



## Mike Vandermause column: Green Bay Packers kicker Mason Crosby deserves more experienced holder

By Mike Vandermause •  
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August 2, 2010

Green Bay Packers place-kicker Mason Crosby missed two more field goals Monday, sinking his training camp accuracy rate to an abysmal 6-for-11.

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Packers coach Mike McCarthy was quick to defend his kicker following practice. "I'm not concerned with Mason Crosby," McCarthy said sternly.

On that count McCarthy is right. Crosby isn't the problem.

Instead, the blame rests squarely on the shoulders of McCarthy and special teams coach Shawn Slocum, who insist on saddling Crosby with a pair of inexperienced holders during camp — punters Chris Bryan and Tim Masthay.

At a time when Crosby should be building confidence coming off a so-so 2009 season, he instead has to break in not one but two new holders.

The Packers' revolving door holder policy is not doing their kicker any favors. Crosby has kicked with four different holders in his first three NFL seasons and is now working on a fifth.

Although McCarthy could employ backup quarterback Matt Flynn, who was a holder for four

years at Louisiana State University and spent parts of the 2008 and 2009 seasons as Crosby's holder, the head coach seems hell-bent on filling the job with an inexperienced punter.

"The ideal, as I stated yesterday, is for the punter to be the holder," said McCarthy on Monday. "It's a relationship that best serves the kicker. I think that has been evident throughout this league just from a time commitment standpoint, but we feel fortunate to have Matt Flynn there if we need him."

The Packers and Crosby need Flynn, the sooner the better.

Bryan has no prior holding experience, and considering he hails from Australia where they like to drop-kick the ball, it makes little sense to put him in that role. Besides, Bryan and Masthay should focus all their attention on what they do best. It's a half-baked idea to have them split holding and punting duties when someone with Flynn's experience is on the roster.

It's Crosby who must suffer the consequences of that decision.

In theory, McCarthy's desire to use a punter to hold makes sense, since punters and kickers can spend more time working together in practice. But important decisions like this shouldn't be made out of convenience or some pie-in-the-sky philosophy. Flynn is the best holder on the roster and the job should be his.

Now is not the time to be mixing and matching holders and toying with Crosby's confidence. He's a

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talented kicker with a big leg, but there's no telling how much his performance has been negatively impacted by the team changing holders so often.

Crosby has not complained or pointed fingers at anyone. Unlike former Packers kicker Ryan Longwell, who didn't hesitate to throw his holder under the bus after missed kicks, Crosby has taken the high road. He is determined to work hard with his holders, regardless of who or how many.

"We're working out some kinks," Crosby said. "We haven't worked together a ton, so it's one of those, we're still trying to find that rhythm with one another."

Essentially, Crosby has no choice in the matter. It was a coach's decision to switch from Flynn to punter Jeremy Kapinos late last season.

Flynn said he had no problem holding and would gladly resume those duties if asked. Crosby said he had no problem with Flynn as his holder.

"He did a good job," Crosby said. "We didn't get a ton of reps together. It's tough with his other duties as quarterback. Sometimes it just didn't feel like we were working as much together. But coaches made the decision. We're going to work with these punters. They're young guys. We've got to make them feel comfortable."

That's part of the problem. The last thing Crosby should consider is making his fledgling holders comfortable. The less Crosby must think about, the better chance he has of kicking the football through the uprights.

**Mike Vandermause is sports editor of the Press-Gazette.**



Mason Crosby during Green Bay Packers training camp at Ray Nitschke Field in Ashwaubenon on August 2, 2010. (Corey Wilson/Press-Gazette)

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Green Bay Packers training camp, Monday, Aug. 2, 2010

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Sports

## Browns backs beef up attack (with video)

### Hillis and Vickers should boost team's offense at goal line

Tuesday, August 3, 2010

By Jeff Schudel

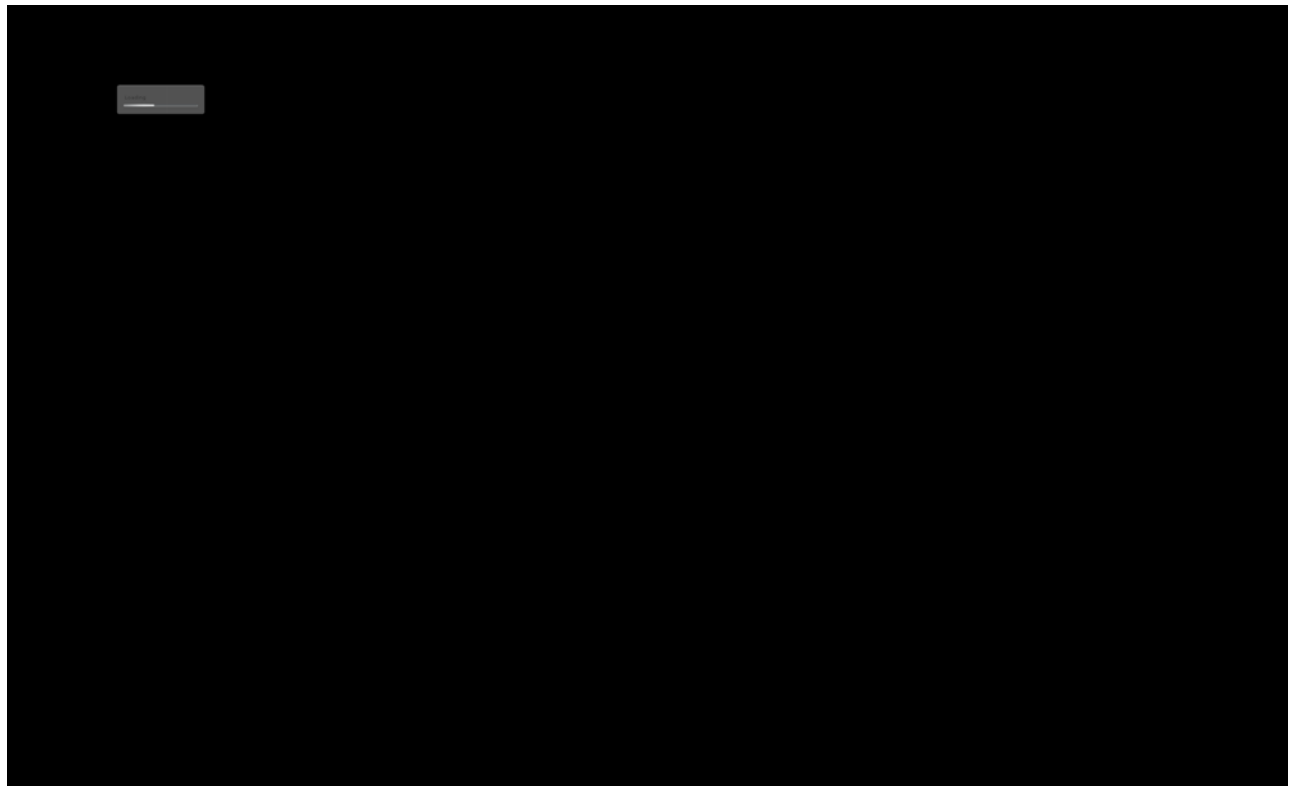
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More than 25 years ago, a cranky old lady in a hamburger-chain commercial angrily asked "Where's the beef?" because she wasn't happy with her meal.

The real beef this summer is in the Browns' backfield whenever Lawrence Vickers lines up as fullback with Peyton Hillis as tailback. That's close to 500 pounds of brawn behind the quarterback, and from the way they've looked in training camp, they are going to be a load for opponents whenever the Browns are near the goal line or in a short-yardage situation.

It is a weapon they did not have last year when they lost 11 of their first 12 games.



"Peyton has played fullback and tailback for the Broncos, and that's one of the things I liked about him when we were

talking about bringing him in," Coach Eric Mangini said between practices Monday. "We have two big backs working together. That's a nice combination."

Hillis is more than a short-yardage specialist. He might have the best hands of any of the Browns' running backs. But near the goal line is where he could have the most impact.

Last season, a Browns running back did not score a rushing touchdown until the 13th game, when Chris Jennings powered his way down the right side from the 10.

The Jennings' touchdown started what Mangini called a "flood" of rushing touchdowns, smiling wryly as he said it. Indeed, Jerome Harrison ran for five touchdowns over the last three games and Josh Cribbs added one.

The strong finish on the ground is a reason for optimism heading into 2010, but one thing was missing from the surge in the four-game winning streak. None of the seven touchdowns was scored inside the 5, where push comes to shove and power dominates.

Harrison had touchdown runs of 71, 8 and 28 yards against the Chiefs. He scored from the 17 against the Raiders and from the 6 against the Jaguars. Cribbs scored on a 14-yard run against Jacksonville.

"Touchdowns weren't coming very easily throwing or running the ball," Mangini said. "Guys got a better sense of working together, and that always helps. The receivers did a nice job blocking on the perimeter. We were running the ball effectively. We just weren't getting it in the end zone."

The Browns had the ball on third down for 233 plays last season. They averaged 4.3 yards on 168 passing plays and 5.8 yards on 65 running plays. That third-down rushing average, skewed by the success at the end of the season, was better than that of the Ravens (5.2 yards), Bengals (2.2) or Steelers (3.3). But cracking the goal line once inside the 5 was something the 2009 Browns could not do.

Hillis, acquired from the Broncos in the trade that sent Brady Quinn to Denver, is supposed to change that. He is listed at 250 pounds but weighs 241 — 36 pounds heavier than Harrison. He carried 68 times for 343 yards (5.0 average) and scored five touchdowns as a Broncos rookie in 2008. Last year, he had only 20 carries and gained 77 yards when he was used as a fullback.

Vickers is a legitimate 250. He has been knocking the numbers off linebackers in training camp, and those guys are his teammates.

"Having Vick in there is a big plus," said Hillis, who rode the exercise bike during the evening practice Monday. "He's a big back that hits people and loves to block. I feel with both of us in there we can move the pile a little bit and get that tough yardage."

Vickers triggered Harrison's success last December. The fullback played so well he thought he should have been in the Pro Bowl. Hillis might help him get to Hawaii this season.

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AUGUST 3, 2010, 9:32 PM

## Ex-CU quarterback Bernard Jackson is on CSU-Pueblo's roster

By **TERRY FREI** |  Comments Disabled



[1]

Then-Colorado quarterback [Bernard Jackson](#) <sup>[2]</sup> scrambles against Texas Tech at Folsom Field in 2006. (Hyoung Chang, The Denver Post)

### Updated...

When last seen playing college football, [Bernard Jackson](#) <sup>[2]</sup> — then a junior from Corona, Calif. — was Colorado's starting quarterback in 2006, [Dan Hawkins](#) <sup>[3]</sup>' first season as head coach. Jackson struggled in the 2-10 season, but he struck most of us as a good guy trying to make the best of a bad situation and not indulging in finger-pointing or self-pity. He rushed for 677 yards and threw for 1,298 yards that season.

He was ruled academically ineligible for the 2007 season, and then the wheels completely fell off. He and former teammate Lionel Harris were convicted in January 2009 and sentenced to five and a half years in prison for second-degree menacing after a 2008 burglary of a Boulder apartment.

They were placed on probation and released in late 2009, and in Jackson's case, it came after several former CU teammates — including Broncos tackle [Tyler Polumbus](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and his wife, Liz — expressed support of and faith in Jackson to the court. Jackson had been serving his sentence in the Rifle Correction Facility and from all indications had been a model prisoner.

Now he's getting another chance at CSU-Pueblo, where former CU assistant John Wristen is the head coach and former Bronco Steve Sewell is the running backs coach.

When I first heard that Jackson was in Pueblo this summer and working out, with the goal of getting a shot at CSU-Pueblo, the speculation was that after three full seasons away from football, Jackson might be a safety if he was able to officially join the ThunderWolves. But he's listed at quarterback on the the official fall camp roster for the Division II, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference program.

*(Update: At the RMAC Media Day proceedings Wednesday in Colorado Springs, Wristen announced he was naming JC transfer Ross Dausin as the ThunderWolves' starting quarterback and said that Jackson initially at least would be used at wide receiver and perhaps some at safety.)*

This will be only the third season for the ThunderWolves since football was revived.

I know some will look at this cynically and question bringing Jackson into the program, but I don't. A quarterback in his mid-20s who has been out of the game for three years and has only one season of eligibility remaining isn't exactly a ticket to automatic success, even at the D2 level. If Jackson indeed is able to play this fall and make progress toward a degree, it will be a story of giving a young man a chance to take another step in straightening out his life.

Good for Wristen, who attended and starred at the school when it was known as Southern Colorado, and the CSU-Pueblo program.

The ThunderWolves open the season August 28 at Oklahoma Panhandle State, then are home on September 4 against Northwestern [Oklahoma State](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

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[Terry Frei's Web Site](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

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