

An Examination of Racial Diversity in Collegiate Football: A 15 Year Update

Bryan Finch, Texas A&M University

Michael Sagas, Texas A&M University (Advisor)

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During the 2004-05 academic year, the number of black male student-athletes competing in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sports reached an all-time high of 24.8% (Vincente, 2006). However, during the same academic year, the proportion of Blacks occupying important leadership positions (e.g., athletic director, coach) were at near all time lows (Lapchick, 2006). The exclusion of blacks is particularly prevalent for NCAA Division IA football coaches. At this level, blacks actually comprise about 46% of the student-athlete participation opportunities (Vincente, 2006) but less than 5% of the head coaching opportunities (3 of the 118 positions at the beginning of the 2005-2006 season) (Lapchick, 2006). These stark differences become even more meaningful when we consider Everhart and Chelladurai's (1998) assertion that former student-athletes comprise the greatest potential pool of coaches within a respective sport. Given the frequent and often intense discussions of the subject of diversity in college football among fans, alumni, and the broadcast and print media, it is surprising that the topic has so rarely been analyzed in a quantitative method. In conjunction with rising coaching salaries and football related expenses and revenues, media coverage and scrutiny regarding the lack of diversity in the coaching ranks has increased (e.g., Lapchick, 2006; Harrison, 2004; Walker, 2005; Wolverson, 2006; Wong, 2002, to name a few).

The lack of diversity among college football coaches was examined by Anderson (1993) in a study which analyzed football coaches and athletic directors at Division IA programs. The present study thus aimed to provide an update of his study by conducting a 15 year trend analysis of football coaches and athletic directors at the Division IA level, comparing Anderson's (1993) data from 1990 to data from 2005. Many changes have occurred across the landscape of Division IA football since 1990, especially with regard to the attention that the hiring of black football coaches receives now from the media, the NCAA, research institutes and centers. It is possible that the representation of black assistant coaches overall may be much improved. Further, from a centrality perspective, it can be argued that an increase in the proportion of assistant coaches coaching more central positions (i.e., offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, quarterbacks coach) is possible given the large increase in black athletes playing quarterback over the past decade especially (Weiberg, 2005). The following two research questions guided this study: first, what is the proportion of Black and White coaches in Division IA football, and do these proportions differ from those published by Anderson (1993); secondly, is institutional discrimination still a valid explanation for the dearth of Black head coaches as a result of Black coaches being 'funneled' into positions that will likely decrease their chances for this type of career advancement?

Immediately following the 2005 NCAA football season, media guides and coaching profile pages were downloaded from 116 of 118 Division IA official athletic program websites. In addition, biographical information was downloaded and printed for all 116 Division I-A directors of athletics. Most media guides or profile pages provided a detailed biographic record of each member of the coaching staff. Data was collected regarding race, playing experience and position played for: head coaches, offensive and defensive coordinators, quarterbacks coaches, assistant coaches, and directors of athletics. Other staff members, such as strength coaches and operations coaches were excluded from data collection. All data was analyzed utilizing a chi-square trend analysis to compare the data from Anderson's (1993) report to the data from the 2005 season.

For black and white head coaches, black coaches represented just 2.6% of the head coaches, down slightly from 3.5% in 1990 ($[1, N = 203] = .48, p = .70$). For offensive coordinators, black coaches occupied 11.9% of the spots, up slightly from 7.2% in 1990 ($[1, N = 184] = 1.11, p = .30$). A similar finding was noted for defensive coordinators as black coaches occupied 8.1% of these positions in 2005, up only slightly from 1990 (6.9%; $[1, N = 198] = .11, p = .75$).

The racial representation of position coaches, however, was significant. There were a total of 739 assistant position coaches in the sample that were coded as either white ($n = 486, 65.8\%$) or black ($n = 253, 34.2\%$). These figures are up from 1990 when white coaches occupied 460 of the total 586 assistant coaches (78.5%), and blacks represented 126 of the assistant coaches (21.5%). This upward trend for the black coaches was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 1325) = 25.95, p < .001$.

We used a cross tabulation to assess differences in assistant coach race representation by position coached, and it was also significant ($\chi^2 [1, N = 758] = 78.4, p < .001$). The most prominent positions coached by black coaches was running backs or wide receivers coach ($n = 115, 45.8\%$), followed by defensive line or line backer coach ($n = 82, 32.7\%$), followed by corner backs or safeties coach ($n = 46, 18.3\%$). Black coaches represented just two of the quarterbacks' coaches (.8%), while there were

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51 white coaches serving as a quarterbacks coach (10.1% of all white coaches). Black coaches represented just six of the offensive line coaches. Another analysis was used to assess differences in position played while a player (if the coach played at all) by race. This analysis was also significant ($\chi^2 [1, N = 758] = 137.6, p < .001$). A majority of the black coaches played wide receiver or running back ($n = 91, 36.3\%$) while only 65 of the white coaches had played this position in college (12.8%). White coaches ($n = 94, 18.5\%$) were more likely than black coaches ($n = 11, 4.4\%$) to have played the position of quarterback. Black coaches were also more represented by race at the cornerback or safety position ($n = 62, 24.7\%$) as compared to white coaches ($n = 81, 16\%$). White assistant coaches ($n = 34, 6.7\%$) were also more likely than black assistant coaches ($n = 2, .8\%$) to have not had played the game of football while in college. When assessing head coaches in the sample, a majority of these coaches that had previous coaching experience as a defensive line or linebacker's coach (23.2%), followed by running backs and wide receivers coaches (20.5%), and then quarterbacks coaches (19.6%). Only 11.6% of head coaches previously were offensive line coaches and 13.3% previously coached cornerbacks and safeties immediately prior to becoming a head coach. For head coaches as players, the data indicated that most head coaches played the game as a quarterback (33.3% down from 44.9% in 1990), followed closely by defensive line or line backers (19.2% up from 15.9% in 1990), and wide receiver and running backs coaches (16.2% up from 8.7% in 1990).

The results provided evidence that institutional racism is still potentially an active deterrent to diversity among Division IA football coaches as head coaches and coordinators. However, there is some guarded optimism in that perhaps in another 15 years, given the general increase in frequency and success of black quarterbacks and the diversity of backgrounds that head coaches are starting to possess, the trend will have changed toward more equitable racial representation.