

A special time for Hyde, surging Packers

[Michael Cohen](#) , Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 8:47 p.m. CT Jan. 7, 2017

GREEN BAY - The ticket placed him in the upper level of Ford Field for a game that crowned the Green Bay Packers division champions. He climbed to his seat behind the goal post and overlooked the end zone from a vantage point that, by game's end, would prove wonderfully serendipitous.

Todd Hyde, 50, had ridden passenger with his son and daughter-in-law for the hour-long trip from his home in Toledo, Ohio, to downtown Detroit, where the Packers and Lions closed out the regular season last Sunday. He fixed his gaze on No. 33 in white, the versatile defensive back Micah Hyde, and admired the success of a son he sired but did not raise.

Todd had a clear view as Micah fended off wide receiver Golden Tate and squeezed a one-handed interception to seal the win.

"It was perfect," Todd said. "I liked it. I loved it."

By defeating the Lions, who still made the playoffs as the sixth seed, the Packers completed a six-game winning streak that threw a life jacket to a sinking season. There are myriad reasons for the turnaround — from the stellar play of quarterback Aaron Rodgers, to the stability of running back Ty Montgomery, to the unflappable attitude of cornerback LaDarius Gunter — and the malleable skill set of Hyde's is certainly among them.

The string of wins has coincided with the best stretch of Hyde's career, evidenced by crucial fourth-quarter plays in four of them. With his ample size (5-11½, 198 pounds), three-sport upbringing (football, basketball, baseball) and heightened instincts (former high school quarterback), Hyde afforded the Packers six-position versatility as their cornerbacks bought a condominium on the injury report. He underscored his value a few months before potentially hitting the free-agent market.

"Obviously he's very gifted physically, a professional athlete, but he's the kind of guy that you go down to the rec center and he's good at anything," coach Mike McCarthy said. "He'd probably beat you at checkers."

After the game, Hyde met his family in the underbelly of the stadium. They made small talk and traded hugs. It was the second time Todd had seen his son play in the NFL, and Micah turned in one of the finest games of his four-year career.

They spoke for a few minutes until the team bus was ready to depart.

“I don’t want to say awkward because that’s not the right word,” Micah said. “It wasn’t awkward. It was just a little different.”

The unfamiliarity between them encapsulated the general arc of their relationship, which was nonexistent for long periods of time but has grown steadier in recent years.

Though Todd was originally married to Micah’s mother, Pamela, he left the family when his children were young. By that point, during the early 1990s, the criminal activity and mental illness that would darken the next few decades of Todd’s life already had begun. He watched from afar as Micah and his older brother, Marcus, both played high-level football without really knowing them at all.

“I regretted it,” Todd said. “I regretted it because I feel that I kind of walked out of their life, especially Micah’s. For his brother I was there, pretty much there. But (Micah) was a baby-baby when I walked out of there. He was like maybe 2 or 3 years old. I really didn’t get to spend as much time with him as I should have.”

Which is why it meant so much to witness his interception against the Lions in person.



When Hyde intercepted Stafford with 1 minute, 35 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, the back end of the Packers’ defense resembled a Choose Your Own Adventure book: Do you play two safeties as your slot corners, or do you play two rookies in a game that determines playoff seeding?

With three cornerbacks felled by injury, defensive coordinator Dom Capers answered yes to both. Morgan Burnett and Kentrell Brice, a rookie, moved from their traditional safety spots to slot corners, and into the game came Marwin Evans, another rookie, to play alongside Ha Ha Clinton-Dix.

But to make it work Capers needed a second cornerback on the perimeter opposite LaDarius Gunter, a savior in his own right. Capers turned to Hyde, who played corner at Iowa, and a few minutes later Hyde’s left-handed pick did the trick.

“The sideline Sunday in Detroit,” McCarthy said, “just from what Micah did and Morgan Burnett and Brice and those guys, and the communication and the whole operation, that’s about as good as I’ve seen however long I’ve been in the league. I’ll always remember that from a coaching standpoint. That was special. That was unique.”

Hyde’s clinching interception serves as a time capsule for all the positive traits identified by his coaches over the years, from McCarthy and Capers down to those who recruited him in high school.

The catch itself flashed the dexterity that made former Packers corner Casey Hayward jump up and down after Hyde snagged a one-handed, backhanded interception of Minnesota's Teddy Bridgewater last year. The reaction to the ball lent credence to the belief by Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz that Hyde would have broken every receiving record in school history if he'd played offense instead of corner. The foresight to shrink Stafford's throwing lane by nudging Tate toward the sideline personified the spatial awareness McCarthy said is greater than most players.

"It's just all heightened when you play multiple sports," McCarthy said. "I'm going through the same conversations with my two boys. It's so important for them to continue playing basketball and football. Micah is a perfect example of that."

Hyde's well-rounded athleticism made him a local phenom in Fostoria, Ohio, a Rust Belt city of 13,000 people two hours west of Cleveland. Raised by their mother, whom Hyde called the "single most important person in my life," both Micah and Marcus shined as dual-threat quarterbacks at Fostoria High School en route to Division I scholarships. (Marcus played at Michigan State from 2007-10.)

The six positions Hyde can play for the Packers — and who knows where he will line up Sunday against the New York Giants — were outdone by even more versatility and freedom in high school. Hyde threw for 7,864 yards and ran for 3,443 more. He scored more than 100 total touchdowns. He made 165 career tackles and set 17 school records. His positions included quarterback, cornerback, free safety, punt returner, kick returner, punter and kicker.

"Really outstanding skill set," said Chris Doyle, director of strength and conditioning at Iowa. "Like this is a guy that you could see playing Major League Baseball center field or shortstop or being a point guard at a Division I basketball school. He was unique."

Part of the athleticism came from his father, and Micah said he and Marcus would hear stories about their father's talents at the barbershop or at their basketball games growing up. "Oh, your dad Todd was an athlete," they were told on a number of occasions.

But Todd wasn't around to show it.

"Track and football," Todd said when asked about his own athletic career. "I was kind of like a troublesome kid type, you know what I mean? I was always in trouble. I wasn't really an athlete athlete."

Todd described himself as a speedy running back who starred in his early years and became a solid contributor in high school. When he started lifting weights, he played with a little more power at 175 pounds. "I had some good games, you know?"

After he left Pamela and the kids, Todd said he saw Micah a handful of times in the next few years. Micah remembers 45-minute car rides to his father's house, where he would stay for a couple of days at a time.

But the visits eventually stopped. Micah said he did not see his father again until high school, when Todd attended some of his football games. But even then, the presence was intermittent.

Said Todd: “When he got done playing in his game I gave him a hug and that was it.”

“You don’t really know how to act once he’s back or whatnot,” Micah said. “You want to be happy because it is your dad but at the same time you’re mad because it’s like, ‘Where have you been?’”



Where Todd had been was complicated to explain. It was a question with many answers, and Micah said he and his siblings were shielded from the details until they were older.

Beginning in the late 1980s, court records in multiple states show Todd Hyde was charged with at least 20 crimes in the span of two decades. Some of them were minor and fairly inconsequential, like an open-container violation that resulted in a small fine. But many of the charges were not.

Hyde entered one guilty plea and one plea of no contest for passing bad checks. He pleaded no contest to theft, resisting arrest and multiple assault charges, at least some of which were misdemeanors. He was also convicted of at least three felonies: battery on a law enforcement officer; resisting an officer with violence; trying to escape detention.

In total, Todd was sentenced to at least three years in prison.

“Personally I had a lot of things going on with me that I couldn’t be in his life like I should have been,” Todd said.

“My mom never talked about that,” Micah said. “People in my hometown that knew of my dad ... they would never talk about the bad things. And my dad’s side (of the family), obviously you know a lot of people have problems, have family problems. But my dad’s side it’s more of just mental — it’s mental illness on that side of the family.

“I’ve seen it throughout the years kind of trickle down in my family. As people get older it kind of trickles down. Being young I didn’t really understand it, but now it’s just a problem that people have and you can’t fight it, you just have to live with it.

“I’ve actually learned a lot about mental illness throughout the years because there’s been some other people in my family that have been diagnosed with it. I’ve done my own little research (and learned) through my mom and stuff like that. She’s taught me some things.”

Todd resides in Toledo and said he keeps in touch with Micah and Marcus on a regular basis. Like Micah, he attributes some of his problems to mental illness but points out “I’m not a sick, sick dude. There’s just a lot of things on my mind that I should have done that I didn’t do.

“I wish I could be there with the kids and stuff all the time now, but they’re grown now. There ain’t much I can do. But when the grandbabies come around...”

His voice rises with excitement. Todd says some of his daughters have children and he gets to see them on occasion. He enjoys sitting down with the babies, talking to them and playing whenever he can. When Marcus and Micah have their own children, he would like to do the same.

“I hope they let their kids come and be part of my life,” Todd said.

This weekend, Micah will have a strong cheering section when the Packers host the Giants in the wild-card round of the playoffs. His mother, stepfather, several college buddies and a close family friend from Fostoria are slated to attend.

Todd plans to watch the game from home after enjoying his experience in Detroit last week. He picks the Packers with confidence based on their six-game winning streak.

And Micah knows he's likely to receive a voicemail regardless of what happens.

“Dude, my family is perfect,” Hyde said. “My family is perfect. I couldn’t say enough about my family from the support that I have from my mom, my stepdad, my brother, my sisters and even the siblings I just met throughout the years, grandparents (too). Everybody has been so supportive. My family is perfect. I would not change one thing about them.”