

# Black coaches in the NFL

I am always amused when people get outraged at results that are completely predictable. The latest outrage that amuses me centers on the lack of black

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coaches in the NFL. The recent lawsuit by Brian Flores is just the latest example of this type of outrage. Flores is suing the NFL and several of its teams, charging them with racial discrimination. Flores has a point. Even though most of the league's players are black, over the last few years, the league has had very few black head coaches.

The NFL saw the need to increase the racial diversity among their head coaches. Their solution was the Rooney Rule, which requires teams to bring in two external minority candidates for each head coaching position. It hasn't worked. Teams just followed the incentives the rule created. They brought in two minority candidates, as required, but that is about all they did. They usually did not end up hiring these minority candidates. This result has prompted outrage

but the results were predictable. The Rooney Rule gave teams an incentive to interview black candidates, not to hire them.

The NFL should consider adopting policies that give teams an incentive to hire black coaches, not just to interview them. There are many ways this could be done. Teams that have a black head coach could be granted an increase in their salary cap, which would allow them to afford more good players. Alternatively, as several of my students have recommended, teams that have black head coaches could be given extra draft picks. For instance, if each team with a black head coach got an extra draft pick after the first round ends (but before the second round begins), these teams could accumulate more good players.

Both of my proposals allow teams with black head coaches to obtain more talented players. This will give these teams an advantage: Teams with better players have a better chance of winning games. At first, a few teams will take advantage of these new policies. They will hire black coaches and start winning due to their built-in advantage of having better players. Other teams will get tired of losing and many of

them will want this advantage for themselves. To gain it, they will hire black head coaches.

Will my proposals cause the NFL to replace all of their white coaches with black coaches? Probably not. The Patriots will want to keep Bill Belichick since he is such a talented coach. The Rams will want to keep Super Bowl-winning coach Sean McVay for the same reason. But the question brings up the biggest challenge that the NFL would face if it were to implement my suggestions. It would need to provide large enough incentives so that teams hire enough black head coaches to achieve their diversity goals. But the NFL would need to guard against making the incentives so great that teams won't consider white coaches. In short, they need to get the level of incentives right.

The Flores lawsuit illustrates that teams found loopholes in the Rooney Rule. Since it is not working, the Rooney Rule should be jettisoned. In its place, the NFL can create incentives to encourage teams to hire more black coaches. Incentives are powerful forces that can be harnessed to achieve goals that rules, on their own, could never achieve.