

Study: Gender, Race Gap Still Exists in Sports Front Offices, Sidelines

WNBA receives top marks for opportunities for women and minorities

ORLANDO, FLA.

The WNBA was the only major professional sports league to receive top marks in a comprehensive study comparing opportunities for women and minorities in sports.

The University of Central Florida's Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport examined front office, support staff, playing and coaching opportunities in 2004 for women and minorities in professional football, basketball, baseball and soccer, along with the range of college sports. Despite improvements in the NBA, Major League Baseball and the Major League Soccer, women's basketball received the only overall A grade in researcher Dr. Richard E. Lapchick's report card.

"There's been a general improvement in the leagues over a period of time," Lapchick says. "I think the glaring gaps are at the college level, at what are considered to be the top positions."

According to Lapchick, all 11 Division I-A football conference commissioners in 2004 were White and just three out of 117 head football coaches in the division were Black.

Though minority players make up about 75 percent of NBA and NFL rosters, only the NBA, which has three Black presidents and CEOs, was awarded an A for race among men's leagues. Baseball maintained its B+ score for race, but college and soccer lost slightly overall.

The grades were calculated by comparing percentages of minorities and women in the country to percentages on teams and in sports management.

Leagues employing at least 24 percent minorities were given an A in race, while those with 9 percent received a C-, the lowest awarded. An A in gender meant women made up at least 40 percent of a given category, with D's awarded for 25 percent and F's for anything below.

The report noted that even leagues with low grades generally had better records in diversity than the country at large.

The NFL scored a C/C+ for combined race and gender numbers, the worst among all surveyed. Despite earning a B in race, football scored lowest on gender (D+), with no female league officials, head or assistant coaches or general managers.

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— Dr. Richard E. Lapchick, Author of *Report Card and Devos Eminent Scholar*, University of Central Florida

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello says the league doesn't see any value in the report and didn't contribute figures for its compilation. Instead, researchers say they used media guides from each individual team.

"We don't spend any time looking at their figures," Aiello says. "We think it's irrelevant and it's purely a publicity gimmick. There are more women and minorities working in the

NFL than ever, and diversity in our workplace is an important league priority."

For the second time since 2001, the WNBA received an A in both race and gender, and scored higher than all men's leagues for minorities in league office, assistant coaching staff, team presidents and general managers.

"It's nice to have an idea of where you stand in the marketplace," says Brian McIntyre, spokesman for the NBA and WNBA.

However, a gender gap continued in men's leagues and colleges, with women claiming slightly more than 41 percent of head coaching jobs for women's NCAA teams across all sports.

Despite good overall numbers for minorities, the NBA received failing grades for having too few minority vice presidents and team administrators.

MLS turned in top gender percentages for senior and professional administration, posting a B overall after receiving an F last year. ■



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