passing touchdowns in the same season (Gerry Ellis, 1983).

Green was a major pass-



Ahman Green poses with the Oneida Hotel team during the 2024 Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame Golf Classic.

Tori Wittenbrock photo

catching threat out of the backfield, on a team known for its highly-successful screen plays.

Green led the Packers in receptions in 2000 and 2001 (73, 62) and was second to Donald Driver in 2002 and ‘03 (57, 50).

Green was acquired from Seattle in an April 2000 trade for cornerback Fred Vinson, which also involved several draft picks. He played for the Packers for eight seasons

(2000-06, 2009). Green spent his first two seasons in the NFL with the Seattle Seahawks, who selected him in the third round (76th overall) of the 1998 NFL Draft. In 2007, Green signed a four-year, \$23 million deal with the Houston Texans, where he was reunited with his former head coach and former Texans’ assistant head coach Mike Sherman, as well as former Packers running

back Samkon Gado.

During his time in Green Bay, Ahman Green was a four-time Pro Bowl selection (2001-04) and was a First-team All-Pro selection in 2003. He appeared in 104 games for the Packers.

Green lived in Green Bay for 24 years and he and his family just recently moved away.

He was elected to the Packers Hall of Fame in 2014. 🏈

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**Lombardi**



“People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society.”

-Vince Lombardi



# THEIR LEGACY LIVES ON

BY TORI WITTENBROCK  
SPORTS EDITOR

GREEN BAY – The Golden Girls were no doubt a special and iconic time in Green Bay Packers history, incomparable to the NFL cheer industry today.

“We were never tuned into anything like ‘Oh, how do I look? How’s my hair? Where’s the camera?’ It wasn’t about us. It was always about the Packers,” said former Golden Girl Anne Maedke.

Despite their humility on and off the field, the storied legacy of the original Packers cheerleaders brought the interest of the media and the local community.

Former Golden Girl Sandy Borkovetz said that she recalls when a *Press Gazette* writer had revealed to her that his interview with Mary Jane (Van Duyse Sorgel) was one of the best in his career.

“This particular writer said he waited 58 years to meet Mary Jane of the Golden Girls and then went on to do this whole article on her. It was neat to read this whole article from a fan’s perspective — who happened to be a writer — on the Golden Girls,” said Borkovetz.

In addition to being memorialized through the media, the Golden Girls’ legacy has also been enshrined in some local museums, including the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame and the Door County Historical Museum.

“We were put into the Sturgeon Bay museum. It’s kind of humiliating to know that now you’re not only in one museum, but two museums. It was a nice display,” said Borkovetz.

The museum display opened in September of 2019 as a way to commemorate



Mary Jane Van Duyse Sorgel stands with the display case at the Sturgeon Bay museum honoring the legacy she built for the Golden Girls during her reign as a Packers majorette. Packers HOF Archives photo



The Golden Girls stand along the sidelines of the Packers game at Lambeau Field, ready to cheer on their team.

100 years of the Packers.

Van Duyse Sorgel passed away just a few years later in July of 2022.

Not only is she credited with starting the Golden Girls, but Van Duyse Sorgel is known as a pillar of what made the Golden Girls such a significant time in the history of the Packers and why they are so well-known today.

One part about the Golden Girls that many fans are fascinated with was Paul Hornung, nicknamed the Golden Boy for being the lone male member of the cheer squad.

“He was a twirler. He went to lots of national competitions. He was really auspicious. He would do some halftime entertainment segments while the

band was lining up. (Van Duyse Sorgel) would promote a lot of people like that. Through her kindness and showmanship,” added Maedke.

### Keeping the memories alive

According to Borkovetz, the Golden Girls would be forgotten entirely if it weren’t for Van Duyse Sor-



Van Duyse Sorgel stands next to the display case at the Packers Hall of Fame, years after the Golden Girls were honored.



Van Duyse Sorgel poses next to the Golden Girls display case at the Packers Hall of Fame in 1967.

gel’s efforts to preserve photographs and memorabilia.

“Mary Jane’s house was like a museum. She lived in Mequon for a while and I lived in Brookfield. I knew what she was trying to do so I was helping her archive some of the photos. Every time she sent me off with a batch of pictures, I made duplicate copies for myself. Now, in retrospect, I’m glad I did because if I hadn’t they probably wouldn’t exist,” said Borkovetz.

When the Golden Girls’ time on the field came to an end in 1972, Borkovetz and Maedke said that it was hard to see their squad be replaced and eventually see the women on the sidelines disappear entirely.

In 1973, Bernie Matzke revived the 1950s Packerettes name, giving it to the new squad of cheerleaders brought in to follow the Golden Girls.

“Bernie put a squad on the field for some time. She was another dance teacher at the time and then it was Shirley Van,” said Maedke.

However, the Packerettes only lasted until 1977 before eventually ending the official cheer team for the Packers. The Sideliners were brought in by Shirley Van from 1977-88, but eventually fizzled out as well.

“Mary Jane got married and she was between Milwaukee and Green Bay. While she was busy with her life — she was pushed out,” said Maedke.

“Neither one of those other groups were on the field for very long. Mary Jane was never one to cast dispersions on anyone, no matter how much she was done dirty. All of a sudden there was a competition about how these new girls were going to be in and the Golden Girls were going to be out,” said Maedke.

After a long career on the field, Maedke said that she was saddened to see the way it all came to an end.

“We were at one parade and we were asked about these other dancers that were there. I remember saying that they were alright. It wasn’t until later I learned that they were basically auditioning to take over as the Packers cheerleaders. If I had known that, I probably would have made a different comment. I was only a freshman in college at the time,” said Maedke.

According to Borkovetz, other acts found out quickly that what Van Duyse Sorgel had put together was no easy feat.

“We were done in the ‘73 season and then they had

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# The Lumberjack Band: Dusting off the red flannel

BY KRIS LEONHARDT  
EDITOR

*Continued from previous edition*

The next time the band suited up in an organized fashion was two years later when the Packers were scheduled to take on the Badgers in Milwaukee.

"The Lumberjack band is assured. Tony Vandenberg and Ernie Stiller are rounding up the musicians. The band will be 20 strong and every member will be 'toggled out' in the Lumberjack togs like they used when they 'burned' up Chicago two years ago," a Nov. 15, 1923, *Press-Gazette* stated.

"The band men are donating their services. They will make the trip in a big truck owned by the Leight Transfer Co. This company is only charging for the driver's salary and the oil and gas en route. Meals for the band total \$30. Each of the musicians will be allowed two meals at 75 cents apiece. The total cost of the trip will be under \$70 and this money has been raised by 'dollar' volunteers."

The list of those donating to deploy the Lumberjack Band was printed the following day — a list that included G.W. Calhoun, A.B. Turnbull, George Abrams and about 70 other supporters.

"Hundreds of Bayites will invade Milwaukee for the Sabbath day tilt," the paper stated. "Eight hundred seats located in the west stands, directly in the center of the field, have been saved for Green Bay's followers. Special seats have been set up for the famous Lumberjack Band and the fun makers."

The Lumberjack Band dusted off their sheepskin and red flannel and began practice.

"Every member of the band is a crackerjack musician and they have had several rehearsals in order to put their stuff over with a bang," the paper added.

"A set of Packer yells have been drawn up and printed. They will be handed out to the Green Bay spectators..."

The press leading up to the game must have done its

job, for when Sunday rolled around it was estimated that the Green Bay supporters totaled a thousand, cheering the team on to a 10-7 win.

"The Lumberjack Band more than lived up to advance notices. When they came out of the 'dugout' a roar of applause made them welcome. The Bay band marched around the field, cutting loose with popular tunes and when they got back to the 'home plate,' they played 'On Wisconsin' while the entire assemblage rose to their feet. The band 'tooted' their horns all during the game while the leaders cut all sorts of fancy capers. 'Mulligan' Seroogy amused the crowd with his fancy steps," the *Press-Gazette* game coverage stated.

*To be continued* 🏈



The Lumberjack Band performs at City Stadium in the early days of its formation.

Germaine Pirlot family photo

## 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](mailto:kleonhardt@mmclocal.com).**

**LEGACY**  
*from page 6*

these other girls out there, but they didn't work out. Mary Jane was a one-off. She was a tough act to follow. She was a star and a true professional," said Borkovetz.

"Looking back at the whole picture at my age now, we didn't realize quite what we had with Mary Jane," added Maedke.

Van Duyse Sorgel had a true passion for keeping her girls on the sidelines of the Packers, and for keeping their legacy alive, long after she herself had passed.

"She and Bill (Soro) carved out a life. They had a house just down the road from my house (in Sturgeon Bay). I remember how wonderful it was to go see her. She had a foyer full of Packers memorabilia. It was like going to mom's house and seeing your baby pictures up on the wall," said Maedke.

*To be continued in the next edition of Packerland.*



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# 2025 NFL DRAFT NEWS

## Green Bay organizations gear up for 2025 Draft



BY PACKERLAND STAFF

GREEN BAY – Plans are starting to emanate from local organizations preparing for the NFL Draft to be held in Green Bay in April.

On Broadway, Inc., Downtown Green Bay, Inc. and the City of Green Bay joined together to plan activities throughout downtown business districts.

The series of events spans four days and is collectively being called “Touchdown Downtown” with an overarching brand and logo.

“Our teams have been working hard to make Touchdown Downtown something truly special,” said Jeff Mirkes, executive director for Downtown Green Bay, Inc. “It’s not just about having fun events—it’s about celebrating the people, businesses, and traditions that make Downtown Green Bay a historical location and so unique. From the Booyah Battle to the Draft Edition of the Saturday Farmers Market, these events are for everyone to enjoy. Let’s show the world what Green Bay is all about.”

### Booyah Battle

This competition will be held on Washington Street in downtown Green Bay on Friday, April 25, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

It will feature local non-profits paired with a booyah chef to battle it out for booyah supremacy.

The best booyah will be determined by a panel of judges who will blind taste test a sample from each chef or chef(s).

There will also be a People’s Choice award determined by popular vote.

Attendees will enjoy live

music from the polka band LIVEwire and can quench their thirst with local beer and other beverage options.

### Uncle Mike’s Kringle Combine

Uncle Mike’s Bake Shoppe will be bringing a Kringle Combine to the Booyah Battle on Friday, April 25, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Participants will have the chance to try new, exciting Kringle flavors.

Attendees will have the opportunity to purchase entry into the Kringle Combine area and sample an assortment of limited edition, never-before-made flavors of Kringle.

After enjoying samples of Kringle, participants will cast their votes.

### Downtown Saturday Farmers Market – Draft Edition

Experience the Downtown Saturday Farmers Market on Saturday, April 26, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Washington Street will be filled with arts, crafts, artisan bakers, prepared food and processed food vendors.

This special Draft Edition Farmers Market welcomes local favorites plus vendors from throughout the state of Wisconsin.

These vendors will be offering products such as meats, cheeses, prepared and packaged goods, fresh produce, seasonal products, handmade creations, flowers and plants.

The official website for Touchdown Downtown Green Bay is available at [TouchdownDowntown.com](http://TouchdownDowntown.com).

### Additional activities

The additional activities include Living Packers Her-



Don Mjelde, Eastern District vice president, Tavern League of Wisconsin, speaks during the December announcement of the shuttle program. Staff photo

itage Trail, on Thursday, April 24, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., where you can experience the historic Packers Heritage Trail as many of its stops are brought to life.

This special Draft 2025 event will offer live actors at several downtown sites with the help of the Brown County Historical Society and Evergreen Theater.

Visitors will hear stories of the rich history of the Green Bay Packers and gain a deeper knowledge of the community’s love for the team.

The Living Packers Heritage Trail can best be experienced by foot, bike or car.

A Draft Day 5K, will be held on Saturday, April 26, 9 a.m.

Race participants will experience a football-themed race, with an out and back course on the Fox River Trail providing scenic views of the Fox River and Downtown Green Bay.

Runners and walkers are welcome.

Participants will receive a commemorative Draft Day 5K jersey shirt, Draft Day 5K finisher item, one complimentary Draft Day Brew from our friends at Stillmank Brewing and a post race tailgate party and food. 🍷

### Draft shuttle transportation system

In December, the Brown County Tavern League and the City of Green Bay announced the launch of an expansive shuttle transportation system designed to support the transportation needs of the over 75,000 visitors expected during NFL Draft week.

The initiative will provide convenient and safe transit options across multiple routes in the greater Green Bay area, with key stops at local areas of commerce, bars/restaurants and nearly 40 area hotels in an effort to reduce impaired driving during the event.

The proposed shuttle system, funded primarily through the Tavern League’s SafeRide program with additional local support, will help reduce traffic congestion and enhance the experience for Draft attendees.

Don Mjelde, Eastern District vice president, Tavern League of Wisconsin, said that the league will provide about forty 12-15 passenger vans.

Mjelde said the program is estimated to cost about \$200,000 — partially funded by a Department of Transportation grant and matching funds.

Mayor Eric Genrich said that the city will contribute tourism support funding totaling \$15,000.

“I think this is a fantastic solution that really complements a lot of what at the NFL and the Packers are obviously pulling together with some of the formal options connected to the Draft itself,” Genrich said.

“But to have this kind of supplemental transportation option is huge from a safety perspective, which is obviously the primary purpose of the SafeRide program. But in addition to that, and from the city’s perspective, there’s the added benefit to our hotels, our taverns, our other businesses that are going to be able to direct their patrons to this service.

“So, it’s going to be a tremendous way for people to enjoy the community, get to different community resources, our businesses, our organizations that are really looking forward to taking advantage of the Draft and putting our best foot forward.”

Genrich said that organizers have been blown away by the members of the community that are “stepping up without being asked and that’s not surprising to us,” he said.

“We recognize we’re the smallest city in the NFL, but far and away have the biggest heart.”

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# CHEESEHEAD NATION



## First visit to Lambeau

CSM Darium Thomas of the U.S. Army Accessions Mission Support Battalion participated in the Packers Salute to Service in December making his first visit to Lambeau Field. Thomas said it was "one of the best experiences/environments I have ever been a part of. God bless you all."

Submitted photo

# PACKERS FAN ON THE WAY



Wyatt and Becca Kidney of Minot, N.D., make an announcement prior to the start of 49ers game. Submitted photo

# UNPACKING History



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](http://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](mailto:katief@gbphof.com).

LeRoy Butler's rookie helmet was donated to the Packers Hall of Fame by Russell Burrows of Calgary, Alberta. In his own words: "In late July 1990, after attempting to buy a brand new Packer helmet at a local sports store, I was offered a wonderful opportunity. The store owner was a friend of Roy Shivers who himself had just been named as a head scout for the CFL's Calgary Stampeders. Roy was about to embark on a tour of NFL camps and would pick up a battle-worn helmet for me directly from the Packers camp, if I would prefer that to one out of the box. Roy returned with the helmet that September. It was clearly experienced — with a chip out of the decal and a red smear across the top — and immediately became my most treasured possession. As far as identifiers went, there was only a small square of green plastic identi-tape stuck to the back, bearing the number "36." There was only one No. 36 at camp that year — some rookie out of FSU, 48th overall, third safety drafted — by the name of Butler." Katie Foust photo

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# PACKERS vs. DOLPHINS

Nov. 28, 2024

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GB	14	10	3	3	30
MIA	0	3	8	6	17



Zayne Anderson launches himself into a tackle against the Miami Dolphins on Thanksgiving Day. **Tori Wittenbrock photos**



Lukas Van Ness and Rashan Gary bring down Miami Dolphins Quarterback Tua Tagovailoa.



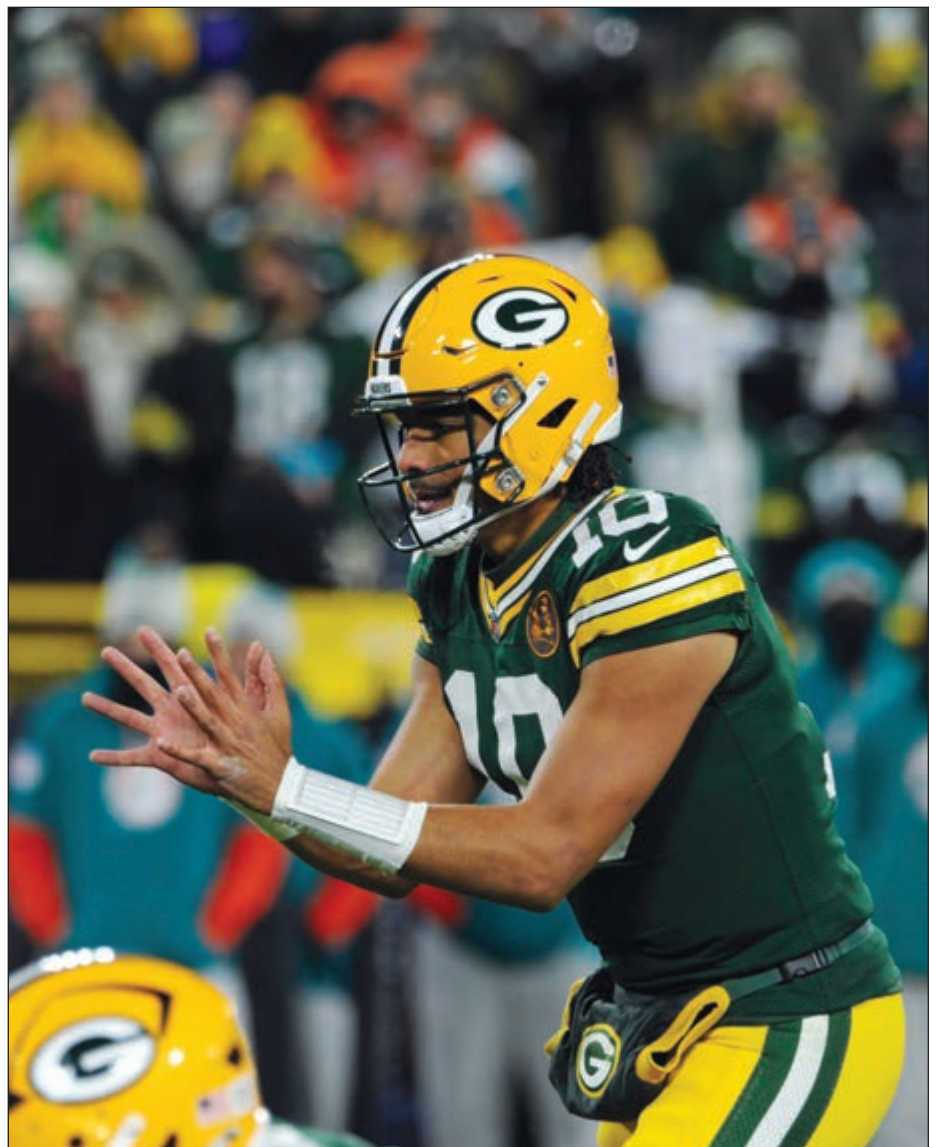
Jordan Love takes a snap in his team's 30-17 victory over the Miami Dolphins in freezing cold Lambeau Field conditions.



Running back Chris Brooks emerges through the Dolphins defense in their Thanksgiving Day victory.



Kenny Clark looks to his team after celebrating a big stop.



The Packers defeated the Miami Dolphins 30-17 on Thanksgiving Day in a snowy Lambeau Field atmosphere. See online for full gallery.



# Putting the cheese in cheesehead

## Fan Photo Gallery



Chris Pamperin photos





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