

# School hires its first Black head football coach

*By Yolande Lezine  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
HOUSTON (NNPA) - University of Oklahoma assistant coach Kevin Sumlin was recently named as the first Black head football coach at the University of Houston.

He becomes the 11th head coach overall and only the sixth Black head coach at the 119 major-college football programs. He joins Tyrone Willingham (Washington), Sylvester Croom (Mississippi State), Ron Prince (Kansas State), Randy Shannon (Miami), and Turner Gill (Buffalo).

"Obviously it is an issue, but it's a credit to where we are right now," Sumlin stated. "I'm a football coach first, and I just happen to be Black."

Sumlin is looking forward to building a championship football program at the Uni-

versity of Houston. He has spent the last five seasons as an assistant coach for Coach Bob Stoops and the University of Oklahoma Sooners.

He signed a five-year contract, and he replaces Art Briles, who resigned November 28 to take over the program at Baylor.

He completed the season at Oklahoma, which played West Virginia in the Fiesta Bowl, before assuming the helm at Houston in his first head coaching job.

"This is a great day for the University of Houston," UH Athletic Director Dave Maggard said. "This program is going to achieve the heights everybody expects."

Sumlin, 43, was at Washington State, Wyoming, Minnesota, Purdue, and Texas A&M before arriving at Oklahoma, where he served as special-teams coordinator

and tight-ends coach before being promoted to co-offensive coordinator, passing-game coordinator and wide receivers coach in 2006.

"I've always seen the University of Houston as a gold mine," Sumlin said.

"It's in one of the largest cities in America; it's in a great football-playing state, and it's a great football playing city. There's a wealth of talent surrounding this university. Any time you have a university with that many players around it, you're go-

ing to have a great chance to win."

Sumlin, the first African-American to be hired to lead a Division I-Football Bowl Subdivision program in the state of Texas, was the man who recruited Reggie McNeal (Lufkin) at Texas A&M and all of the players that came in that year.

His hiring is being applauded by those who have been at the receiving end of his service.

"We're excited for Kevin and his family. He helped our

program achieve many of its goals and had a solid track record even before he joined our staff. There is no question that he is deserving of this opportunity and we're confident that he will make the most of it," said Oklahoma head coach Stoops.

UTEP head coach Mike Price says he has distinguished himself among his peers.

"Kevin is one of the brightest and most energetic football coaches in the country. Houston has made a great

hire, and I'm very pleased for him," Price said.

His ability to coach comes largely from his own playing talent, says former Texas A&M head coach R. C. Slocum.

"I am excited for the University of Houston. Kevin is a bright coach, who did a great job for me, and I have the highest regard for him. He is a very good offensive mind and an excellent recruiter."

*Yolande Lezine writes for the Houston Forward Times.*

## Mayweather might pursue martial arts

DALLAS (AP) - Floyd Mayweather Jr. met with Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban recently to discuss competing in mixed martial arts.

"We're definitely going to work together," Cuban said after the Mavericks' game recently. "It's just a question of in what capacity. You just don't jump from being a boxer to an MMA fighter overnight. He's got to test the waters."

The 30-year-old Mayweather is considered the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world and boxing's No. 1 drawing card. His fights this year with Ricky Hatton and Oscar De La Hoya generated 3.25 million pay-per-view buys, more than \$200 million in revenue and earned him about \$50 million.

Cuban owns a fledgling mixed martial arts promotional company called HDNet Fights. He's put on at least two events so far, the latest in Dallas on Dec. 15. The bouts are shown on Cuban's HDNet.

"It would be huge," Cuban said. "He's an icon in boxing. He's conquered that world. He is the champ and he wants to be the biggest grossing all-time champ as well. ...Having him work with MMA and HDNet Fights would be huge. It would take it to a whole other level."

Mayweather and Cuban became friends when they were both contestants this year on "Dancing with the Stars."

Cuban was Mayweather's guest at the Hatton fight in Las Vegas. Mayweather knocked out Hatton to retain his title. Mayweather and Cuban met again a short time later in Las Vegas and discussed Mayweather's possible role with HDNet Fights.

"We discussed him coming out to some of the gyms and, on one hand, helping some of the fighters we're working with on their boxing skills," Cuban said. "And on the flip side, he can get a sense of what it's going to take to make the conversion."

Leonard Ellerbe, Mayweather's adviser and best friend, said initially that the welterweight champion and was seriously considering a move to MMA.

"It's definitely something he is interested in, and when Floyd makes his move, obviously, it's going to be a mega event," Ellerbe said.

"We don't have a timetable. Floyd is taking some time off, but Floyd understands what is involved. You have to take time to go out and understand what you're getting involved in, and he's ready to do that."

A few boxers, such as former heavyweight contenders Ray Mercer and Frans Botha, have attempted to compete in mixed martial arts with little success.

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