

Keynote Address
Black Coaches Association's
Images of Excellence Luncheon
June 5, 2003

NCAA President
Myles Brand

- Thank you Amos. I appreciate that introduction.
- And I appreciate the opportunity to address the 2nd annual Images of Excellence luncheon. The awards that are being presented today go to student-athletes and other individuals whose contributions to intercollegiate athletics are truly outstanding. I am honored to be a part of this gathering.
- The Black Coaches Association and Floyd Keith are to be congratulated for the ways in which you have elevated the discussion around inclusion, how you

have attended to the issues of African-American coaches, and how you have joined with other higher education constituencies to argue for the compatibility of athletics and academic mission. At no time in the history of the NCAA and college sports has it been more important than now for all facets of intercollegiate athletics to join forces in addressing complex and sometimes confounding issues.

- I see that the theme of this year's convention is "Equity for All." It is a noble concept, and, of course, it is the right goal to pursue. It sounds so easy. How can anyone disagree with everyone having the same opportunities to succeed?

- In a few aspects of intercollegiate athletics, progress has been made. For example, where not too many years ago students of color were denied access to institutions of higher education, the doors today are more open. College sports has helped with that effort, and the result has been a diversity far more representative of the general population than only a few decades ago.
- But there are two areas where improvement is needed; the preparation of student-athletes for college and diversity in the coaching and athletics administration ranks.

- Since the mid-1980s, initial-eligibility standards have raised the bar for high school student-athletes who want to participate in athletics as college freshmen. Those standards combined success in academic core courses with results on standardized tests, with an emphasis on the ACT and SAT tests. The standards were successful. Freshmen arrived better prepared, and graduation rates rose.
- But there was also justifiable concern about the bias of the standardized tests. Two years ago, the Division I Board of Directors appointed a task force of its members to develop new initial-eligibility requirements that would continue to set higher standards but that

would also enhance access to the collegiate experience.

- The task force examined the most comprehensive database ever collected that correlated high school performance with college preparedness and recommended standards that increased the number of core academic courses and significantly decreased the emphasis on standardized test scores.
- The bar for performance must be raised again, though in a different area. We must enhance performance in terms of diversity among coaches and athletics administrators.

- African Americans have dramatically increased among Division I male basketball coaches. Today, there are more than 90 African Americans in head coaching positions. This has been a success story of developing a pool of talented assistant coaches who then moved into the top jobs.
- But aside from those two areas of initial eligibility for student-athletes and African-American head basketball coaches, there is little to point to as progress. Men and women of color are simply not being hired in head coaching jobs or administrative positions in intercollegiate athletics in an equitable way.

- Consider these facts: If you exclude the historically black colleges and universities, there are 29 African American males in athletics director positions in all divisions. Out of nearly 14 thousand head coaching positions in all divisions – again, excluding the HBCUs – there are 737 African Americans.
- The numbers for women of color are even worse. There are only three African American female athletics directors when you exclude the HBCUs. And there are only 165 black women who are head coaches.

- But even that is not the worst of it.
- There is a gentleman in the audience today who 31 years ago became the first African American head football coach in Division I. Ron Stratten, now NCAA vice-president for education services, was named head football coach in 1972 at Portland State University. This was before Division I subdivided in the sport of football.
- Ron knew he was a pioneer, but he could not have guessed or even imagined that 31 years later, there would be only four black head football coaches in

Division I when you exclude the historically black colleges and universities.

- It would be a decade after Ron's appointment before there would be as many as two African American head football coaches in Division I. And in fact, there has never been more than four at any one time.
- This is not progress.
- Sadly, the increasing percentage of African American football student-athletes in Division I – nearly 43 percent and rising – only serves to point how far short

of equitable the hiring of black head coaches in the sport has been.

- Frankly, the imbalance is so exaggerated at the head coach level that the real target may not be there at all. The feeder system for head football coaches is most often offensive and defensive coordinators. While there are nearly 400 assistant football coaches in Division I who are black, there are fewer than 30 coordinators. And if you are looking to Divisions II and III as stepping-stones for African American football coaches to move on to Division I, the numbers and percentages of both assistant coaches and coordinators are even worse.

- If we are going to attack the problem of diversity among head football coaches in any meaningful way, the numbers of African American assistant coaches and offensive and defensive coordinators must increase.
- In presenting the numbers to you today, I have deliberately omitted the historically black colleges and universities from the calculations for purposes of better defining the problem. Let me hasten to add, however, that the talented coaches and administrators at those institutions should not be

omitted from consideration in the available talent pool for the rest of Division I.

- Is it unreasonable to assume that the coaching staff at the top four football programs among historically black colleges and universities could improve the win-loss records of most of the programs in Division I? In fact, if only one of those individuals became a head coach among other Division I schools, we would have more African Americans coaching concurrently than in the history of Division I football.
- Equity for all. It is the right goal, but unfortunately difficult to achieve.

- Floyd Keith and the Black Coaches Association have lead the effort to bring attention to the lack of opportunities for both men and women coaches of color. They have set a goal of 20 percent for all hires of Division I head football coaches being African-Americans by the year 2005. That is an aggressive but reasonable.
- The NCAA is proud to be joining the BCA in developing the NCAA Coaches Academy to advance minority candidates. This is one of 16 programs currently funded by the NCAA to develop candidates

among minorities and women for positions in intercollegiate athletics.

- The Academy will be launched in January 2004 and will include comprehensive workshops designed to enhance skills necessary for career advancement in football coaching.
- The workshops will focus on interview preparation, networking, résumé building, media training and alumni and fan relations, as well as other areas that

will assist in the professional development of ethnic minority coaches.

- Also included in the Academy will be a mentoring component that will provide formal mentor relationships with head football coaches, athletics administrators and conference commissioners.
- In addition, the Black Coaches Association is working with the American Football Coaches Association to mount a major thrust at each other's conventions with seminars designed to address coaching techniques, skill development and other professional development

efforts. This sharing of information and experience is essential for the growth of young coaches.

- These are important and worthwhile efforts. I fully support them and I expect them to yield results. But there is more that must be done. We have to find a way to strike at the heart of the problem. In my opinion, it is the hiring process.
- Here is where the highly competitive nature of intercollegiate athletics generally – and football in particular – has served inclusiveness poorly. The emphasis on winning and the competition for proven coaching talent has created a risk-adverse

environment where minorities once blocked out of key coordinator positions are then locked out of the top positions.

- The next important step is to work with college presidents to develop clear guidelines for searches. Colleges and universities must do a better job of identifying the available pool of talented individuals and then embrace a search and hiring process that gives minority coaches a fair chance.
- Universities have learned how to undertake searches for senior academic administrators and faculty that include diverse pools of candidates and, increasingly,

fair results. Of course, these academic search processes are not perfect, and sometimes highly qualified candidates are passed over; but, by and large, they are reasonable and – importantly – considerably more likely to lead to diversity in appointments than the current approach used for athletic departments.

- There are differences between academic and athletics searches. Academic searches, even for a university president, rarely command the national press attention as does one for a head coach at a major Division I-A school. Moreover, an academic search ordinarily follows the academic calendar,

meaning that it could require nine months or more for completion. By contrast, athletics searches are conducted far more quickly. The reasons are the desire to protect the candidates from press exposure, to satisfy impatient fans and boosters, and to assure that the enrolled and recruited student-athletes are not left leaderless.

- Nonetheless, despite these differences, searches for head coaches and athletics directors, and perhaps a few other athletics positions, can be significantly improved by modeling them, within reason, on academic searches. Doing so will greatly improve the

chances to identify and attract more talented and more diverse final candidates.

- In particular, I recommend that serious consideration be given to undertaking searches for head coaches and athletics directors using the following guidelines.
- First, there should be a representative search committee, in that it should include faculty members, university administrators, as well as athletics department personnel. It would be helpful to include an external member, for example, a knowledgeable alum or retired senior athletics administrator, perhaps from another institution. It would also be

advantageous to include a student-athlete on the committee. There should be persons of color on the committee. The committee should not include the president or members of the Board of Trustees.

- Second, the search committee should make every effort to identify leading candidates, most especially minority candidates. This is the approach taken in successful senior academic searches.
- Third, the search committee should personally interview the leading candidates. The committee should determine whether each candidate can succeed in the local environment in three major

areas: namely, fielding highly competitive teams, focusing on the academic success of student-athletes, and representing the university well to its many and varied constituencies.

- The search committee should also undertake a full due diligence review of each candidate. It is not necessary to engage an outside consultant in searches for head coaches and athletics directors, but it can be useful. A good search consultant – and they are not all good – can help identify candidates, including candidates of color. They can be helpful in the due diligence segment of the search; in fact, this is the area in which they can be most helpful. A good

search consultant can also assist in the final negotiations with the selected candidate.

- Fourth, the search committee should recommend to the president a short list of three to five candidates. The current practice in head coach searches sometimes involves the AD recommending a single candidate to the president. The president should meet with each of the candidates on the short list who he or she considers viable. The president should consult in depth with the AD if it is a coaching position and with others who know the candidates well. Once the president has chosen the best candidate, he or she should recommend the final candidate to the

Board or directly make the appointment, depending on the procedures for appointment at the institution.

- This approach puts the president in the crucial decision-making position. It identified who is responsible for the appointment and it clearly specifies the point of accountability. The current approach tends to defer responsibility to the athletic department, and as history has shown, that leads to appointments that lack diversity. There is too much of a tendency to restrict the pool of candidates to a small network of known individuals. I have confidence that the presidents are considerably more likely to move

beyond this small network and make appointments that take into account a wide range of factors.

- This new approach will automatically lengthen the search – but should not take more than three to four weeks to complete. That is sufficient time to do the job properly.
- Colleges and universities at the Division I level must end the practice of hiring over an abbreviated time period – sometimes as abbreviated as a weekend – and begin hiring in a way that includes a diverse pool of candidates and with a process that permits

developing talent, not just cannibalizing the talent from other programs.

- There is no guarantee, of course, that this new approach will yield a more diverse group of head coaches and athletics directors. Moreover, even if it will do so, it may well take time to reach this goal. But I firmly believe that modeling major athletics searches on those for senior academic administrators, including the president being the primary decision maker and point of accountability, has a far better chance to yield a diverse group of head coaches and athletics directors than the current approach. This point pertains not only to head football coaches, the

example on which I have focused, but head coaches in all sports.

- This is a problem that can be solved. It requires commitment to the principle of building diversity. We can take hope from the success we have seen with men's basketball, but we cannot rest on the progress in that sport and believe we are developing diverse coaching and administrative staffs.
- The talent among African American men and women to lead and produce winning programs is clearly present. The challenge is to make equity for all the accepted standard.

- It is the noble concept whose time is long past due.

- Thank you.