

Rooney rule cited for its effectiveness

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The number of black head coaches in the National Football League has more than doubled -- from three to a record seven -- since the league began requiring teams in 2003 to interview minority candidates for coaching vacancies.

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Now the National Collegiate Athletic Association should enact a similar rule, according to the Black Coaches Association and the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport.

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"It may lead to some bogus interviews, but I think it's been proven in the NFL that when [minority] candidates are brought into the room under any circumstances they have surprised some people and gotten a real shot at a job," said Richard Lapchick, director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport.

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NCAA schools that violate the policy should face financial penalties, as NFL teams do under its so-called Rooney rule, said Floyd Keith, executive director of the Black Coaches Association. The NFL rule is named for Pittsburgh Steelers owner Dan Rooney, who is the chairman of the league's committee on workplace diversity.

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But the NCAA has yet to decide whether to embrace the plan, partly because its member schools are independently governed and enjoy greater autonomy in hiring practices than NFL teams do, according to an NCAA spokeswoman.

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Not all black coaches support the rule, either.

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"If they have to make a school bring somebody in for an interview, is that coach truly getting a fair shake?" said Mel Mills, who is black and the head football coach at Becker College. "I'd rather be put on an even playing field."

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The NCAA made clear, however, that it supports the purpose of the Rooney rule and has yet to rule out adopting a similar version.

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"NCAA presidents and athletic directors must do more now to ensure that the head coaching ranks reflect the full diversity of talented men and women who are capable, able, and willing to assume those jobs," said Charlotte Westerhaus, the NCAA's vice president for diversity and inclusion.

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