

Floyd Little snub disgrace to pro football

By George Curry

Special to Sentinel-Voice

In a few days, the 39 members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame Selection Committee will nominate former players, coaches, owners and administrators to be considered for enshrinement in Canton, Ohio. And unless the committee does something differently this year, it will again pass over Floyd Little, one of the greatest running backs in the history of professional football. If this annual snub is not rectified, perhaps they should consider changing the name from the Pro Football Hall of Fame to the Pro Football Hall of Shame.

Little, the former Denver Broncos star, has been waiting for his number to be called in Canton since 1981 — the mandatory five years after he hung up his cleats. When he walked off the field after nine seasons in Denver, he was the seventh-leading NFL rusher with 6,323 yards and 43 touchdowns. He was an All-Pro selection five times. He joined Denver after making the All-American team three consecutive years at Syracuse and shattering many of the records set by NFL great Jim Brown and Ernie Davis, the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy.

In 1967 and 1968, Little led the NFL in

combined yardage. In 1970, he led the AFC in rushing. In 1971, he led the NFL with 1,133 yards while playing on a last-place team. He was 5 feet 10 and 195 pounds — light by today's standards — but was a threat running from scrimmage and excelled in pass receiving and returning punts.

All-Pro Linebacker Jack Ham of the Pittsburgh Steelers told one reporter: "He was a rare back who could do everything well — even block. He's the most complete back I ever played against."

One reason Little may have been overlooked by Hall of Fame voters is that he played on losing teams. In the pre-John Elway days, Denver had some great players — Lionel Taylor, Randy Gradishar, Abner Haynes, among others — but did not have a winning season until 1973. Of the original eight members of the old American Football League, Denver had the poorest record (39-97-4).

Even though it took years for the Broncos to shed their losing ways, Denver was the scene of NFL history. Denver was the first



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AFL team to defeat an NFL team (Detroit Lions on Aug. 5, 1967). In 1968, rookie Marlin Briscoe became the first Black starting quarterback in the modern era and Gene Mingo was the first Black place-kicker in the NFL. Little, John Elway and Frank Tripucka are the only Broncos to have their jerseys retired. Elway is the only former Den-

ver player to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Hall of Fame selection is done in two stages. Sports writers make the initial nominations. Each NFL city gets one vote except New York, which gets two votes because it has two teams. Anyone can nominate a player and the player is eligible for induction after being away from the game for five years. In the second stage, the committee makes final selections the day before the Super Bowl. A nominee must receive 80 percent of that vote. But Little hasn't made it that far.

And it's not because of the numbers. There are eight running backs in the Hall of Fame with fewer yards. Of almost 40 running backs inducted, Little has better stats than more than

half of them.

If Little is passed over again, he'll be in good company. Dallas won five Super Bowls, but has only five players in the Hall of Fame. Bob Hayes, Lee Roy Jordan, Rayfield Wright, Too Tall Jones, Drew Pearson and Harvey Martin have yet to be inducted. Former Oakland Raider Coach John Madden's winning percentage of .750 (103-32-7) is best among coaches on the sidelines for at least a decade and he, too, has yet to be enshrined in Canton.

The longer Floyd Little and these greats are overlooked, the less chance they have of being selected. The bylaws were amended in 2003 to reduce the maximum number of Hall of Fame inductees from seven to six. The seniors committee, in charged of picking pre-1979 players, submits only two names each year to be voted on. The final selection takes place on the eve of the Super Bowl, with enshrinement ceremonies scheduled for the following August.

Of more than 120,000 NFL players, fewer than 250 have been accorded the sport's highest honor. Floyd Little belongs in that select company.

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Stakes high for Blacks in Supreme Court struggle

By Ron Walters

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The relatively abrupt resignation of Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor took most people by surprise. Although, she intimated at a Washington cocktail party during the 2000 election that she was thinking about it, but wanted to be sure that a conservative was in the White House. Like Ronald Reagan's passing last year, this event has set off a celebration of her tenure on the Supreme Court as a "moderate" who was the swing vote among the liberal and conservative justices. This evaluation, however, is always made with the racial majority in mind, rather than with an eye to the impact of her role in recent decisions on people of color.

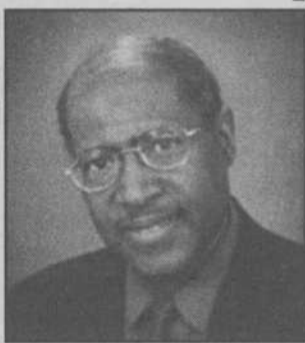
Justice O'Connor is a conservative and her role in the delivery of the 2004 election into the camp of George Bush was an unprecedented ("activists") usurpation of the power of a state Supreme Court over elections. Historically, it was a bald, raw use of Republican power to install a Republican president.

Then, her decision in the *Shaw v. Reno* case of 1993 was abominable, since her activist decision virtually invented a set of precedents that did not exist before. She regarded the use of race to draw district boundaries as "political apartheid" and as a practice lacking sufficient justification. Where has she

been? Race had been used historically to exclude Blacks from political participation and so too has the use of race to include Blacks had a long history rooted in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Her real exception to that history was her demonstrated favoritism of states rights.

In the affirmative action decision in the Michigan cases last year, some have applauded her for voting to retain the principle of "diversity." But this new definition of affirmative action does not require that Blacks be included, based on their history of exclusion and on the remedy of the Fourteenth Amendment standard of "equal protection." Rather, it is a definition that recognizes the value of having people of different ethnic heritages as participants in American higher education. So, in her swing vote role on court votes, Justice O'Connor has also played a role in de-constructing the legal basis of the rights of the disadvantaged, especially Blacks.

President Bush wants to leave a legacy of a Supreme Court that issues decisions with a reliable and strong conservative bent. This means that he must nominate someone to the



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right of O'Connor. Seven Democrats in the Senate have signed an agreement that they will not use the filibuster, except in what they consider a case of "unusual circumstances." But the no-filibuster pledge they made amounted to a sell-out of Blacks by permitting the Black conservative California Supreme Court Justice Janice Rogers Brown

to accede to the federal bench.

The current danger is that Blacks will be sold out again. Many thought that the first opportunity Bush might have to nominate a Supreme Court justice was when Chief Justice William Rehnquist left because of his poor health. If Rehnquist's replacement came from inside the court, that would leave a vacancy that Bush could also fill and if a conservative justice were nominated and confirmed, it would not change the nature of Supreme Court decisions. But if Rehnquist leaves in any case, Bush would have two replacements, giving him the opportunity to really change the nature of high court decisions.

Democrats have demanded that Bush "consult" with them before his nomination and he has talked with Democratic leader

Senator Harry Reid (R-Nev.). But what do Reid and Bush consider adequate consultation? Meanwhile, Senator Edward Kennedy has shot back that if a far right candidate is nominated by Bush, that would be considered an "unusual circumstance" which might trigger a filibuster. In order for this threat to be eventually carried out, the seven Democrats would have to join him. Recent Gallup polls find the American people sympathetic to the right of Democrats to fight for fair justices and reflect a continued downward slide in their confidence of High Court decisions.

Blacks should follow Kennedy's lead and they also should teach the major media that this is not all about *Roe v. Wade*. It is about the balance between the rich and poor, about how all children will be educated, about whether the country will continue its unfinished responsibility to protect and administer civil rights fairly, about reforming a racist criminal justice system and about the devaluation of American civil liberties by a distorted conception of patriotism.

Above all, the vigor of the right wing should be matched by a mobilization of those who favor an inclusive, not a narrow vision of freedom to let the White House and the nation hear our voices.

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close proximity to children and not be suspicious. It's logical for sexual predators to try to get jobs as a teacher, or a pastor of a church, or youth group minister to boys or girls, or as a scout leader since these positions surround the victimizer with children. What's illogical and astounding is that the damn system — the good teachers, the good pastors, the good parents, the good guys — all, or at least far too many, look the other way, further shielding and complicating the problem.

These good people are the ones who have been placed in positions to protect our children at all costs. Yet, often times, they look

the other way, will not get involved or do not believe the children — further adding to the trauma suffered by the child. Statistics indicate that most reports of child sex abuse are true; children usually lack the imagination and knowledge to describe the explicit intimate details that occur during a sexual assault.

At what point are we willing to put everything on the line to stand up and truly protect our children from the sexual predators that are pervading our society in huge numbers? More alarming statistics: 70 percent of sexual offenders have between one and nine victims, and 23 percent of them have from 10 to 40

victims. On the average, serial child molesters have between 360 and 380 victims in a lifetime. With that said, regardless of whether it is a teacher, a pastor, a parent, a brother, or the uncle — anybody, no matter who it is — we need to take a hard stance and be willing to convict and sentence to life in prison any adult who molests a child.

Personally, I believe it is a waste of taxpayer dollars even to give child sexual abusers a trial. Of course, I do understand due process, but I believe that if you castrate for the first offense, you won't have to worry about any more occurrences, and I assure you that the number of abuse cases against chil-

dren will decrease and the pedophiles will begin to proceed with caution.

There are resources available for information about child predators in our area and ways to prevent juvenile sexual abuse and abduction. Many organizations and child advocates have helpful tips and links on their websites, like on Oprah Winfrey's www.oprah.com and local www.klastv.com. Just this week, the U.S. government announced its website www.nospr.gov with registered sex offender tracking. And there is a state site at www.nvsexoffenders.gov and the federal www.fbi.gov. Learn more and be aware of what and who is around you.