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HOO! SPORTS

Favre to blame for nasty divorce

By **Michael Silver**, Yahoo! Sports

Aug 5, 10:44 pm EDT

GREEN BAY, Wis. — [Aaron Rodgers](#) dropped back, set his feet and prepared to release a routine slant pass when he heard the squeaky voice from behind the fence. The fourth-year quarterback paused during an individual drill late in the [Green Bay Packers'](#) training camp practice Tuesday afternoon and spied a little boy, maybe 6, among the hundreds of spectators lining the Oneida Street side of [Clarke Hinkle Field](#).

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“We don’t love you,” the kid said. “You suck.” Favre leaves c 

Rodgers didn’t respond to the taunt, nor did he acknowledge the pockets of fans chanting “we want Brett” and “bring back Favre” at sporadic points during the practice. But given the way things had played out since a certain legendary quarterback’s dramatic return to Titledown less than 48 hours earlier, there was an obvious message that should have been delivered to the kids – and the people acting like them – going to pieces over the messy divorce between the Packers and [Brett Favre](#).

The Aaron Rodgers era has begun in Green Bay, and if you don’t like that, you’re taking it out on the wrong quarterback.

“I know people are emotional, but that’s an interesting way of expressing yourself,” Rodgers told Y! Sports after Tuesday’s practice. “All I know is we have a really good *team*, and we’re excited to get ready for the season.”

It’s a season which, it now seems painfully clear, will take place without Favre in a Packers uniform for the first time since 1991. And if you want to

know who's most responsible for that, Packers fans, take a look at that No. 4 jersey in the mirror above your dresser.

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There have been numerous tactical missteps made by Favre and the bosses he publicly suggested are dishonest – general manager Ted Thompson and coach Mike McCarthy – during this month-long saga, and Packers fans have a right to be frustrated at both camps. But if you believe that the quarterback soon will be leaving Green Bay, most likely via trade to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, because those merciless meanies just didn't want poor ol' Brett around, you've got more than cheese clouding your head.

As McCarthy stated in his news conference after Tuesday's practice, and as Favre himself had stated more clearly in his latest woe-is-me interview (this one to ESPN's Chris Mortensen) earlier that morning, the reason the future Hall of Famer couldn't come back to the Pack was that he can't let go of his ill will toward his employers.

Rodgers, meanwhile, has every right to be bitter about the way things went down since Favre stepped onto the tarmac at Austin Straubel Airport on Sunday night. Yet he's the one biting his lip and acting like the adult.

Let's see it from his perspective: After waiting three years for his shot, and without much warmth or mentoring from the guy he was playing behind, Rodgers finally was told he was The Man after Favre's tearful retirement news conference in March. Shortly before training camp, a story surfaced that Favre had the itch to return. Favre, via text message, dismissed the report as "just rumors," which was a lie.

After floating his desire to come out of retirement, Favre waited for Thompson and McCarthy to embrace him as the reinstated starter, just as he so often has demanded to be indulged over the latter part of his career. This time, they didn't respond positively – partly because they didn't believe he wanted to come back and play, partly because they already had committed to Rodgers and didn't want to destroy their relationship with a talented quarterback they had spent years grooming, and partly because they were tired of being in a subservient position.

Favre got more and more resentful, lashing out publicly and privately demanding to be released. The team held firm, insisting that it would only trade him to a team outside its division. To force the issue – and thanks largely to the intervention of commissioner Roger Goodell – Favre secured his reinstatement, flew to Green Bay and, in a shameless bit of

showmanship, showed up at Lambeau Field with his wife Deanna to watch the team's "Family Night" scrimmage from a luxury box.

In that glorified 11-on-11 drill, with some of the 56,000-plus fans booing him, Rodgers completed just 7 of 20 passes. Afterward, he fielded questions from reporters and learned – from *them* – that the Packers supposedly had declared an open competition between him and Favre for the starting job.

Gulp.

"It was news to me," Rodgers admitted Tuesday. "All of a sudden people are talking about 'open competition,' and I'm wondering what happened."

For the next day and a half, Rodgers, like the rest of us, wondered what it all meant when Packers CEO Mark Murphy said the team would welcome Favre back "and turn this situation to our advantage."

On Monday night, as Favre was staging meetings with his superiors that dragged on so long that McCarthy had to cancel a quarterbacks meeting, it certainly didn't seem that things were working to Rodgers' advantage.

Nonetheless, publicly and privately, Rodgers did what Favre can't seem to do these days: He kept his cool.

"If I was going to get mad, or throw something against the wall, what difference would it have made?" Rodgers asked rhetorically. "All I can do is control the attitude I bring into every day, stay positive and think about leading this football team to the best of my ability."

Favre, meanwhile, couldn't overcome the negativity that apparently has been swirling inside his mind for quite some time. In that lengthy vent session last month to Greta Van Susteren of Fox News, Favre complained that he couldn't trust Thompson because, among other things, the GM had ignored his pleadings to acquire Randy Moss and hired McCarthy over Steve Mariucci, the one-time Packers assistant and former 49ers and Lions coach with whom the quarterback is extremely close.

Think about that: Favre was affronted because the Pack's *general manager* wouldn't follow his quarterback's decree about whom to hire as head coach.

The Packers hired former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer as a PR consultant, but in truth, Favre is the one more in need of such image management.

Consider that Favre, in another interview, said he only wanted to play for another NFC North team – in order to play the Packers twice a season. Now *that's* loyalty.

Yet, for all his regrettable posturing, Favre still had the image war won when he stepped off that plane Sunday night and received a hero's welcome and an invitation to return to the Packers' roster. At that point, the coach of another NFL team told me, "The game's over. There's no way Favre won't get his job back now. If you don't start him, how are you going to explain it to all of those fans?"

If Favre, as some suspected, was preparing to engage the Packers in a game of chicken, be it in an attempt to go where he wanted to go (Minnesota) or to get his old job back, this is what he *should* have done:

1. *Not* attend the scrimmage. (Perhaps he and Deanna could have stayed home and rented a DVD.)
2. Apologize to McCarthy and Thompson for having called them dishonest and assure his bosses he had overcome his ill feelings and was embracing a return to the organization under any terms.
3. To prove he totally was on board, show up for practice on Tuesday, wave to the adoring fans, meet with reporters afterward and tell them, "I just want a chance to compete for my job and help this team" – even if he believed the competition was going to be a sham.
4. Quietly push for a trade or his outright release and wait for the Packers, facing the prospect of a season-long quarterback controversy and a \$12 million tab for a player they had hoped would stay retired, to blink first.

Alas, Favre couldn't help himself. On Tuesday, while still in discussions with McCarthy about his future, he took a break to call Mortensen and confirm what many of us had suspected all along: Favre, despite another public statement to the contrary ("My intentions have always been to play for Green Bay," Favre had told the Sun Herald of Gulfport, Miss., before

returning on Sunday), was the one who wanted out.

“The problem is that there’s been a lot of damage done and I can’t forget it,” he told Mortensen. “Stuff has been said, stories planted, that just aren’t true. Can I get over all that? I doubt it. ... So they can say they welcome me back, but come on, the way they’ve treated me tells you the truth. They don’t want me back, so let’s move on.”

Move on is what most of Favre’s teammates were eager to do on Tuesday, even some of the Packers who’ve been most supportive of his return.

“I think it should end *today*,” veteran cornerback Charles Woodson said. “We should be talking about the team; instead, we’ve talked about one guy for the last five minutes. This is a situation unique to itself, and it has become its own monster.

“You’ve got fans out there yelling ‘we want Brett,’ yelling A-Rod this and A-Rod that, Ted Thompson this and Ted that. That’s not looking at the grand scheme of things. It’s not helpful at all. You’ve got fans that are die-hard Brett fans, and they’ve put that above the team.”

If Favre, by forcing the issue, did the Packers and his successor one favor, it was this: We’ve gotten a small taste of Rodgers’ demeanor under intense pressure, and to the young passer’s credit, he has kept his cool a lot better than the outgoing legend.

“Aaron Rodgers has done everything right,” McCarthy said during his news conference. Later, the coach talked about his conviction that Rodgers will succeed in his new role.

“You just have to believe in a number of things,” McCarthy said. “Number one, I think he’s prepared himself for this opportunity. I think he has the tools, physically, mentally, emotionally. I mean, you talk about what he’s been challenged with emotionally of late, this is great (training). Who’s had better training to play in the National Football League than Aaron Rodgers, and I think he’s handled it well.”

Hopefully, that maturity will start to rub off on Favre – and the fans who can’t find the grace to cope with the fact that their hero willfully abandoned them.

