

Commentary: Minority Coaches in the NFL-Why are they being overlooked?

Written by Yolande Y. Lezine
Wednesday, 30 January 2013 00:00



“Black Monday” came and went after the 2012 National Football League regular season was over. Many head coaches and some assistants got fired. Some found new homes and others didn’t. But nevertheless there’s one issue that stands out with this year’s hiring of several new head coaches. There were eight new coaches hired, but none of the eight are minorities!

Former Indianapolis Colts head coach Jim Caldwell nearly went undefeated as a rookie coach in Indianapolis three years ago, and this week he is in New Orleans, Louisiana returning to the Super Bowl as an assistant with the Baltimore Ravens. Yet Caldwell didn’t get one interview for any of the eight coaching vacancies in the NFL.

Yes, you heard me correctly, eight teams hired new coaches and seven more filled general manager positions, but none of those jobs went to a minority!

The NFL has something called “The Rooney Rule”, which has been a valuable tool in expanding diversity and inclusion in the hiring process. The league now plans to expand the “Rooney Rule” in the aftermath of zero minority general manager positions being filled so far this offseason.

NFL executive vice president of Human Resources Robert Gulliver stated “that there has been full compliance with the interview requirements of the Rooney Rule which mandates that teams interview and hire minority candidates for front-office and head coaching jobs.”

Although there has been full compliance with the interview requirements, the hiring results this year have continually shown an unethical lack of diversity.

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According to several sources, the league is hoping to add team president, assistant head coach, and both offensive and defensive coordinator to the list of positions that will require that a candidate be interviewed. In addition, the league is hoping to restart its annual coaching management symposium program to help train assistant coaches and staff members (both black and white) on the duties that go along with head coach and general manager positions.

The league's stance comes in reaction to meetings with the members of the Fritz Pollard Alliance, a group that has helped push for the hiring of minority coaches over the past ten years.

The lack of hiring minority coaches in the National Football League became an issue this offseason because teams emphasized hiring head coaches who were offense-oriented coaches. Eight jobs were open, seven were filled with offense-oriented coaches. Out of the 32 NFL teams, only two had minority offensive coordinators this season, the Buffalo Bills and the Baltimore Ravens.

In addition to the head coaching hires, all six general manager jobs that have been filled so far were by white men. The New York Jets, who are still looking to fill their vacancy, reportedly are expected to hire Seattle Seahawks executive John Idzik. Such a move would make it 15 for 15 of white men hired in jobs that come under the Rooney Rule.

The trend has left hard feelings among numerous African-American candidates and it should. According to a source, Arizona Cardinals defensive coordinator Ray Horton and New York Giants personnel man Marc Ross were particularly frustrated with not getting a chance for some of the jobs that were available. Horton was interviewed by the Cardinals and the Cleveland Browns; Ross was interviewed by the Carolina Panthers and the New York Jets.

Coach Caldwell won his first 14 games with the Colts back in 2009. They reached the Super Bowl only to lose to the New York Giants. They then went 10-6 the following season and captured another AFC South title, and the following season the Colts went 2-14 with Peyton Manning sidelined all of that season, and Caldwell lost his job.

He later joined the Ravens as quarterbacks coach and was promoted to offensive coordinator.

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Caldwell will have to wait until next year to see if he will have a chance to be a head coach again. So does Lovie Smith.

The Chicago Bears fired Smith after he went 10-6. Smith interviewed with Philadelphia, Buffalo and San Diego. The Eagles chose University of Oregon Ducks head coach Chip Kelly, the Bills hired Doug Marrone, and the Chargers went with Mike McCoy.

There were a total of 203 minority coaches in the National Football League in 2012, including six head coaches. Only four minorities will start the 2013 season as head coaches. That's the fewest number ever!{jcomments on}