

African Americans in College Sports: Black Teams with White Coaches



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❑ African Americans in College Sports: Black Teams With White Coaches

Blacks make up a large and growing percentage of student athletes in many college sports programs. But there are few black head coaches or administrators who oversee these sports. Those who call the signals and shape the strategy are largely, and in some cases increasingly, white.

Black athletes dominate college sports and in many fields of athletics their position is strengthening. In 1998 blacks, who make up 13 percent of the American population, made up 50.2 percent of all athletes on football scholarships at the NCAA's 312 Division I schools. In basketball 58.2 percent of the men and 35.1 percent of the women on basketball scholarships were black. Blacks made up 25.1 percent of the men and 28.6 percent of the women on track scholarships.

Despite the huge percentage of black college athletes, African Americans make up small percentages of the coaching and administrative staffs in college sports. And despite university pledges to increase the number of blacks serving as coaches and as athletic department personnel, there has been very little progress since the NCAA's previous study in 1995. In fact, in a number of categories the number of blacks in these positions has actually declined.

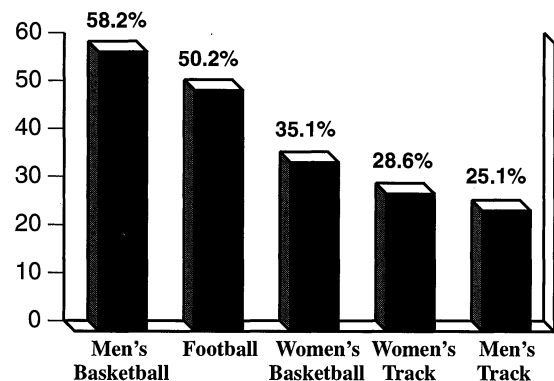
According to a new report issued by the National Collegiate Athletic Association,* blacks make up 4.4 percent of all head coaches at all predominantly white NCAA member institutions.** The percentage of black head coaches has increased slightly from 4.2 percent in 1995. But the percentage of black head coaches of women's basketball teams actually declined from 7.7 percent in 1995 to 6.4 percent in 1999. For head coaches in Division I-A football, the percentage of black head coaches declined from 5.6 percent to 4.7 percent.

**1999-2000 Race Demographics of NCAA Member Institutions' Athletics Personnel, May 2000.*

***In our analysis of the extent of racial integration in coaching ranks and among university sports administrators at predominantly white institutions, figures for historically black colleges and universities that are members of the NCAA have been excluded.*

The African-American Dominance of College Sports

Black Percentage of All Scholarship Athletes in the NCAA's Division I, 1998



Source: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Chart © The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.

The status of blacks in collegiate coaching ranks is best illustrated by the following fact: In 1999 there were 1,338 head coaches at predominantly white NCAA Division I member institutions in men's and women's fencing,

women's field hockey, men's and women's golf, women's gymnastics, men's ice hockey, men's and women's rifle, women's rowing, men's and women's skiing, women's softball, men's and women's swimming, men's volleyball, and men's water polo. Not one of them was black.

At most large universities, there is intense pressure on administrators from alumni to mount a strong football program. (Many alumni agree that blacks are superb athletes but they feel blacks lack the cognitive powers necessary to lead a team.) Moreover, many of the nation's leading football powerhouses are in the South. A large number of the alumni of these schools attended these universities when they were lily-white. Many of these alumni would be very uncomfortable if the leadership of their cherished football team were turned over to a black man.

The Zero-Sum Game

*NCAA Division I Sports With No Black Head Coaches, 1999**

Sport	Total Head Coaches	Black Head Coaches
Men's Fencing	21	0
Women's Fencing	22	0
Women's Field Hockey	67	0
Men's Golf	257	0
Women's Golf	165	0
Women's Gymnastics	61	0
Men's Ice Hockey	33	0
Men's Rifle	27	0
Women's Rifle	24	0
Women's Rowing	72	0
Men's Skiing	12	0
Women's Skiing	13	0
Women's Softball	210	0
Men's Swimming	144	0
Women's Swimming	166	0
Men's Volleyball	23	0
Men's Water Polo	21	0
TOTAL	1,338	0

**Historically black institutions excluded.*

Source: NCAA.

Black Teams Led by White Coaches and Administrators

*Percentage of Blacks Serving in Various Coaching and
Administrative Posts at Predominantly White NCAA
Member Institutions, 1995 and 1999*

Position	% Black 1995	% Black 1999
Men's Head Coaches	4.2 %	4.4 %
Women's Head Coaches	4.2	4.4
Men's Assistant Coaches	12.6	12.4
Women's Assistant Coaches	9.6	9.7
Director of Athletics	2.7	2.9
Associate Director of Athletics	6.1	5.6
Assistant Director of Athletics	6.7	6.5

Source: NCAA.

Blacks as Assistant Coaches

Blacks have achieved a greater presence among assistant coaches than they have among head coaches. Many head coaches encourage the hiring of blacks to the assistant coaching ranks to help them smooth the way with increasing numbers of black athletes. In football, for example, black assistant coaches are routinely assigned to coach wide receivers and defensive backs, positions that are manned almost exclusively by black athletes.

In all college sports, the authority of the white head coach is legitimized in the eyes of his or her black athletes when black assistants are seen following orders from a white coach. Black assistant coaches tend to be very helpful in avoiding racial tension if a discipline problem emerges with a black athlete.

In 1999 blacks made up 12.4 percent of all assistant coaches of men's teams and 9.7 percent of all assistant coaches of women's teams at predominantly white institutions. The percentage of black assistant coaches for women's teams edged up slightly from 9.6 percent in 1995. However, the black percentage of assistant coaches of men's teams actually declined from 12.6 percent in 1995 to 12.4 percent in 1999.

Few Blacks Serve as Athletic Directors

In administrative ranks, too, we find little or no progress in increasing the number of blacks. In 1999, 28 African Americans served as director of athletics at the 948 predominantly white NCAA members. The percentage of blacks who served as athletic directors at predominantly white institutions rose slightly from 2.7 percent in 1995 to 2.9 percent

in 1999. But at the NCAA's Division I schools — those with the largest athletic programs — the percentage of blacks who served as director of athletics declined from 3.7 percent in 1995 to 2.4 percent in 1999.

The percentage of blacks who served as associate athletic director at predominantly white Division I schools actually declined during the period. Blacks made up 6.9 percent of all associate athletic directors in 1995 but only 6.2 percent in 1999. The percentage of all assistant athletic directors at Division I schools who are black rose slightly from 1995 to 1999.

Clearly, at these Division I schools, athletics is an extremely important enterprise. Universities with major athletic programs can turn profits of \$15 million or more from football alone. Thus the director of athletics at these large universities cannot simply be a high-level gym teacher. The director of athletics must not only be a competent administrator but must have skills in marketing and have abilities to negotiate complex deals involving television contracts, stadium concessions, and licensing rights. With so much money on the line, it appears that university presidents are less likely than ever to appoint African Americans to posts in which the school's financial well-being is at stake. These administrators are increasingly appointing white athletic directors whom they feel are more competent to deal with the complexities of running what has become a major business enterprise.

Audio Book Publishers Turn a Deaf Ear to the Works of Black Authors

Over the past decade, the audio book industry has become a very big business. According to figures compiled by *Publishers Weekly*, in 1996 there were 54 audio books that had sold more than 100,000 units. Today there are 108 titles that have reached that milestone and 34 audio books have sold at least 200,000 copies. The best-selling audio book of all time is Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, which has achieved all-time sales of 1.5 million copies. John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* is the only other audio book to have sold more than 1 million copies.

Black authors are almost totally absent from the list of best-selling audio books. There are only two audio books by black authors that appear on *Publishers Weekly's* list of 108 all-time best-selling audio books. These are Colin Powell's *My American Journey* and Oprah Winfrey's *Make the Connection*.