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Colleges

Minority-hiring policy stiffens

Unlike in NFL, ignoring rules carries no fines

By Steve Wieberg
USA TODAY

Major-school athletics directors have taken perhaps the strongest swing ever at improving college football's dismal minority hiring record, issuing guidelines Tuesday that mirror the NFL's Rooney rule.

"I really, truly believe it's the right thing to do," said Dutch Baughman, executive director of the Texas-based Division I-A Athletic Directors Association and who oversees the five-month process of drawing up "acceptable standards" and sent them to all 120 major football-playing schools Tuesday.

Like pro football's Rooney rule, the guidelines call for schools searching for a head coach to interview "one or more" minority candidates.

Unlike the 5-year-old Rooney rule, which subjects NFL teams to fines, the colleges' policy does not carry penalties. The AAU athletic directors, the NCAA and other organizations question the propriety and legality of infringing on individual schools' hiring practices.

"The best we can do," Baughman said, "is provide recommendations and so on and respect the fact that there is institutional prerogative."

The policy targets football for now. The sport, with one of the most criticized minority hiring track records in college or pro sports, employed no black head coaches as recently as 1992. There were seven minority coaches last season, less than his representation in a sport in which 54% of the players are black or other minorities.

"There'll be eight next season. UCLA's first hire, Cornell's Houston hired Oklahoma assistant Kevin Smith, an African-American, and New York's second hire, Ben Nnamak, thought to be the first NCAA African-American head coach."

The sport's scarcity of African-American coaches was addressed during the NCAA's annual convention, which was held in Nashville, Tenn. in November. In his state-of-the-association address, called it an "emblematic" and "of intercollegiate athletics."



Unseen playing field: Kevin Smith was named Houston's football coach at a December news conference. Next season, he will be one of eight minority head coaches out of 120 Division I-A football programs.

College football coaching changes

Division I-A (Bowl Subdivision) football teams that will have a new head coach for the 2008 season:

School	Former coach	New coach
Alabama	Raymond Gundy	Tommy Tuberville
Baylor	Clayton Kopp	Art Briles
Colorado State	Spencer Platt	Steve Rickard
Duke	Tommy Bowden	David Cutcliffe
Georgia Tech	Chan Gailey	Paul Johnson
Hawaii	John Kneiss	Steve Sumner
Houston	Art Briles	Kevin Smith
Michigan	Bo Schembechler	Rich Rodriguez
Mississippi	Ed Orgeron	Houston Nutt
Navy	Paul Johnson	Ken Numanak
North Carolina	Bill Calahan	Bo Pelini
Northern Illinois	Ken Noland	Kevin Frazier
Southern Methodist	Phil Bennett	John Lyles
Southern Mississippi	Ray Gundy	Larry Brown
Texas A&M	Dennis Franchione	Mike Sherman
UCLA	Karl Dorsett	Rick Neuheiser
Washington State	Paul Wulff	Paul Wulff
West Virginia	Rich Rodriguez	Bill Stewart

Ohio State's Gene Smith, one of 12 African-American athletics directors among the 300-plus schools in Division I, said during a panel discussion of diversity issues: "We do not provide an opportunity for the assistant black football coach to be in the room, to go through the interview process and learn from it ... we're doing a disservice and we're doing an injustice."

The AAU's guidelines urge athletics directors to collect names of potential minority candidates before they're faced with an opening and to "enhance the efficiency of a search process" and provide "fairness" to personally become better acquainted with those coaches. "Schools using an

side search firms are instructed to urge them to be inclusive. Baughman's organization offers help in identifying minority candidates.

Though the policy wasn't finalized until the end of football's annual recruiting and hiring cycle, Baughman said its pending release and personal contact with schools conducting searches were effective in increasing the number of minorities interviewed.

He also dismissed suggestions the guidelines could lack effectiveness without the hammer of penalties. "I have a lot more professional trust in our kids than that," he said. "Based on my conversations with athletic directors, the overwhelming feedback has been ... it's time that we do this."

Floyd Keith, who heads the Indianapolis-based Black Coaches and Administrators, in more cautious. "I don't want to judge it until I see the results," he said. "It remains concerned by a growing number of schools that have pre-designated successors to longtime coaches — Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, Syracuse and Arizona in basketball and most recently Florida State and Purdue in football — circumventing the search process."

A read the guidelines document at collegehoops.usatoday.com

Coach will go barefoot to help needy children

From staff and wire reports

[UP] men's basketball coach Ron Hunter will sport an unusual look Jan. 24 for a Summit League game against Oakland (Mich.): no socks, no shoes.

Hunter, whose Jaguars are tied for the league lead with Otis Williams, says he wants to raise awareness for all the children in the world who don't have shoes. He is teaming with an organization called Samaritan's Feet (samaritanfeet.org) to bring in donations to supply 40,000 pairs of shoes. That figure, Hunter says, is to mark the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death.

[UP] athletics spokesman Ed Holdaway said the school is encouraging students to get involved by being barefoot at the game.

Reprieve granted: An all-star college golf tournament that includes Tiger Woods among its winners will continue after the NCAA preserved its exemption.

The NCAA board of directors approved when the NCAA eliminated the committee that decides which events are exempt from a rule that limits the number of playing days for student-athletes. The College All-America Golf Classic had been an exempt event.

The NCAA board of directors approved a new exemption Monday. It will become official if no one objects within 60 days.

Division I All-Americans and national champions from other divisions are the only ones eligible for the El Paso event, which is the only individual stroke-play event at the NCAA.

Early exits: Cornerback Reggie Smith has become the third Oklahoma junior to declare for the NFL draft. Coach Bob Stoops confirmed Tuesday that Smith, No. 4 on the team with 79 tackles, was joining Oakland Kolby, a receiver, and Curtis Lofton, a linebacker, in entering the draft.

Tuesday was the deadline for undrafted players to declare. They have 72 hours to withdraw.

California's receiver Desean Jackson will enter the draft.



Sole goal: [UP] coach Ron Hunter, celebrating 2003 league title, hopes to bring in donations to give 40,000 pairs of shoes to children.

Jackson, a star punt returner, had an underwhelming junior season as a receiver, with 55 receptions for 762 yards and six touchdowns while battling injuries. He returned a punt for a touchdown in the opener, giving him a Pacific 10 Conference-record six in his career.

Virginia Tech starwideback Victor "Macho" Harris has apparently changed his mind and decided to return for his senior season.

He sent a text message Monday to offensive backs coach Torrian Gray, informing him of the reversal. Gray told the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch:

"Coach, I'm coming back." Gray said Harris' text message read according to a story posted on the newspaper's website.

Briley: Bob Knight's first chance to become the first NCAA men's basketball coach at any level with 500 wins ended Saturday in a 74-52 loss at Oklahoma State. The Red Raiders will try again to get the milestone for their coach tonight when No. 3 Texas A&M visits Tuesday that Smith, No. 4 on the team with 79 tackles, was joining Oakland Kolby, a receiver, and Curtis Lofton, a linebacker, in entering the draft.

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California's receiver Desean Jackson will enter the draft.

Stewart quietly easing into his Toyota world

By Nate Ryan
USA TODAY

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Toyota's blockbuster signing of Joe Gibbs Racing essentially was sealed by a trip to central Indiana last week.

A few weeks before the deal with CR was announced, last September, Toyota Racing Development general manager Lee White shot the ball for a day with Tony Stewart at the two-time champion's sprint car shop in Brownsburg, Ind.

The tone might have been casual, but the stakes were high.

"If Tony had any reservations about racing a Toyota, there wouldn't be a Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota," White said. "I flew in to make sure he understood who we were and that he was comfortable."

Though Stewart and Toyota are off to a strong start (sixth at 187.352 mph on the second day of the second session of Daytona 500 testing), the new agreement contains a delicate balance.

White Stewart has spent the last two days at Daytona International Speedway in a Camry that he will drive in NASCAR's premier series this season. He still pilots a Chevrolet (Gibbs had been a GM team since 1992) in open-wheel events.

Stewart, a three-time world Midwesterner who grew up in Columbus, Ind., has been somewhat reticent to discuss the Japanese manufacturer. He provided mostly clipped answers Tuesday.

"I don't know, I'm still working for them yesterday," he said.

Corvette team picks E85 fuel

Corvette Racing will be powered by E85 ethanol, a high-octane, renewable alternative fuel, in the 2008 American Le Mans Series.

As part of the series' "green racing" initiative, the most successful team in ALMS history will use a blend of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline in the demanding arena of endurance road racing.

After winning its seventh consecutive GT1 manufacturers' and team championships in 2007 using E10 (10% ethanol), Corvette Racing's twin race cars will make the transition to E85 for the 2008 season.

The series announced at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit on Tuesday that it is partnering with the Environmental Protection Agency, Depart-

ment of Energy and SAE International to incorporate "green racing" principles into its 2008 season.

"The auto manufacturers competing in the American Le Mans Series have made it very clear that this is a direction and an overall initiative that is important to them," said Scott Atherton, president and CEO of the series.

All race cars in the series compete on alternative fuels.

For the last two seasons, Audi has competed with a revolutionary clean diesel-powered car.

In addition to Audi and Corvette, other auto makers in the series include Acura, Aston Martin, Dodge, Ferrari, Ford, Mazda, Peugeot, Porsche and Volvo.

From staff reports

Motor sports



Lots of new faces: Dale Earnhardt Jr., center, talks with engine specialist Scott Maxin, left, and Hendrick Motorsports racing director Ken Howes. "I'm just nervous in getting to know them and hoping that they like me and like the kind of driver I am," Earnhardt says of his transition.

Earnhardt steadily shifting gears

Junior getting used to new team, sponsor

By Gary Graves
USA TODAY

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — As his legion of fans begin converting their casual wannabe from Budweiser to a primary color, it has been determined, Dale Earnhardt Jr. said Tuesday, that he is getting used to his new job even if he wanted to.

Stewart's team won a championship last year and could be an attractive pickup for Toyota, which is looking to expand its sprint car program.

But White, who chatted up Chevrolet's Chase Bowler in Tulsa from Stewart's pits, said Toyota wasn't wooing Stewart.

"We respect what he has with Chevrolet and we're not going to cross that line."

That had its share of changes. The Impala SS features an extra 8 and 100-hp, says Howes. Hendrick Motorsports, which means NASCAR's most popular driver couldn't ease into his new job even if he wanted to.

Earnhardt's last two days have had little hoopla, other than the fact that he hovered over his garage stall late Tuesday upon discovering its location in the garage.

"It's been pretty nice to be able to concentrate on the things that are important right now, testing and working and getting to know the guys," a somewhat subdued Earnhardt said between Tuesday's morning and afternoon test sessions.

"I'm just nervous in getting to know them and hoping that they like me and like the kind of driver that I am," Earnhardt said. "It's really fun to be going through this, and I'm enjoying these parts, and even the difficult and challenging parts are fun because of the atmosphere and the attitude that everybody here has."

Any uneasiness disappeared on the track as Earnhardt led Jansky's pre-race test at 185.520 mph, a tick faster than Monday afternoon's second-quietest run of 185.026 mph.

His was one of just two Chevys in the top 15 as Toyota continued its pre-race test at 185.520 mph, a tick faster than Monday afternoon's second-quietest run of 185.026 mph.

Of course, it could be argued Earnhardt got something of a head start last week when he dropped in on teammates Jimmie Johnson, the reigning four-time Cup champion, four-time champion Jeff Gordon and Casey Mears. That four-hour visit went over big with his new mates and sort of broke the ice for Earnhardt.

Earnhardt's next step is breaking a 64-lap victory drought and getting back into championship contention. Those prospects are why he's excited. Dale is a fan of the team's late father Emling — for NASCAR's version of the New York Yankees.

Despite joining NASCAR's best superspeedway team and being nearly four years removed from a

Daytona 500 win with DEI, Earnhardt stopped short Tuesday of making predictions for the 50th anniversary race Feb. 17. After all, he's still getting used to all the resources, technology and personnel at his disposal.

Earnhardt's crew chief and cousin, Tony Stewart Jr., last DEI early last fall to get a grasp on it and the initial results were pretty much what he expected. That made him a little more confident than Earnhardt, predicting a handful of wins and losing "a few" to make it make it happen.

"Right now the object is getting that first one."

"I just like running up front every week," Earnhardt said. "I want to be up front and challenging, and when I show up at the track I want people to expect me to run well."

He's hoping to do that with the extra team his late father Emling — for NASCAR's version of the New York Yankees.

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