

NCAA initiative pushes for Black head coaches

By Sarah Lake
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) — All NCAA Division I-A football programs must now interview at least one racial minority candidate when a head coaching position is available.

This new policy was modeled after the "Rooney Rule" in the NFL, designed to help assure fairness and equal opportunity in the recruitment of head coaches. But unlike the NFL there is no penalty for noncompliance.

The Division I-A Athletic Directors' Association put the rule in place this year with hopes of diversifying the largely White sidelines. Of the 119 Division I-A schools, only six have Black head football coaches.

This lack of diversity on the sidelines is in stark contrast to the number of minorities on the playing field. Blacks make up an overwhelming number of players in NCAA football programs.

In 2002, the NFL enacted a policy, nicknamed the "Rooney Rule" after Dan Rooney, the chairman of the NFL Committee on Workplace Diversity, which ordered all NFL franchises with a head coaching position available to interview at least one minority candidate. The Detroit Lions appointed Steve Mariucci as their head coach in 2003 without interviewing any other candidates, minority or otherwise. The NFL responded by fining the Lions \$200,000.

The NCAA does not enforce any such penalty for teams refusing to adhere to

the new policy. Some might argue that without a penalty, teams that have already shown a lack of dedication to diversifying its coaching staff will not have an incentive to follow the guidelines set by the Athletic Directors' Association.

But, Mike Cleary, executive director of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, said the Division I-A policy will be "every bit as effective as the Rooney Rule," even without penalties for non-compliance.

According to Cleary, universities and colleges enjoy what is called institution autonomy. Outside entities can not enforce penalties on autonomous institutions like the owners of NFL franchises can. "You don't step over that line," he said.

In collegiate sports the NCAA can't take away a draft pick like in the NFL. Cleary said the NCAA could take away a scholarship from the offending institution as a penalty but one scholarship out of 100 wouldn't be much of a deterrent.

Shelly Poe, Ohio State University's Director of Athletic Communications, said the real incentive for Division I-A football programs to comply with the rule is to find the best candidates possible. "Anytime there's a vacancy, people want to find the best fit, and this policy will help include more prospects that may be well suited for the job," she said.

Dutch Baughman, executive director of the Athletic Directors' Association,

which established the rule, said that the rule had been discussed for a quite a long time but gained momentum last September during the association's annual meeting. He worked closely with the Fritz Pollard Alliance, an organization that promotes diversity and equality in high level job opportunities with NFL teams, to formulate the policy because the organization had been instrumental in establishing the Rooney Rule in the NFL.

According to Baughman, the Rooney Rule wouldn't

work in intercollegiate athletics. The NFL has direct jurisdiction over their member franchises but in the NCAA all institutions are voluntary members. The Division I-A Athletic Directors Association doesn't have the authority to enforce penalties for noncompliance.

So, why would these institutions comply with the rule? "Member institutions would be motivated to do the right thing," he said. "Diversity is something that has been recognized as the right thing to work towards. This

is something that is well-established as being the right thing to do," he said.

Baughman said the policy was discussed with Division I-A athletic directors prior to making it official and they had a chance to review the policy beforehand. There were no dissenters to the rule, he said. "We certainly would encourage all institutions to adopt guidelines like this but we have no jurisdiction over other divisions," he said.

Recent searches for head coaches in Division I-A are evidence that the policy has

already had a positive impact, Baughman said. "Before we can focus on how many minority head coaches there are we must focus on giving minorities the opportunity to have legitimate interview opportunities," he said. At least 14 of the 17 head coaching searches last year resulted in at least one minority being interviewed, which, according to Baughman, is an extraordinarily high number.

He concluded, "We've never seen numbers like this."

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"I remember when it went from, 'What do you want?' to 'Can I help you?' And that's the story I wanted to tell," said Klores.

The film is not solely aimed at the evolution of the game, nor is it solely aimed at racial discrimination, but at a combination of the two. Klores' film delves into the untold stories of Black basketball players and coaches and their experiences dealing with segregation in the sport as well as the role these men played in gaining fair treatment for Black people in society.

The story chronicles the lives of such notable players as Earl "the Pearl" Monroe, who averaged 42 points per game during his tenor at Winston Salem State University. Earl Lloyd, the first Black player in the NBA, also tells his story.

Klores gives insight into the life of Bob Love, who overcame a speech impediment and poverty over the course of his journey. Klores also covers the story of how John McClendon, the coach of North Carolina's College for Negroes, hosted "the secret game," in which his team competed against Duke, and won, during a time in which it was illegal for Blacks and Whites to compete against each other in sporting events.

Groundbreaking indeed is what this film will prove to be. Looking forward to the release this weekend, Klores said, "The untold stories will finally be told."

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