

## The Price of Tyranny

There are many motivators in the world, but which one is the strongest? In the eyes of Macbeth Matthews, Thane of the Gridiron and King of the Defense, fear was the greatest motivator. He ruled the Green Bay Packers' defense with an iron fist. Anyone who dared to oppose him was swiftly targeted with a hit vicious enough to cause not only concussions but also submission. However, this little reminder of supremacy could not compare to the punishment suffered by Macbeth's opponents. Macbeth had the ability to wreak havoc on opposing offenses. Vikings, Lions, and Bears all fell victim to his relentless effort and dirty play. In short, Macbeth was feared throughout the league just as much as he was feared in his own locker room.

After one particularly resounding defeat of the Minnesota Vikings, Macbeth was approached by three athletic trainers. They applauded his efforts in the game before offhandedly remarking that, since he was already the most important player on the team, perhaps Macbeth should coach the team as well. Now the coach at that time, Mike McCarthy, was universally loved and respected by his players, even the fearsome Macbeth. But throughout the days that followed, the idea of being the first player-coach in the NFL continued to percolate in the back of his mind.

Macbeth would return from practices in a subdued, pensive mood, quite contrary to his usual boastful manner, as he pondered the possibility of being a player-coach. Macbeth's wife, a woman whose desire for power was rivaled only by her husband's, asked about his sudden change in demeanor. Upon discovering Macbeth's ambitions, his wife began to paint a grandiose picture of the glorious future her husband could have as the first player-coach in the history of the National Football League. Swayed by this vision of the future, the couple devised a plan to

embroil the beloved McCarthy in scandal, thus putting Macbeth in a position to succeed as head coach. Overcome by delusions of power, Macbeth steeled himself to overthrow the only individual he had ever obeyed.

The seven words in the headline on the front cover of the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* the next Monday were the seven words that would mark the beginning of the end for Packers head coach Mike McCarthy. Gracing the front page of the *Gazette* this fateful Monday were the words “McCarthy Accused of Relations with Macbeth’s Wife.” Of course, these allegations were completely falsified, but there was not one soul within the organization brave enough to stand up and tell the world that Macbeth was a liar. Even McCarthy, seeking to avoid confrontation, quickly and quietly resigned from his position as head coach. Defensive coordinator Dom Capers was selected to act as the interim head coach. Capers, however, was a head coach in name only. Macbeth called the shots on defense, disregarding any communication that came through his helmet. When the offense was on the field, Macbeth would don a headset and relay plays of his choice to quarterback Aaron Rodgers. The next three weeks of the season came and went in a similar fashion while, unbeknownst to Macbeth, an undercurrent of opposition to his tyrannical rule of the team was steadily swelling.

The leader of this opposition movement, fellow linebacker Julius Peppers, first sought to establish a successor to fill the power vacuum that would surely be present following Macbeth’s demise. Peppers settled on Joe Lombardi, son of Packers legend Vince Lombardi, as the ideal candidate and made the proper arrangements to ensure a smooth succession. The question of how to end Macbeth’s rule by fear was more difficult to answer. After much discussion, the opposition movement decided to depose Macbeth by injuring him in a way that would keep him

off the field for an extended period of time. In the end, Peppers agreed to strike the blow, a swift, savage hit to the Macbeth's knees that would sideline the tyrant for the rest of the season.

The situation reached a boiling point the next Sunday, when quarterback Aaron Rodgers was inexplicably benched and Macbeth was brought in to replace him. The following Tuesday, as Macbeth was taking reps at the quarterback position in practice, Peppers struck. He blitzed from Macbeth's blind side and tackled him low. In the ensuing silence, Macbeth crumpled to the ground with a torn ACL. The silence persisted until he had been carted off the field and out of earshot, after which the cheers erupted. The team members hoisted Peppers onto their shoulders and paraded him around the field, hailing him as their liberator.

The rest of the week passed in whirlwind of activity. Joe Lombardi was hired to replace interim head coach Capers. Lombardi's first move as head coach was to cut Macbeth. Freed from his overbearing presence, the Packers organization enjoyed a period of resurgence that brought about many successful seasons in the years to come. Macbeth Matthews never again found work in the National Football League. He spent the remainder of his career as a gym teacher who was increasingly unable to keep up with his students due to the violent collisions he experienced during his time in football. Macbeth, yearning for the attention that he was once afforded by his superstar status, continued to disparage the Packers organization through frequent interviews with various media outlets. As the years passed, these opportunities to vent his frustrations through the mainstream media became more and more infrequent until Macbeth finally became nothing more than another angry voice on Twitter and a living reminder of the tenuous nature of dominance through fear.