

APRIL 3, 1976

POOL THROUGH GREEN BAY PACKERS HEADQUARTERS

The President arrived on schedule and was greeted at the front door of the Packer Administration building by Coach Bart Starr, Dominic Clejnickzak, President of the Green Bay Packer Corporation, who led them on a 15-minute tour of the Administrative offices and some training facilities for the team.

Room No. 1 - Names of pro-ball players from every NFL teams were listed on the wall along with their ratings, as determined by the Packers' coaches and scouts.

Room No. 2 - College talent names covered a much larger wall... 600 names overall... and : grades for each of the players. The Green Bay coaches make their draft selections based on this information on ratings and player positions.

On leaving Room No. 2, the President turned to the pool and said, "You know, maybe we should rate the press that way." (The Pool considered reminding the President that ratings that high do not exist, but decided that would be imprudent.)

Down the hall, the President stopped to inspect the film room -- a small room lined with ceiling-to-floor racks holding literally hundreds of canisters of 16 mm films of the Packers games.

Next stop was Coach Starr's small corner office on the second floor, where the President was presented with a regulation gold and green Packers' helmet. He was most appreciative, but did not put it on: On leaving the office, the President remarked, "I need that helmet for some of those questions you ask."

Then the entourage walked down stairs to the locker room, where the President went through an informal receiving line of approximately 30 Packers' employees -- secretaries, ticket agents, corporation executives, trainers, assistant coaches, etc. Then he walked into the adjacent weight room (the only room where television taping was allowed). Nine players in green shorts and regulation Packer jerseys of green and gold demonstrated the use of several strength-building machines. President Ford resisted the temptation to try one out himself. "Don't asked me to do one," he jokingly warned Packer Assistant Coach (and former quarterback) Zeke Bratkowski.

Just before leaving the room, the President began waxing nostalgically about his days as a jock. He told the story -- that he later told at the Hall of Fame dedication -- about how he almost became a Packer when he caught the attention of then-Packer coach Curley Lambeau during the East-West Shrine game following Ford's senior year season at Michigan. "He offered me \$200 a game, which was the going rate in those days. But I decided to go and coach at Yale, so I could go to law school. That's as close as I got to being a Packer." Starr responded, "We wish you had gotten closer."

The President, with his thumbs tucked in his belt, told the players, "I'll be watching. That's how I get a little relaxation on Sunday afternoons."

ANN COMPTON - ABC
TOM DeFRANK - NEWSWEEK
ED WALSH - POST

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