



Green Bay Packers count on LB Brad Jones to improve pass rush

By Pete Dougherty •

pdougher@greenbaypressgazette.com • May 19, 2010

Ted Thompson has placed a big bet on second-year linebacker Brad Jones.

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If an inadequate [pass rush](#) prevents the Green Bay Packers from advancing deep into the playoffs, then the general manager will shoulder most of the responsibility because he didn't spend a high draft pick or free-agent money on an outside linebacker.

But if Jones builds on his competent half-season last year as a rookie starter and adds something to the pass rush in 2010, then Thompson will have judged well the talent on his roster.

While there's a decent chance Thompson will add another outside linebacker before the season starts, either via a trade or waiver pickup during training camp, that's still only a possibility. Thompson has so far stood pat with Jones at one of the key playmaking positions in defensive coordinator Dom Capers' 3-4 scheme.

If Thompson had felt desperate, he would have done something, anything, to add an outside linebacker at least as a fallback — much like he did last season when he traded up to select Clay Matthews late in the first round to start at right outside linebacker. But he didn't.

"If you'd have told me at this time last year that Brad Jones will have started seven games for us down the stretch (in 2009), I don't know if I'd have felt real

comfortable at that point," Capers said. "I feel better about it now."

Though the Packers aren't going out of their way to talk up Jones this offseason, their actions say they're prepared to go with him as their starter in a season in which they could be a legitimate championship contender.

Brady Poppinga lined up at left outside linebacker with the No. 1 defense in the organized team activities practice that was open to reporters on Wednesday, but Capers said after practice that Jones is his starter opposite Matthews.

"They don't need anybody else," Poppinga said of he and Jones manning the position this season.

Jones was an unexpectedly big contributor as a rookie even though he was a seventh-round pick and sat out the first three weeks of his rookie training camp because of a back injury. Missing the critical first three weeks of camp can cost a low draft pick a roster spot, but Jones showed enough as a pass rusher and special-teams player in his limited time to make the final 53-man roster.

By midseason, he'd surpassed Poppinga as Aaron Kampman's backup, and in eight games as a starter, playoffs included, Jones had four sacks and 11 quarterback hits.

Jones played last season at about 239 pounds, which is light for the position, though Capers said Jones might be physically mature enough to hold the 10 pounds he's added in the offseason workout program.

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"He's a pretty good leverage player," Capers said. "He's probably stronger than his size would indicate because he understands playing with leverage. And he's got a little pass-rush instincts. He's slippery in terms of not giving people a large blocking surface, he can get on the edge and slip by and use his hands, that type of thing. To me that's one of the qualities good pass rushers have."

Along with Jones, the Packers also are placing a big bet that their pass rush will get better simply because they've had a full season in Capers' 3-4 scheme.

They made a significant improvement in that area in Capers' first season, when they jumped from No. 25 in sacks percentage in 2008 to No. 12 last year in their switch to the 3-4.

But a shortcoming against top competition was their pass rush. They failed to sack Brett Favre in two losses to the Minnesota Vikings, and in their playoff loss to Arizona, when Capers decided to play more coverage than blitz against quick-triggered Kurt Warner, they also had no sacks.

Capers said the defense discovered its identity about halfway through last year, and he has a good feel for his personnel and what blitzes work best.

"With this scheme, we've always been a top-sack team," Capers said. "At four different places we've been either first or second in sacks (in the league at least one season). I just feel like there's a natural progression of them understanding the scheme, and it has to come down to what you see on the field and gain confidence in terms of calling. The more confident you are, the more pressures you're going to call. We did that as we progressed."

The Packers also have talked this offseason about using alternative outside rushers on passing downs.

On draft weekend, coach Mike McCarthy talked of possibly rushing inside linebacker Brandon Chillar from the outside on occasion, though Chillar has minimal experience as a pure outside rusher. Last year, he shot gaps as a zone-rush blitz and never lined up against tackles and tried to beat them with defensive-end rush techniques such as dipping his shoulder and turning the corner.

More likely, if the Packers aren't getting enough pressure from their outside rushers as the season

goes on, Capers on occasion might line up defensive lineman Cullen Jenkins at end on obvious passing downs and let him rush with his hand on the ground.

But Capers mostly will look to his scheme to generate rush. He suggested Chillar and Nick Barnett will blitz more this season — Chillar had two sacks and two quarterback hits last season, Barnett four sacks and nine hits — and named cornerback Charles Woodson (two sacks and three hits) as one of the team's best rushers.

"Nick can rush from either inside or outside," Capers said. "We've got some different combinations, it might not be a 3-4 outside linebacker type or defensive end type, so we might have to seek it by different means."

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Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Ex-Jag Iwuh to workout for Bears

By Michael Wright

Apparently the Bears aren't limiting their talent search to perceived positions of need.

The club will bring in former Jaguars linebacker [Brian Iwuh](#) on Friday to work out on a tryout basis for its veteran minicamp.

"I'll be in there just for minicamp on a tryout," Iwuh told ESPNChicago.com. "So we'll see what happens."

A four-year veteran, Iwuh played in 58 games for the Jaguars, starting in three, before the club released him in April. Iwuh made his mark in Jacksonville primarily on special teams. But he also proved to be a valuable reserve. In two starts last season, Iwuh tallied 17 tackles, including a game-high 12 during an Oct. 11 start at Seattle.

Iwuh has posted 64 career tackles from his linebacker spot, in addition to another 61 on special teams -- which ranks third in Jacksonville franchise history. He is coming off a career-high 38-tackle season (including two for lost yardage) with the Jaguars.

A former undrafted free agent from Colorado, Iwuh served on the Jaguars roster at the same time as Chicago linebacker [Tim Shaw](#), who the Bears appear to be high on heading into the season. Interestingly, Iwuh was ranked higher on Jacksonville's depth chart than Shaw.

It's difficult to gauge whether Iwuh will be offered a contract at the conclusion of veteran minicamp. Based on his athleticism and body work over four seasons, Iwuh appears to have a good shot, provided he shows up to minicamp in good shape.

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Former Buff McChesney retires

Broncos lineman injures ankle in golf accident

Associated Press
Boulder Daily Camera

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Veteran journeyman guard Matt McChesney has retired from the NFL after suffering an ankle injury in a golf cart accident last month.

The former University of Colorado defensive lineman had a shot at making the Broncos' roster as a backup guard and center.

He was getting out of his cart to hit his ball recently when a trailing cart clipped him, resulting in an injury to the same ankle he had surgically repaired after a preseason injury in Denver last year.

McChesney spent time with the Dolphins, Jets and Rams, playing in four NFL games.

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Seahawks sign former Bills QB Losman

The Associated Press

The Seahawks have signed former Buffalo Bills starting quarterback J.P. Losman.

Agent Gary Wichard told The Associated Press in an e-mail Tuesday night it's a \$630,000, one-year contract, which Losman signed Wednesday. The 29-year-old Losman threw one pass for Oakland last season after five years with the Bills, plus time in the United Football League. He would back up Matt Hasselbeck and Charlie Whitehurst in Seattle.

The Seahawks also signed tight end Michael Allan, a former Whitworth player who was a seventh-round pick in the 2007 draft by Kansas City. The Chiefs released him after training camp in 2008.

The Seahawks also released tight end Patrick Devenny and wide receiver Victor James.

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