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## Wheels of diversity turn slowly

**NCAA Division I-A schools have been slow to hire black ADs.**

By Andre D. Williams Of The Morning Call

George Bright has spent the last 27 years proving wrong the high school guidance counselor who once told him he might not be much more than a shoe store manager.

Bright, Lafayette College's associate athletic director the last five years, has been succeeding for years, and he's ambitious about becoming a Division I-A athletic director in the future. But he faces an uphill battle.

Whereas publicity about the need to hire black coaches in sports has reached an intense level, awareness of the need to hire and promote black athletic administrators largely has been ignored.

There are just 15 black athletic directors -- or 12.6 percent -- out of 119 NCAA member schools in Division I-A, not including the historically black colleges in two southern conferences. In contrast, 20 percent of all Division I-A athletes are black, and in the major revenue-producing sports such as football and basketball, nearly 50 percent of all athletes are black.

Bright's chances -- and the hopes of black athletic administrators -- for advancement slowly might be getting better. Two years ago, the NCAA started a program offering administrative and coaching leadership and skills training for blacks. As a result, and also because of earlier initiatives and recent increased awareness of the dearth of minority administrators, more blacks may be joining the college athletic office pipeline that eventually leads to the role of athletic director -- the person who oversees a university's intercollegiate sports programs.

"I feel very confident about my experiences and that my opportunities for leadership will come at some point," said Bright, 44, who worked in athletic administration at South Carolina State for five years before joining Lafayette as an assistant athletic director in July 1993.

In his senior year at Laurel High in Prince George's County, Md., in 1980, it was a guidance counselor who tried to shatter Bright's dream before he even received his diploma.

"She said to me, 'Why don't you just work there [at a shoe store]. You'll never make it out of college. You don't have the grades,'" Bright recalled.

Bright graduated from Claflin University in Orangeburg, S.C., with a degree in liberal arts in 1985, and eight years later earned his master's in rehabilitation counseling from South Carolina State. He is pursuing a doctorate in leadership and administration from East Stroudsburg University.

If Bright were to see his guidance counselor today, he would thank her.

"Thank you, thank you for the motivation, than you for putting me in the box, and almost putting a lid on the box, saying this is all that you can do, because that caused me to reflect back inside," Bright said. "I said, 'No, that's not me.' I can project better than what somebody else can project for me."

Overwhelmingly white

There has been a slow progression of blacks as athletic directors, said Richard Lapchick, the founder and director of The

Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport and primary author of the Racial and Gender Report Card for college athletics. The institute, based at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, also does racial and gender report cards for professional sports.

In a study released by TIDES in January it was disclosed that just 12 blacks are athletic directors at schools that compete on the I-A football level. In addition, three other black men direct athletics at schools that do not have I-A football programs.

Meanwhile, there are 102 -- or 86 percent -- white athletic directors of the 119 total for I-A. (The study excludes the historically black colleges.)

Lapchick said the paucity of blacks indicates unfair hiring practices by most NCAA Division I institutions.

"The athletic director's position at I, II and III is [85-plus percent] white in each division," Lapchick said. "The associate athletic director's position, the so-called pipeline, is almost 90 percent white at all three positions. There's not a lot of optimism out there that things are going to change because we're not opening up the hiring process.

"We are not mandating that we bring people into the room that are qualified to be candidates for that position."

Bright is one of those candidates. He was the ticket manager at South Carolina State University for five years. He was in the inaugural class of the NCAA Leadership Institute for Ethnic Minority Males, and completed the Sports Management Institute Executive Program classes at both Notre Dame and at South Carolina.

But the training has not led to the job offers he seeks.

"I've gotten some great experiences along the way," Bright said. "I feel that I am young enough to do it. My children are grown enough. I can kick up some dust the next couple of years and not have to worry about that side of it."

Lapchick is worried that qualified black candidates such as Bright will continue to be overlooked if NCAA institutes don't change the way they search for job applicants for athletic director jobs.

"I think it's probably become the old boys network, and that's why with the athletic director's position, we have not bothered to look too far," Lapchick said. "If the school doesn't tell a search firm, which is who usually hires an AD at this point, or what brings people to the table, that diversity is important, they probably will bring five white guys."

NCAA diversity vice president

NCAA President Miles Brand has strengthened efforts to change the tide. Two years ago, Brand hired Charlotte Westerhaus as the NCAA vice president for Diversity and Inclusion. Westerhaus has created several programs aimed at enhancing and encouraging diversity and inclusion throughout intercollegiate athletics for student-athletes, coaches, administrators and coaches.

The NCAA also conducts on-campus workshops designed to provide a positive learning environment that teaches the values of diversity in maximizing team effectiveness.

Lapchick is encouraged by the multiple programs, but thinks more aggressive steps may have to be made to assure the fairest hiring practices.

"I really think that Miles Brand wants to change things," Lapchick said. "I think that is one of his priorities.

"I think he is sincere, that he wants more opportunities for women and people of color. I think that his tool box would be a lot richer if he had something like the Rooney Rule."

The Rooney Rule requires National Football League teams to interview minority candidates for any head coach opening. The rule is named for Dan Rooney, the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers and the chairman of the league's diversity committee, and is often cited as an example of affirmative action.

#### Won't endorse Rooney Rule

In addition to the 15 black males, there are four Latinos and one Native American who are athletic directors in Division I-A, but Lapchick said the numbers are still low and that legal steps may have to be taken to create even more diversity.

"I think what's going to happen is the black coaches are going to institute going to Title VII lawsuits against individual schools, and that's going to make the biggest difference," he said, referring to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in voting, employment and public services.

Westerhaus said the NCAA would not endorse a Rooney Rule because institutions have the right to interview and hire who they want.

"That autonomy and that responsibility have not been conceded or given to the NCAA by our membership institutions, so we do not have the ability to dictate or mandate how interviews are conducted and who is hired, so we have to be very cognizant of that," Westerhaus said.

"No 2, I think that we have to be careful so that we don't set up applicants to what I call a photo kind of interview where they are being interviewed to where they are just trying to fill some kind of mandate. I can tell you that we seem to be having substantial progress, positive progress in the hiring of athletic directors of colors in Divisions I-A."

#### Paving the way

Before Westerhaus was hired to head the NCAA's diversion and inclusion program, the University of Virginia made headlines by hiring Craig Littlepage as the school's first African-American athletic director on Aug. 21, 2001.

Littlepage, 55, also became the first black AD in Atlantic Coast Conference history.

"Initially, I was relieved," said Littlepage, who was UVA interim AD for a year before being hired. "Eventually I was and still am happy and humbled to get this opportunity."

But opportunity does not knock that often for African-Americans, although the number of black athletic directors is at an all-time high.

"I'm a little surprised that it's even got to 15, said David Williams II, Vanderbilt University's vice chancellor of student life and university life and general counsel, who's assigned to oversee athletics.

Some of the prominent black athletic directors in I-A include Southern California's Mike Garrett, Ohio State's Eugene Smith, Georgia's Damon Evans and New Mexico State's McKinley Boston Jr., who grew up in Philadelphia.

Garrett, a former Trojans running back who won the Heisman Trophy in 1965, played with the Kansas City Chiefs and San Diego Chargers over an eight-year pro career. He has been USC's athletic director since 1993.

Smith is Ohio State's first black athletic director and oversees 36 varsity sports with an operating budget that tops \$92 million, one of the nation's largest. Under Smith, Ohio State played in the national title games in football and men's basketball this academic year.

Williams, 69, who previously worked as a professor of law and was vice president for minority affairs at Ohio State, did not

plan to run Vanderbilt's athletics program when he was hired in July 2000. But he was persuaded to do so by the school's chancellor, Gordon Gee, whom Williams worked for at Ohio State.

"Probably, if I had planned for this position, I probably would not have gotten it," Williams said. "I think it's very hard for African-Americans who want to be an AD at a school like this [majority white] going through the mainstream line."

It's that way across the country in Division I, and Williams, Lapchick and others believe that the root of the problem stems from the lack of black college-presidents in I-A outside of the historically black colleges.

Bowling Green, Indiana, Middle Tennessee State and Ohio State are the I-A institutions with black presidents.

"It all starts with that commitment at the top, to say that we're going to have an open conclusive process," said Carolyn Femovich, the Patriot League's executive director. "Is it fast enough, or as aggressive as we'd like? The answer is probably no. I think it just means that we all have to keep our feet to the fire and keep working at it, and keep encouraging people."

#### Making history

The Patriot League has two black athletic directors in Army's Kevin Anderson, who became West Point's first black AD in January 2005, and American's Keith Gill, who starts on June 1.

Femovich considers both hires as a sign of efforts by Patriot League schools to be more diversified with interviewing and hiring.

"I think we're fortunate that we've had some representation by minorities and women in those leadership roles, and I would expect that to continue," Femovich said. "I think it takes real proactive approach, and people have to be willing to look hard to make sure that the pool is diversified and that people are encouraged to apply."

Lehigh athletic director Joe Sterrett said the key for each school still is to hire the best candidate.

"I believe strongly in the importance of institutional fit when making hiring decisions," said Sterrett, who in 2002 hired Billy Taylor as the men's basketball coach and first black coach in school history for any sport.

Sterrett believes that Taylor could become a good athletic administrator. A vast number of I-A athletic directors, black and white, are former coaches or star players, and having the athletic background could be one of the best steps for blacks to move up the ladder.

But there's really no secret to success, according to Williams, who said Vanderbilt has black athletic administrators already qualified to make the leap to athletic director.

"Any one of those who I have on my staff have the ability to run a program, or at least are developing the ability to run a program," Williams said. "The question is will they get the opportunity."

Blacks also are being overlooked for conference commissioner jobs. All 36 conference commissioner jobs, excluding the SWAC and MEAC, are held by whites, but a breakthrough occurred last Thursday when Rudy Keeling became the first black to be named commissioner of the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Keeling's hire was particularly noteworthy considering he made the jump from athletic director at Division III Emerson College in Boston to commissioner of an organization that has Division I, II and III members.

#### Other initiatives

Westerhaus has become increasingly encouraged by the hires of blacks as athletic directors and associate and assistant athletic directors the last two years since the NCAA's Diversity and Inclusion program was created.

The NCAA already had programs in place to help with the development and enhancement of leadership skills for minority men and women before Westerhaus was hired.

In June 2001, the NCAA began the Institute for Ethnic Minority Males. The first class had 24 participants, including Bright, who took part in workshop sessions for a year.

Top candidates for athletic director jobs from that class include Anton Goff, an assistant athletic director at Maryland; Corey Holiday, associate athletic director at North Carolina; David Harris, associate athletic director at Wisconsin; Bryan Hicks, assistant athletic director at Louisville; and Bright, who's received multiple inquiries about his interest in athletic director jobs since his promotion to associate AD in 2002.

Bright has never participated in a formal interview for the position of athletic director, but he believes that invite may come one day.

So, too, does Lafayette athletic director Bruce McCutcheon.

"George Bright is more than ready to take on the challenge of being a Division I athletic director," McCutcheon said.

"George is a valuable member of our management team here at Lafayette.

"That being said, I know that George wants to direct his own program. As positions come open, I've discussed them with George and have nominated him for positions on several occasions."

'Assertive effort' needed

The list of qualified blacks continues to grow, helped by the NCAA's various programs for minorities. But it's going to take continued patience for those blacks who are interested in the higher level jobs.

"I think patience is an element, but it's not the only element," Westerhaus said. "It will take an assertive effort for our institutions to have fair hiring practices that are within their institution. It will take the effort of the NCAA and everyone involved with the NCAA to promote a fair and open hiring practice, but it will also take our membership institutes within the NCAA to continue to support [minority] programs that we have.

"I think, after all those things are done, with patience, a combination of all those things will happen."

Another way that Lapchick believes the tide can be turned is for blacks to be encouraged at earlier ages to pursue careers in athletic administration.

"I think it would be so helpful if young people who love sports recognize that there are 68,000 jobs in college sports," Lapchick said. "There's 1,000 or so athletic director jobs, and you can prepare yourself to move into a position by taking school seriously."

Bright did that, choosing as an 18-year-old to set his goal to become an athletic administrator.

"I would say that the best is yet to come for me," he said. "I am very comfortable where I'm at. I love Lafayette College tremendously. Lafayette has been very good to me. That's certainly not a statement that I'm moving on, but the best is probably to come for me. We'll see what happens.

"I'm preparing and continue to prepare."

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