



Notes

Brad Jones' return to Packers still a possibility

By [Tom Silverstein](#) of the Journal Sentinel
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Don't rule out a return to Green Bay for **Brad Jones**.

The free agent inside linebacker met with the Packers Wednesday at the team's Lambeau Field facilities, presumably to discuss a return.

In a light blue hooded sweatshirt, Jones was inside 1265 Lombardi Ave. for about an hour. It's possible he was meeting with defensive coaches to find out what kind of role he would play next season.

On his way out, Jones, who had earlier visited the Tennessee Titans, did not stop to speak to a pair of reporters. His agent, **Josh Wright**, did not indicate if Jones had reached a deal with the Packers.

Jones is considered one of the top free agents at his position this off-season after recording 77 tackles, four pass breakups and two sacks last season.

Mostly a special teams player in 2010 and '11, Jones was the third option for the Packers at inside linebacker, gaining a starting spot after **Desmond Bishop** tore a hamstring muscle and **D.J. Smith** tore his anterior cruciate ligament.

Jones played 794 of a possible 801 snaps over the final 12 games, serving as the team's lone linebacker in the dime package.

It's been a quiet free agency period for the Packers, but not at inside linebacker where **A.J. Hawk** took a pay cut and **Robert Francois** re-signed a one-year deal slightly above minimum.

Indications from Francois' camp were that the Packers would let him compete at inside linebacker in training camp. If Jones signs, he would join Bishop, Smith, Hawk, Francois and 2012 rookie **Terrell Manning** competing for two starting spots.

That does not include any draft choices the Packers might add.

It's unknown whether the Titans offered more money and/or a starting spot to Jones.

Before free agency began, a market appeared to be building for Jones. Wright said eight teams had contacted him about the linebacker. His ability to play inside and outside linebacker positions and special teams may have made him attractive to some teams.

Fresh start: At the time cornerback **Davon House** dislocated his left shoulder in the exhibition opener against San Diego, he was moving up the depth chart quickly.

After seeing limited playing time the rest of the year, House underwent surgery on the shoulder right after the season and has been doing extremely well in his rehab.

"House is back here; he looks great," McCarthy said. "He had his surgery and I thought he had an excellent training camp. He'll definitely be someone who'll push for a starting position or definitely a big role in our defense."

Rather than undergo surgery last summer, House played with a harness on his shoulder once the healing process was complete and simply wasn't the same player. The harness prevented him from effectively using the arm in bump-and-run and raising it up to go for interceptions.

One of the things the team missed the most from the 6-1, 195-pound House was his size and tackling ability. Timid and soft as a rookie, House proved much tougher his second year and actively threw his body around in the run game.

"You could've made a point there the first three weeks of training camp, he might've been our best corner," coach **Mike McCarthy** said. "He did some really good things early."

House joins **Tramon Williams** in trying to come back fully from a shoulder injury. Williams said during the off-season that he never felt he was 100% last year because of nerve damage he suffered in 2011.

The Packers have depth, however, with **Sam Shields** and rookie **Casey Hayward**, the latter of whom made some all-rookie teams and is the best player in the slot.

"His ability to play nickel as a rookie was huge," McCarthy said. "I think we'll have a lot of competition for the outside spots in base and we'll see the way this nickel and dime sorts out."

Time to heal: McCarthy knows there are no sure things with 2011 first-round pick **Derek Sherrod**.

The broken tibia the offensive tackle suffered his rookie year forced him to miss all of last season and he still isn't out of the woods. McCarthy said Sherrod has been extremely diligent in his rehab and has responded well, but it's still too early to tell whether the leg will hold up in training camp.

"You watch it on film, that's not your everyday (injury)," McCarthy said. "I think anytime you break bones and you try to categorize injuries, there was more to it than that. Obviously, with him missing the whole season that was truly evident."

McCarthy did not give a strong endorsement to left tackle **Marshall Newhouse**, who gave up too many pressures and was inconsistent as a run blocker. There's always a chance that **Bryan Bulaga** could move to left tackle and rookie **Don Barclay** could start on the right side, but McCarthy said it's too early to determine that.

"Well, the one thing about Marshall, you go back through the grades, Marshall played OK," McCarthy said. "We need some improvement from the left side of our line. That's, if you're breaking down the line as a whole, our left side and the center position, we need improvement there."

Contract numbers: The four-year, \$12 million deal that running back **Steven Jackson** signed with the Atlanta Falcons proved to be not nearly as lucrative as the numbers suggest.

Jackson received \$4 million in guaranteed money, but there are no guarantees after next season and his salary cap charge is just \$2.917 million this year. If he doesn't pan out, the Falcons can cut him and he will count about \$2.2 million against their cap in 2014.

His base salaries are \$3 million in '14 and \$3.75 million in '15.

Also, the two-year, \$1.6 million deal tight end **Tom Crabtree** signed with Tampa Bay pays him base salaries of \$700,000 in '13 and \$750,000 in '14 and roster bonuses of \$50,000 and workout bonuses of \$25,000 in both years.

Tyler Dunne of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.

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Crosby could face camp kicking competition

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Photo/Getty Images

Mason Crosby had a tough go in 2012 and may be challenged in camp.

PHOENIX – While nothing is set in stone, it sure sounds like kicker Mason Crosby will get some training-camp competition this summer with the Green Bay Packers. At least that's the impression coach Mike McCarthy gave folks at the NFC coaches breakfast at the annual NFL Meetings Wednesday morning.

"I think competition's good," McCarthy said when asked about Crosby, who is coming off his worst NFL season, having made only 63.6 percent of his field-goal attempts (21 of 33) in the regular season last year. "Definitely, I don't think you can look past any performance throughout your team and think that competition's (not) going to help, regardless of how they performed the year before.

"I mean, I think that's definitely something that we'll look at."

Throughout Crosby's struggles last season, the Packers chose not to bring in a kicker to compete with him. In fact, Crosby hasn't faced training-camp competition since his rookie year of 2007, when he was a sixth-round pick from Colorado and beat out incumbent kicker Dave Rayner. McCarthy gave no reason to think the Packers are looking to replace him.

"Mason's in town and we feel good about the plan and all the things that we've talked about," McCarthy said. "He's an experienced kicker and those guys make subtle adjustments. Sometimes it's too much and if there's a common theme of a lot of our evaluation with our football team, it falls in the category of too much."

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Crosby could face some competition during camp

Written by Rob Demovsky

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greenbaypressgazette.com

PHOENIX — For the first time since his rookie season, Packers kicker Mason Crosby probably will have some competition in training camp.

Crosby beat out incumbent Dave Rayner in the summer of 2007, and the Packers haven't signed another kicker since then. That could change with Crosby coming off a season in which he converted just 63.6 percent of his field goals (21-of-33 in the regular season).

It was by far his worst year.

"I think competition's good, definitely," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said. "I don't think you can look past any past performance throughout your team and think that competition's (not) going to help regardless of how they performed the year before. I mean, I think that's definitely something that we'll look at."

Crosby went through a midseason slump in which he missed 12 of 24 field goals and had a miss in eight straight games in which he attempted a kick.

"And the other part of it, Mason's in town and we feel good about the plan and all the things that we've talked about," McCarthy said. "He's an experienced kicker and those guys make subtle adjustments. Sometimes it's too much and if there's a common theme of our evaluation with our football team, it falls into the category of too much."