

Too many bowls, too few black coaches



George Curry

Guest Columnist

Basketball's "March Madness" has nothing on the college football bowl frenzy — 34 games over a 19-day period spanning the last month of the old year and the first month of the new one. Let's face it, not all 68 teams deserve to be in a bowl: Some — including North Carolina State, Kentucky, Bowling Green, Southern Mississippi, Northern Illinois, Notre Dame and Vanderbilt — got invitations after winning only 50 percent of their games.

Even worse, nine teams — including Florida Atlantic and Memphis — are going to bowls after accumulating losing records. Unfortunately, bowl games are no longer rewards for an excellent season. Now, it's all about the money. And the more bowls, the more money.

An oversaturation of bowl games is not my No. 1 com-

plaint against college football. Rather, it's the fact that approximately half of the players are African-Americans yet only 3.4 percent of the college football coaches are Black. That's four among the 119 major division coaches.

According to the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at Central Florida University, that's the fewest Black coaches in 15 years. As recently as 1997, there were twice as many African-American coaches as there are now.

Evidently, the football sidelines suffer from the same on-field racial stereotypes of the past. For years, they said Blacks were excellent players but didn't have the intellect to play the so-called "thinking positions" — quarterback and middle linebacker. Of course, that was pure hogwash. For years, Grambling, Florida A&M and Tennessee State were football powerhouses and it wasn't because they played 10 men on each side of the ball — or without a coach on the sideline.

And if there were any lingering doubts about the Black



Turner Gill

gridiron intellect, they were removed by Washington Redskins quarterback Doug Williams' MVP performance in Super Bowl XXII and when two Black head coaches, Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith, paced the sidelines in Super Bowl XLI.

Of the 32 NFL coaches, seven are Black, largely because the league adopted the Rooney Rule requiring teams

to interview at least one person of color for all head coach vacancies. If African-Americans can coach in the pros, they certainly can succeed at the college level.

In addition to the failure to interview an ample number of top-flight Black assistant coaches for openings, many universities are still more willing to recycle failed White coaches than take a chance on a promising African-American. Two examples immediately come to mind.

Auburn University hired Gene Chizik as its new head coach after he went 5-19 over two seasons at Iowa State, including 10 straight losses. Meanwhile, the University of Tennessee, eager to get back on the winning track after forcing out Phillip Fulmer, hired another losing coach, Lane Kiffin, formerly of the Oakland Raiders. Kiffin was fired by the NFL team after compiling a record of 5-15.

These two losers were hired while promising African-American coaches were ignored, some of whom had turned around losing programs. For example, Turner

Gill took over a program at Buffalo that had not won five games in a season for nearly a decade. Within three years he turned it into Mid-American Conference champion and this year had a record of 8-5.

When Auburn selected Gene Chizik over Gill, one of its most famous alums, Charles Barkley, was livid.

"I think race was the No. 1 factor," said Barkley. "You can say it's not about race, but you can't compare the two resumes and say [Chizik] deserved the job. Out of all the coaches they interviewed, Chizik probably had the worst resume."

How do we put an end to this nonsense?

One approach would be to adopt a college version of the Rooney Rule. Some have suggested calling it the Robinson Rule, in honor Doug Williams' former coach, Eddie Robinson of Grambling. For that to work, however, penalties must be assessed against universities that fail to cooperate.

A sure-fire way of forcing change would be for star high school players and their parents to spurn athletic programs that spurn Black leadership. If

players refuse to enroll in universities that have never hired a Black head coach in any sport or an African-American athletic director at any time, universities would finally get the message. What I like about this approach is that it empowers the athlete and does not rely on the so-called good will of schools eager to exploit Black athletes.

Five bowls — the Rose, Orange, Fiesta, Sugar, and BCS championship game — will each generate \$17 million for schools and their respective conferences. If Blacks stop playing for schools that refuse to hire African-Americans in leadership positions, that would lessen the chances of universities getting a share of that lucrative pie. With so much money in jeopardy, universities will be forced to do the right thing.

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me a lot. And my coach let me play."

Foster definitely got off. I know you're probably wondering what about him reminds me of Chris Paul. Well, first he has this unassuming little boy face. Foster looks as innocent as a church boy. But no one is causing more fits than him on the court. He's quick to do little slick things to his opponent that only a trained eye could see. He's also not the biggest guard around. Just like Chris back when he played JV ball. Another thing I liked about Foster was his ability to control the game. His coach will tell you that's one of the areas he needs to work on. I will tell you that he's got it. You hear people say that certain athletes have that "it factor." Well, Foster has that. He's also smart. He never seems to be rattled. Even when his squad was down by about 10 points, he maintained focus and poise.

"I was a little worried," Foster said. "... especially when we were down. Of course, you're going to get a little worried if you get down. But I still needed to keep working. I knew we could come back. You saw that we were down by 10 and came back. That just shows that the team didn't want to lose."

Reagan head JV coach Mike Russell added, "Reynolds has a very good team. They've (also) got a very good point guard in Jerran Foster. He does a good job running that team. He's really smooth, and doesn't get rattled."

That's what I was saying, coach. I really enjoyed watching J-Foster get down. I even found myself cheering or showing emotion after watching Foster do something nasty on the court. Trust me when I said he did plenty that would have you impressed. Put it this way, I didn't go to one game of the Frank Spencer, and I didn't feel like I missed anything after witnessing what Foster did during the tournament. That's the truth. And, so is Jerran.

Extended Lash JV All-Tournament Team

It's always hard to only reward six players for their play during the Chronicle Lash Tournament. So, I thought I'd list some of the guys that would've made the All-Tournament team if it consisted of 15 players instead of only six.

First, let's name the six that were recognized on Monday. The MVP was Jerran Foster, of course. Then, Jontu Brown (Reynolds), Dakota Raymond (Reagan), Vic Williams (West), Tre Douthit (Mt. Tabor) and Trey Ervin (Mt. Tabor).

I would've also included Pat Nicholson (Mt. Tabor), Matt Turner (Mt. Tabor) and Brad McGriff (Mt. Tabor). From Reynolds, I would've included Tyler Blue and Alex McCallister. Four more? I'd go with North Forsyth's Trent Coles, East Forsyth's Randy Morrison and Da'Quan "DQ" McKinnie. The last two would've probably been Reagan's Jamie Buckley and Will Carter. Carter reminds me of Milsap with the Utah Jazz.

Those are the 15 players I would've put on the All-Tournament team. I felt like all of those guys made this past tournament one of the most exciting ever. I honestly enjoyed every minute. I'm already looking forward to next year.

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Bines

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prominent national leagues such as the AFL, CFL and NFL.

"This is the beginning," said Team co-owner and IIFA East Commissioner Clayton Banner, who's a former West Forsyth athlete. "This is the grass roots. But it's going to be a big thing. Football is the one sport that doesn't have a farm system. There are so many young men playing college football that don't get to continue after college. Their careers end right when they're getting good. Why should it end? Guys can continue their careers in this league. We have number of local players that have already signed on to join us."

One of the local football stars that's already signed on to play with the new indoor team is former Winston-Salem State football star Jed Bines.

"You never want to quit playing until you can't play anymore,"

Bines said during a press conference last month. "Just the opportunity to go to the next level still motivates you. That motivates me. I just want the opportunity."

The League began last year based in Texas with eight teams and was a huge success, according to representatives. Approximately 30 players and four coaches out of eight teams received opportunities to move up in their careers.

The Carolina Renegades will call the new Proehlfic Park the home. The new facility, which is the only certified NFL combine training facility in the state, is owned by EX-NFL wide out Ricky Proehl. The Renegades are owned

by Dale "Coach G" Glossenger and Brad Tucker. They will host their first (open) tryout on Jan. 3, IIFA

East will begin league play in February at Ricky Proehl's state of the art indoor facility.

Registration begins at 9 a.m., and tryout starts at 10 a.m. Pre-registration cost is \$35. That increases to \$40 during day of tryouts. All interested players should be at least 18 years old, with valid ID, shorts and tennis shoes. No cleats needed.

The eight-team league will begin play in February. For more information about the Carolina Renegades visit the team website at www.renegadesfootball.com. Also, visit www.myspace.com/carolinarenegadesfootball. Glossenger

can be reached at coachg@renegadesfootball.com.

Youth league also coming

A youth indoor football league will also be added to the many new attractions of Ricky Proehl's state of the art indoor facility, Proehlfic Park.

"We're getting ready to also have a youth indoor league," Banner said. "We want to work with the Pop Warner and other youth leagues for training as well. A lot of schools don't have middle school or junior high football. Nor do we have spring ball. This will provide those kids with the opportunity to play. The new youth league will also benefit the many kids that don't get the opportunity to play Pop Warner because of size and other issues."

For more information about the youth league, contact Glossenger at 336-406-4344 or coachg@renegadesfootball.com.

Hardy

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Demons, who are presently 7-4. Hardy is averaging 14 points per game to go along with seven rebounds, two blocks and two steals per game. She's also providing a spark for Reynolds in the paint — as well as the perimeter.

"At North she was asked to do more in the paint," said Gray. "She's transitioning between three and four. Her outside shot is very good. But we're working on her

dribbling and finishing. But she's one of our beast on the boards. Her and Yaz (Yasmeen Alston)."

Hardy added: "I want to dribble better. I want to see the floor better. I basically want to be a better guard because I know I won't be playing in the paint in college. I will be a point guard on the next level."

Hardy is already getting some college attention too. Several schools have showed interest in her this year.

"But I don't have any guarantees yet," Hardy said. "I'm just going to continue to work hard and

help my teammates on the court. Hopefully that stuff will take care of itself."

Gray added: "She's getting some attention from colleges. We're also trying to promote her through our team. She also plays AAU with the Stealers. That's helping as well. It's really up to her with how far she wants to take her career. She has to continue to progress and play hard. If she does what she has to do then people will recognize that, and want her."

Bumpy move

Reynolds

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named tournament MVP. Foster finished with 27 points, five assists and four rebounds.

Despite the charge from Reynolds, Mt. Tabor fought back in front late in the second quarter. The Spartans took a 33-29 lead into the locker room at the half. Trey Ervin put the Spartans on his back midway through the second quarter to lead the run. He cut the Demon lead to 27-20 after connecting with two free throws. That was followed by a basket by Turner to make the score 27-22. Ervin went on to score the next 6 points to give Mt. Tabor a 33-27 lead. But Reynolds guard Jonathan Booker made the score 33-29 after hitting a 13-foot jump shot right before the first half buzzer sounded.

Mt. Tabor maintained a 47-41 lead over Reynolds heading into the fourth quarter. The Spartans seemed to keep Reynolds off balance. But the Demons found a comfort zone after allowing Mt. Tabor to go up 49-41 early in the final quarter. That's when Brown, Joshua Jackson, Foster and Tyler Blue got it going for the Demons. Jackson provided a spark for the Demons after two Dwight-Howard-like blocks around the basket. Alex McCallister was big for the Demons with his rebounds and putbacks down the stretch.

Jackson made the score 49-45 with under 6:00 to go in the game. Then, Foster hit a 3-pointer to pull Reynolds to within one (48-49) with 5:47 go to. Blue tied the game up with 1:15 to go in the contest after a strong tip in. The score remained locked at 56 for the next 30 seconds. But Reynolds went up for good after Jontu Brown came through with an exciting and-one play with 40.2 left in the game. On the play, Brown flashed to the paint and dipped underneath a Spartan defender before flicking the ball good on a finger roll attempt. Brown hit the free throw to give Reynolds a 59-56 lead. Dvontae Jones iced the victory for Reynolds after connecting with four free throws down the stretch.

"We missed two box outs from free throws at the end," said Mt. Tabor head JV coach Marc Raye. "I felt like the outcome might've been different if could've gotten those rebounds. I'm very disappointed for the sophomores. This is



Mt. Tabor freshman Torey Baskins goes for a shot during the title match-up on Monday night.

tough. When you get on a winning streak you feel like you can't be beat sometimes. Reality sets in when it happens."

"They just wanted it more tonight," Raye continued. "Jerran Foster is an outstanding player. Coach Coker is an outstanding coach. They have a great team. Hats off to all of them."

The standout players for Reynolds were Jerran Foster, Jontu Brown, Tyler Blue, McCallister, Trent Miller, Dvontae Jones and

Josh Jackson.

Note: The members of the Chronicle Lash All-Tournament team were Dakota Raymond (Reagan), Vic Williams (West), Trey Ervin (Mt. Tabor), Tre Douthit (Mt. Tabor), Jontu Brown (Reynolds) and Jerran Foster (Reynolds). Foster was named tournament MVP.