

# Leveling the playing field

## The impact of race on the search for Duke's next head football coach

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Deep in record books documenting [J.] Redick's scoring averages and the 1938 Iron Dukes' box scores rests a conspicuous absence of fact. Duke has never employed a black head coach in any sport. For all of its record-breaking achievements, the athletics department with perhaps the foremost national reputation has a stark lack of diversity at the top of its programs. Duke is far from an exception. But in the ongoing quest to find its 21st head football coach, Duke can buck the trend.

Director of Athletics Joe Alleva—who leads the committee to find Ted Roof's replacement—has the opportunity to hire a minority candidate to lead a team comprised of 42 percent black athletes in a sport that was more than 50-percent black in 2007 in Division I-A. College football is an outlier in the sporting world, which features increasingly diverse coaching ranks. In 2007, there were six black head coaches in Division I-A college football, roughly five percent of the country's total. In the sport's history, only 22 head coaches have been black.

Almost all sources agree that Duke should hire the most qualified candidate, regardless of skin color. But the question remains: how critically will race factor into that decision?

"You make efforts to try to get [minority head coaches] at certain times, but it's often a func-

tion of the pool," said John Burness, senior vice president for public affairs and government relations. "President [Richard] Brodhead has said explicitly that he intends for us to make aggressive searches, particularly in football, and expects that minority candidates will be looked at. But I don't think anyone is particularly satisfied, nor should we be, with the current situation."

Burness is not content with Duke's state, and national organizations like the Black Coaches and Administrators are displeased with searches throughout the country. The problem, they believe, is that coaches of color do not receive enough interviews and simply are not given the chance to be considered for head-coaching positions. As a prominent athletic powerhouse, though, Duke is in a unique position: it could help trigger national change, said eminent civil-rights lawyer Cyrus Mehri, who works to encourage diversity in sport.

"With Duke being as prestigious a place as it is, it really can not only quietly show leadership—which is what it's doing now—but hopefully publicly show leadership," Mehri said.

### Duke and the BCA

Almost 20 years after its founding in 1988, the BCA has emerged as the watchdog of college football hiring practices.

The BCA issues a report card every year grading college football

SEE BLACK COACHES ON PAGE 12



## BLACK COACHES from page 1

coaching searches in terms of a school's effort to include diversity in the process. Each school is evaluated in five categories: communication with the BCA, diversity of the hiring and search committee, range of candidates interviewed, time it takes to hire a coach and adherence to the school's affirmative action policy.

In 2004, when Alleva promoted Roof after a national search, Duke received a 'B' from the BCA, as did five of 14 Division I-A schools evaluated. The University saw its lowest marks in communication and diversity of the search committee, including a 'D' in the latter. The best grades were reserved for the diversity of the candidate pool and the amount of time the search took, in which Duke earned 'A's. This time around, University officials seem to have emphasized improvement in areas in which it struggled.

"There is some diversity on the [six-person] search committee," Alleva said Friday. "Our search committee this time is not nearly as big as it was last time. We had some diversity last time, but we had a big committee, so the percentage was smaller."

BCA executive director Floyd Keith said that to his knowledge, Duke had not yet contacted his organization as of late Wednesday night. Normally, schools contact the BCA within a day of starting a coaching search, he said.

But senior associate athletics director Chris Kennedy said Monday that he intended to call the BCA office later that day to make sure Duke was not overlooking a worthy candidate. When asked in an e-mail last Friday if Duke had contacted the BCA, Alleva wrote: "Yes we have, that is part of our process."

Duke's top brass traveled Monday to the Washington D.C., area to discuss the open position with Navy's Paul Johnson, who is white. But Duke also hosted Grambling State head coach Rod Broadway, who is black, for an on-campus interview Tuesday. One of the stipulations of the candidate-diversity portion of the report card is that coaches of color are interviewed on campus.

That sort of cooperation is all the BCA can hope for. The organization hopes that by encouraging the placement of qualified blacks in the interview room, more candidates will eventually become coaches.

"We can't ask schools to go about hiring black coaches," said Georgia Tech head basketball coach Paul Hewitt, who is president of the BCA. "I think that's unrealistic and unfair to universities. All you can hope for is to see that a search committee has diversity and the pool of candidates has diversity. If those two things happen, everyone will benefit. The schools will truly get a person who is best qualified for the job."

### A history without blacks

The racial composition of Duke's football program is below the average of other Division I-A teams, according to the school's 2006 NCAA self-study report, which documents aspects of the athletic department every 10 years.

The three Duke football teams listed in the report were, on average, comprised of 42 percent black athletes, slightly lower than the national average of more than 50 percent. There are 26 black offensive and defensive coordinators in Division I-A in 2007, but offensive coordinator Peter Vaas and Roof are both white. Only Duke's group of three black assistant coaches this year eclipsed the national clip of 26 percent black assistants.

In the most recent year of the self-study, 10 percent of athletics personnel were black. While that seems like a sliver, Kennedy insists that the department is attempting to instill more diversity, especially in the programs that need it most.

"It's hard to do—we're pretty close," Kennedy said. "But it doesn't have as much of an impact if you have a minority employee on the fifth floor of Schwartz-Butters who eight people see every day. It's more important, for example, to have minority representation on the football staff than in the business office."

Such a presence has not yet permeated Duke's head-coaching circles. Many close

they thought were necessary to build that I-A program to whatever level they were looking to build it to," said Richard Lapchick, chair of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida. "Duke would be a strong candidate to hire an African-American coach because of its not-so-good record, and that's where black coaches have been hired."

### "I would love to see an Afr.-Am. coach"

Duke may be behind the times, but the ACC has been a pioneering conference in ethnically and racially diverse hires. The conference is home to seven black basketball head coaches, tops in the nation. Duke and North Carolina are the only two schools to have never employed a black head coach—although Duke nearly hired its first in 2006.

When former lacrosse head coach Mike Pressler resigned in the wake of allegations that accompanied the 2006 lacrosse scandal, the athletics department needed to fill the void. Alleva conducted a search under the eye of the national media and eventual-

as Duke's basketball coach presides over the most scrutinized program in college hoops.

But college basketball has seen plenty of black head coaches, partly because of pioneering and outspoken coaches in the 1980s like Georgetown's John Thompson and Temple's John Chaney. Krzyzewski's program has also produced several minority head coaches.

Duke has not hired minorities to lead other sports, quite simply, because there are not as many candidates—the pool of potential coaches in non-revenue sports is shallow. Basketball and football searches are the best avenues to sign coaches of color. Alleva conducted a search last year to replace women's basketball head coach Gail Goestenkors and offered the job to two white women, one of whom was current coach Joanne P. McCallie.

Despite the school's current status, black assistant coaches at Duke are receptive to the possibility of change.

"I would love to see an African-American coach of any sport at Duke," said Brad Sherrod, Duke's running backs coach. "But at the same time, we want to make sure they fit our mission statement as an athletics department and university. That's what's important: that they have the right fit for the players and kids."

### An NCAA Rooney Rule?

Less than 10 years ago, the NFL was in a comparable predicament as Division I-A college football. The Rooney Rule, adopted by the NFL in 2002, reversed that trend. The rule requires professional football organizations to interview minorities for all open head coaching positions. It was prompted by a report that essentially revealed a bias in decision-making that implied a double standard in NFL hirings.

"Everyone now looks at [the Rooney Rule] as a major step forward," said Mehri, one of the rule's architects. "And one of the reasons is because it's an effort that doesn't say who you should hire. It just says you should have an inclusive process. There's probably no position in the country, inside or outside sports, that shouldn't be done this way."

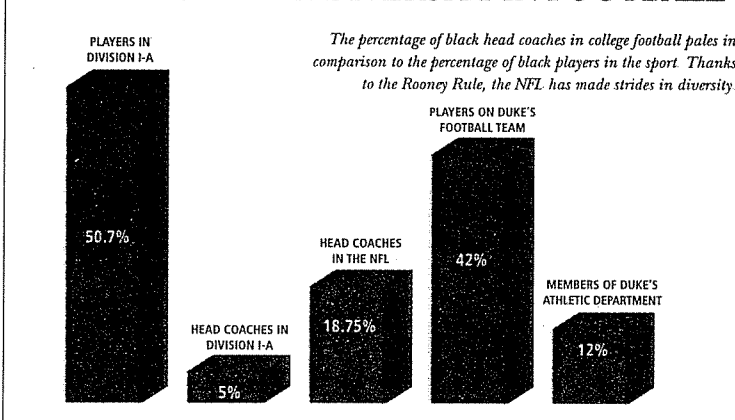
Lapchick cites the Rooney Rule in his effort to institute a similar rule in college football. Currently, the NCAA has no official policy about interviewing minority candidates. Instead, it is a recommended practice in Division I, as it is in NFL front-office hires and Major League Baseball.

Few, if any, claim that Duke has demonstrated racial prejudice in hiring. Most believe that the University's hirings have been matters of circumstance: the most-qualified candidate happened to be white.

"I do know that at different times, we have tried to recruit African-American head coaches, and we weren't able to pull it off," he said. "I think we will do it. It will happen. And it will happen more and more. It just hasn't happened yet."

And when it does, it will certainly be inscribed in Duke's record book of achievements—not as a celebration of the past, but as a benchmark for the future.

## BY THE NUMBERS: DIVERSITY IN FOOTBALL



to the University, however, say that does not mean Duke has made feeble efforts to entice minority candidates. Duke athletics directors have simply hired who they thought was the best person for the job.

"How could I possibly express the thinking of Eddie Cameron, or Carl James or Wallace Wade, when they directed the program?" said Tom Butters, Duke's director of athletics from 1977 until 1998. "I can tell you that I searched, I found who I thought to be the most-qualified candidate for the position, and I hired those people."

Duke's football position is unique because of the program's middling status. Schools with more modest football legacies, like Duke, have proven to be most willing to hire coaches of color—with the one notable exception of Notre Dame, which employed Tyrone Willingham from 2002 to 2004.

"There has been a fear on the part of athletic directors that black football coaches couldn't mix with alumni or raise the funds

ly hired John Danowski, a head coach with a prodigious resume and a counseling degree—not to mention a son on the team.

But had the search taken place under more-normal pretenses, the former Hofstra coach might not have been Duke's man. SUNY Stony Brook head coach Rick Sowell, who is black, received serious consideration from the search committee.

"Coming into that situation, there would have been a value for an African-American coach," Kennedy said. "We had a really strong minority candidate who probably would have gotten the job in any other circumstance."

Rumors have swirled for years that when Mike Krzyzewski retires—and he said before this season that he has no plans of stepping down soon—he could be replaced by associate head coach Johnny Dawkins. The promotion of Dawkins, perhaps the most high-profile assistant coach in the country, would be significant, especially if he became the school's first black coach,