

# Satisfyingly super ending to Super Bowl

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Tony Dungy has finally done it. On Sunday, he became the first African-American coach to win a Super Bowl. As everyone on this side of Mars knows by now, Dungy's Indianapolis Colts defeated the Chicago Bears, coached by Lovie Smith, a Dungy protégé.

Considering that no African-American head coach had led a team to the Super Bowl throughout its four decades of existence — most of them without Blacks as head coaches — it was a story worth following.

It was notable that both coaches, this time around, were African-Americans. However, all of the attention on race ignores some fundamental facts that are more important than the race of each coach. Both Dungy and Smith are exceptionally smart tacticians. They obviously know their business. In addition, each found success by breaking the typical NFL coaching mold and proved that nice guys can finish first.

Unfortunately, only one coach could win on Sunday, and I am happy it was Dungy. Lovie Smith will eventually join the ranks of Super Bowl winners, but on Sunday, it was Dungy's turn and nothing could be more fitting.

On Sunday, as in the previous playoff nail-

biter against New England, the Colts started in the hole. After falling behind 21-6 against the Patriots, Dungy persuaded his team that they could win.

"It's our time," Dungy said, making believers out of misbelievers.

"Tony is one calm customer, no matter what the circumstance he has a way of making you believe," Quarterback Payton Manning said later.

"We're stressed out, and he's parading back and forth telling us we're going to win. That rubs off on the younger players, even the older players. It made a difference," he added.

That's not the only way Dungy has made a difference.

We hear a lot about the coaching disciples of Bill Parcells and others. Yet, Dungy's record and nose for talent has to be one of the best in the NFL. It was Dungy, as head coach of Tampa Bay, who gave Smith his first opportunity to coach. And here they were — teacher and pupil — facing each other on the sidelines. En route to his Super Bowl victory, Dungy had to defeat Herm



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Edwards, the Kansas City Chiefs coach who had been an assistant with him at Tampa Bay. Pittsburgh hired yet another Dungy pupil, Mike Tomlin, to become its head coach.

Dungy's influence isn't limited to African-Americans. Another assistant, Rod Marinelli is now coach of the Detroit Lions.

What a judge of talent. After his coaching days are over, teams should hold a bidding war to acquire the services of someone with such an eye for spotting talent. In retrospect, it is clear that in hiring those Black assistants, Dungy was looking at far more than their skin color.

In his own quiet way, Dungy demonstrated that as head coach, he wasn't afraid to hire other talented African-Americans. Without that first job from Dungy and others might still be waiting for their first break, just as Dungy did for years.

"Lovie Smith and I are not only African-Americans, but also Christian coaches showing you can do it the Lord's way," Dungy said at the trophy ceremonies. "We're more proud of that."

In all the euphoria over Dungy and Smith, we shouldn't lose our perspective. A report co-authored by the late Johnnie Cochran concluded in 2002 that the NFL had a "dismal

record of minority hiring."

Approximately 70 percent of the players in the NFL are African-Americans. Yet, since the NFL was formed in 1920, more than 400 coaches have been hired, according to the report. Of those, only six were Black — five of them hired since 1989; only one Black has been added since the report.

And things are even worse at the college level, the feeder system for the NFL. Almost half of Division I-A players are Black — 46 percent; five of 119 coaches were Black.

One longtime complaint of Black football coaches is that in some areas, Blacks are no better off now than they were under segregation. In an earlier era, Blacks had their own "classics" and bowl games. Jake Gaither of Florida A&M, Grambling's Eddie Robinson and John Merritt of Tennessee State were common and larger-than-life fixtures on the sidelines; it was not considered unusual when one squared off against the another.

And no one questioned whether an African-American had the smarts to play quarterback or middle linebacker. There were 11 slots on offense and defense and none were allowed to go unfilled.

In one sense, Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith showed White America what African-Americans had known all along: Blacks can perform successfully at any level — if provided the opportunity.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service.

## Justices defend Florida 2000 recount decision

WASHINGTON (AP) - Three of the five Supreme Court justices who handed the presidency to George W. Bush in 2000 say they had no choice but to intervene in the Florida recount.

Comments from Justice Anthony Kennedy and retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor are in a new book that was published this week. Justice Antonin Scalia made his remarks Tuesday at Iona College in New York.

Scalia, answering questions after a speech, also said that critics of the 5-4 ruling in Bush v. Gore need to move on six years after the electoral drama of December 2000, when it seemed the whole nation hung by a chad awaiting the outcome of the presidential election.

"It's water over the deck — get over it," Scalia said, drawing laughs from his audience. His remarks were reported in the Gannett Co.'s *Journal-News*.

The court's decision to halt the recount of Florida's disputed election results, thus giving Bush the state's electoral votes, has been heavily criticized as an example of the court overstepping its bounds and, worse, being driven by politics.

Rather than let the recount take place and leave state officials and possibly Congress to determine the outcome of the election, the court's five conservative justices decided to intervene.

They eventually overturned a ruling of the Florida Supreme Court and halted the recount of the state's disputed election results 36 days after the voting. The decision effectively gave Bush Florida's electoral votes — and the presidency — by 537 votes.

"A no-brainer! A state court deciding a federal constitutional issue about the presi-

dential election? Of course you take the case," Kennedy told ABC News correspondent Jan Crawford Greenburg in her new book, "Supreme Conflict."

Kennedy said the justices didn't ask for the case to come their way. Then-Vice President Al Gore's legal team involved the courts in the election by asking a state court to order a recount, Kennedy said.

Legal scholars and the four dissenting justices have said the Supreme Court should have declined to jump into the case in the first place.

In a decision made public on the evening of Dec. 12, 2000, the court said the recount violated the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause because Florida counties were allowed to set their own standard for determining whether to count a vote.

"Counting somebody else's dimpled chad and not counting my dimpled chad is not giving equal protection of the law," Scalia said at Iona. Justice Clarence Thomas and the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who died in 2005, also were part of the majority.

O'Connor said the Florida court was "off on a trip of its own."

She acknowledged, however, that the justices probably could have done a better job with the opinion if they hadn't been rushed.

Still, O'Connor said the outcome of the election would have been the same even if the court had not intervened.

She was referring to studies that suggest Bush would have won a recount limited to counties that Gore initially contested, although other studies said Gore might have prevailed in a statewide recount.

## Farrakhan

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by her father's side the entire time.

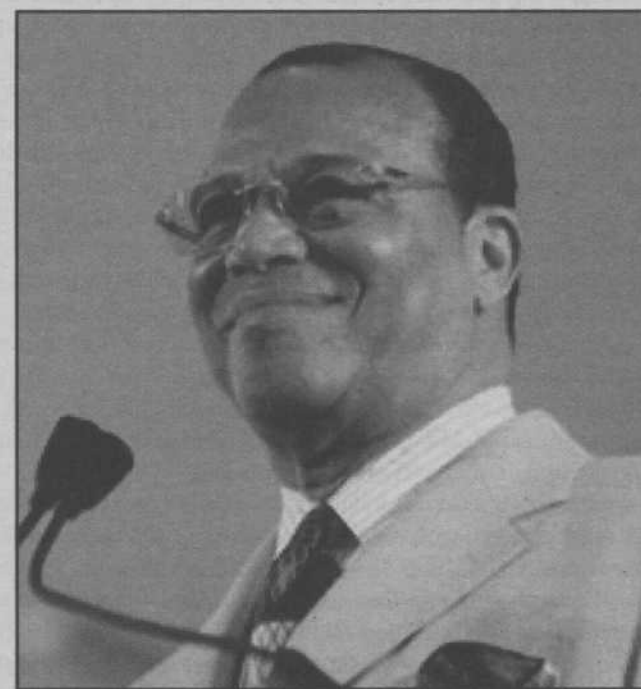
"The Minister wants to thank all those who prayed for his recovery and healing. Let us continue to keep the Minister in our prayers for his complete recovery," Muhammad told *The Final Call*.

"His focus is Saviours' Day. With the help of Allah, he hopes to see all of those whom Allah has blessed him to touch through his ministry in Detroit at Saviours' Day 2007," she said.

Ishmael concurred with that sentiment. "That's a man of his word. When he says he's not going to be able to be with you, that means he's not going to be able to be with you; but when he says he'll see you, he'll be there," Ishmael said.

"Long before the surgery, the hours before the surgery, coming right out of the surgery, his mind and his heart was set on Detroit, Mich.," he added.

Farrakhan was hospitalized early in January in order to undergo a major 12-hour abdominal operation. The surgery was designed to help correct the severe damage caused by the radiated seed implantation procedure he received to treat his pros-



The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan

tate cancer. That procedure left him in constant pain for years.

"He's not where he needs to be; it will take several more days, and we celebrate this victory, but there's still some days ahead and weeks for him to have a full recovery, but the doctors say he has already exceeded their expectations, from the surgery to the days after the surgery," said Ishmael.

Saviours' Day, to be held Feb. 23-25 to highlight Black History Month, is the Nation of Islam's annual convention and conference of workshops, special events,

children's activities and the expected featured speaker Farrakhan, who has been absent from the public since August 2006.

This year's event is considered a historical one. Farrakhan will deliver what could be his last major public address entitled, "One Nation Under God: The Confusion, The Guidance, The Warning."

The event is expected to draw tens of thousands from across the country. Farrakhan's speech will be delivered from Ford Field.

Nisa Islam Muhammad writes for the *FinalCall.com*.