

Black medical trainers trailblaze in Maryland

*By Perry Green
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
WASHINGTON (NNPA) — It may not be February anymore, but the University of Maryland-College Park has still given us reason to celebrate Black history, as they house the only African-American led sports medicine team in all of NCAA Division-I athletics.

For years, African-Americans athletes have increased in number on both the collegiate and professional level. And according to Darryl Conway, assistant athletics director for sports medicine at College Park, you'll now find more and more Blacks walking the sidelines in roles beyond just athletes.

"The number [of Black athletic trainers] is constantly growing, especially in the National Athletic Trainers' Association," Conway said.

"But I truly feel that the athletic training profession is one of exposure and opportunity."

Conway, who's been in the sports medicine business since 1993, says he stumbled onto his current profession

via his strong desire to stay involved with sports.

"I always played sports growing up in high school, but my parents stressed that I needed another option in case I didn't make the pros," Conway said.

"I met the athletic trainers for the [Washington] Redskins (Bubba Tyer and Keoki Kamou) who first introduced me to the profession and then I attended the Cramer Workshops at Salisbury with Pat Lamboni that cemented my interest." Over the past 15 years, Conway has served as an athletic trainer for Morgan State University, University of Delaware, University of Northern Iowa, University of Central Florida and the NFL's New York Jets.

Today, he supervises a staff of 14 certified athletic trainers and approximately 15-20 athletic training student assistants.

Together, they oversee all medical and sports medicine operations for the University's 28 teams; 750 student-athletes.

12 members of Conway's

staff are African-Americans, including Head Team Physician Dr. Craig Bennett, who also serves as an orthopedic surgeon. Bennett worked in the NFL as well as a former team physician for the Baltimore Ravens and Pittsburgh Steelers.

Conway looks at how far he and Bennett made it in this industry and believes young Black kids should consider their profession as another option in life.

"School-age kids need to be exposed to athletic trainers and the profession as an-

other opportunity," Conway said.

"That is what's lacking the most, especially since most high schools and middle schools in the country do not have athletic trainers working with their athletes.

"I think that once more athletic trainers are hired in schools and students are exposed to the profession more, the number of Blacks will continue to increase significantly."

Conway says the number of Blacks in his line of work

is already on the rise, more so in professional sports than in college.

"Blacks are a minority, but not as much as in college," said Conway.

"There are several teams that have Black head athletic trainers, including the New York Giants, who has Ronnie Barnes as Vice President of their organization.

"The number is definitely growing on a yearly basis, as with other initiatives in the coaching ranks and front office level in professional sports. The NFL does a good

job; better than other sports, at promoting minorities. They have a summer internship program for minority student athletic trainers."

Other African-Americans among Conway's staff include Dr. Yvette Rooks, Team Physician; Dr. Valerie Cothran, Team Physician; Dr. Sacred Bodison, Director of University Healthcare; Dr. Wiemi Douoguih, Orthopedic Surgeon; Kala Flagg and Gayna Lacy as Rehabilitation Coordinators.

Perry Green writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

NFL chief Claiming cable companies discriminate

WASHINGTON (AP)— Cable television operators discriminate against the NFL even though professional football is the nation's most popular spectator sport, the league's commissioner told lawmakers.

The league-owned NFL Network airs eight regular-season games each year. But they are not widely available to viewers because of a dispute between the league and the country's two biggest cable companies, Comcast Corp. and Time Warner Cable.

Commissioner Roger Goodell said the companies "enjoy a high level of bottleneck power" and treat the NFL Network in a "sharply different and clearly less favorable" way when compared with networks they own a stake in.

Goodell asked members on the House Energy and Commerce's telecommunications subcommittee to pressure the Federal Communications Commission to enforce a law that bars discrimination against unaffiliated networks.

But Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., said Goodell's claims of discrimination were "a little hard to swallow" considering the league's own antitrust exemption. She said the dispute is really about

money.

Glenn Britt, president and chief executive of Time Warner Cable, said the NFL's position was "especially disingenuous" considering the league's exclusive arrangement with DirecTV Inc. to air the "NFL Sunday Ticket" package of out-of-market games.

The FCC has a process for resolving disputes between cable operators and programmers.

But owners of independent networks have said the process is not used enough and is ineffective.

At the heart of the NFL Network dispute is the league's preference that the network be carried on basic cable levels.

Time Warner has refused to carry the NFL Network channel unless the channel is part of a higher-priced package. Comcast carries the channel on a premium level.

As a result, fans are caught in the middle, said Consumer Federation of America research director Mark Cooper.

"The current system, where the cable operators and dominant sport programmers force consumers to pay ever-increasing prices for a restricted set of choices, is the worst possible for the consumers," he said.

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