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## Fremont Ross grad aids Green Bay win

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CLEVELAND -- The clock is ticking on Charles Woodson's career.

Woodson, whose name still decorates the Fremont Ross record books 14 years after his departure from Fremont, is now a 12-year NFL veteran on the back end of a potential Hall of Fame career.

He's no longer sprinting past defenders as a halfback with electric speed, and he hasn't lined up as a wide receiver for years. Even punts, which Woodson once regularly returned for touchdowns, are plays he rarely sees.

On top of all that, there's still the matter of winning a Super Bowl.

But Woodson -- Ohio's Mr. Football, a Heisman Trophy winner and a five-time Pro Bowler -- is arguably having his best season yet as a 33-year-old Green Bay Packers cornerback. Like a fine wine, Woodson has gotten better with age. Maybe not in size, speed or athleticism, but as a team leader and a defensive threat.

Woodson showed his worth again Sunday afternoon in Green Bay's lopsided 31-3 victory over the Cleveland Browns. He forced two Browns turnovers that led to 10 Packers points -- one on a second-quarter interception and the other on a forced fumble in the third -- while holding the receivers he defended to no receptions.

Browns receiver Brian Robiskie, whom Woodson defended on most plays, was targeted five times. And five times Robiskie came up empty.

To Ross fans, that's typical Woodson. And it's performances like Woodson's against the Browns that Green Bay fans have become just as familiar with.

Packers cornerback Al Harris, who's been Woodson's teammate for four seasons in Green Bay, has come to expect good things from Woodson, too.

"(Sunday), Wood came up with the turnovers, which were big in this game" said Harris, who is the only Packers defensive starter with more NFL experience than Woodson. "That's what we expect from him. That's what he gives us every week."

As a tandem, how good are Woodson and Harris?

"Since Wood's been here in Green Bay, we've done well together," Harris said. "Both of us older guys understand the game. It's been an honor and a privilege. I think we make one of the best, if not the best, cornerback tandems in the league."

Woodson, like Harris, regularly wreaks havoc on wide receivers. He certainly didn't make Browns quarterback Derek Anderson's job easy Sunday.

To Anderson's credit, he doesn't have a whole lot of receiving talent to work with these days. Not with top receiver Braylon Edwards wearing Jets colors and rookies like Robiskie and Mohamed

Massaquoi serving as the team's top pass catching threats against Woodson.

Anderson spent the early part of Sunday's game avoiding Woodson, instead picking on Harris. In fact, Anderson didn't sling a pass Woodson's way until midway through the second quarter, when he threw wide of both Robiskie and Woodson.

Two plays after that incomplection, Anderson tried again to connect with Robiskie, but instead hooked up with Woodson, playing in Cleveland for only the second time in 12 NFL seasons. Woodson picked off the pass at the Browns' 40-yard line.

Woodson sprinted down the left sideline toward the end zone, but he didn't make it in for a score. Three Browns players cut off his path for a touchdown, and he was tackled at the 15.

Still, Woodson's 40th career interception -- and fourth of the season -- set up Green Bay's third touchdown and gave the Packers a 21-3 lead. Essentially, the touchdown sealed the Browns' loss, something they've grown accustomed to lately.

But just to be sure the game was in hand, Woodson forced another turnover in the third. Browns receiver Josh Cribbs caught a 3-yard pass from Anderson, but Woodson timed the play perfectly, hit Cribbs in the midsection and knocked the ball loose. Linebacker Brandon Chillar recovered the fumble, and Green Bay later converted the turnover into points on Mason Crosby's field goal.

In addition to the interception and forced fumble, Woodson finished Sunday with three tackles. Woodson had a season-high 10 tackles, two interceptions and a defensive touchdown in a Week 2 home loss against the Bengals.

Through three games, Woodson was on pace to surpass his career-best mark of 79 tackles. Now he's on pace for 69, a mark that would still establish a personal high with the Packers. Sixty-nine would also be the most he's recorded since he played for the Oakland Raiders in 2004.

Then again, teams might continue to limit their attempts attacking Woodson's side of the field after he set a precedent early this season: Don't throw my way -- or else.

Anderson threw Woodson's way a few times Sunday. And Woodson made the struggling Browns pay.

"We know (the Browns) are struggling a little bit, and we felt like this was a game we could win," said Woodson, who mentioned 14 family members and friends from Fremont were among the 69,797 in attendance. "It was a big game for us, but we know the road is going to get much tougher. We took care of business (Sunday), but we know it's a long road ahead."

The path to Woodson's first Super Bowl championship is still a long one, but the Packers are at least on the right road at 4-2. And if the Packers do happen to eke out a Super Bowl win this season, Woodson's role defensively will be as big as they come as a lockdown artist with a penchant for turnovers.

"We just got to keep playing hard every week," Woodson said. "It's really that simple. We're not trying to look down the road."

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Green Bay Packers cornerback Charles Woodson (21) escapes Cleveland Browns tight end Greg Estandia (83) after an interception in the second quarter of an NFL football game against the Cleveland Browns on Sunday in Cleveland. (Tony Dejak | Associated Press)