

Press Release

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Black Footballers Partnership launches calling for a new goal - for representation on the pitch to be matched off it



Today present and former players announce a new voice for Black Footballers and release the [Szymanski Report](#) that catalogues just how much that voice is needed after decades of being left behind off the pitch.

Black players are:

43% of players in English Premier League, but only,

4.4% of managerial positions usually occupied by former players,

1.6% of people in executive, leadership and ownership positions.

BROKEN FOOTBALL PYRAMID FOR **BLACK FOOTBALLERS OFF THE PITCH**

Newly commissioned research by the Black Footballers Partnership (BFP), a company formed from a coalition of Black Footballers in the men's and women's game, shows progress on the pitch is not matched by career progression off it. The BFP commissioned world renowned Professor Stefan Szymanski to map the gap between the pitch and the dugout and boardroom:

KEY FINDINGS SHOW:

Black players are well represented on the pitch

- 43% of players in the EPL and 34% in the English Football League (EFL).
- Black players represent an even larger share of the total market value of players in these leagues.

Black players are doing the coaching badges and graduating from "board-ready" training

- 14% of all known UEFA Pro Licence holders who graduated under the FA.
- 23% of all those Licence holders who were professional players between 2004 and 2020.

But Black players are not getting jobs off the pitch

- 8.9% of former players active in pro English football (2004-20) that progressed into 'ex player' manager/admin roles were Black.
- Black players are particularly under-represented in scouting or junior coaching levels.

The higher you go: the worse it gets

- 4.4% of managerial positions usually taken by former players are occupied by Black employees.
- 1.6% of executive, leadership and ownership positions are Black.

THE BLACK FOOTBALLERS PARTNERSHIP DEMANDS ACTION TO ADDRESS THIS **IMBALANCE**

Initiatives by the English football community to support Black players' post-playing careers are welcome, but they are piecemeal and moderate in impact.

IN THE EPL:

- 8 out of 18 clubs reported zero diversity hires in senior leadership.
- 4 out of 19 reported zero hires in team operations.
- 9 out of 17 reported zero hires in coaching.
- Only 6 clubs reported meeting the target for team operations.
- Only 4 clubs reported meeting the target in coaching.

PROACTIVE GOALS FOR CHANGE:

To deliver a more inclusive game where good governance, accountability and transparency is key, the **Szymanski Report** recommends:

- Formation of a new, well-resourced, and strategic organisation to represent the interests of black players and build good practice across the game. However, well intentioned other bodies in the game might be, they are too easily diverted from focusing on these issues. Black players need a voice.
- Future proofing women's football by commissioning Black footballers to carry out a similar review of Black representation in the women's game at all tiers. There is a widely held view that there's a lack of diversity and inclusion which should be evidenced with strategic recommendation linked to any findings.
- Targeted training and development opportunities aimed at Black players. While much of what needs to be done concerns the attitudes of clubs to recruitment, preparing Black players for career opportunities in management helps to change the established culture and prepare the game for where it is going, not what it was.

More teeth, less talk

- The FA's voluntary code on diversity needs to be replaced by a compulsory code. A compulsory code which can be properly monitored, not least by an organization dedicated to representing the interests of Black players, is essential if real progress is to be made.
- Lumping every non-White group together is counterproductive. The data-driven game on the pitch should welcome more accurate measures to address issues of diversity and inclusion off it.



Delroy Corinaldi Executive Director of the BFP says:

"This report demonstrates what we have long known: for Black players the path from the pitch to the dugout or boardroom is largely barred when they retire. On the pitch, where talent, hard work and skill decide who wins and loses, Black players are well represented, particularly among the big stars.

'If Black players were represented in proportion to their share of players in the top two English Divisions, there would be around 400 administrative and leadership positions held by Black people. This is almost ten times the current number.'

"Black players do their coaching badges because they want to stay in the game and share that talent and experience; but the game appears not to want to employ them. A culture of ignoring Black talent off the pitch must end for the good of the game.

"The BFP calls on the game to learn lessons from global sports such as the National Basketball Association in North America, where the representation of Black players is comparable but the number of Black coaches and general managers sits at 50% and 40% respectively.

This is a far cry from our frankly embarrassing 4.4% and 1.6%."

RESPONSE FROM BLACK MALE AND FEMALE PLAYERS ON SZYMANSKI REPORT



Anita Asante, Player, Aston Villa and England, said:

I welcome the insight and findings in this report and the recommendations will go a long way to growing and improving the game going forward.

I have played in the women's game for many years now at the highest level both in the UK, USA and wider afield. While the men's game is still behind by only permitting talented and qualified black players to play and not lead, the women's game is at risk of going backwards with access to the game largely limited by a lack of diversity and equity. TV money has come into the game but unless the leaders know how to make a change, we are at risk of creating a lost generation of black talent and a game not punching above its weight.



Les Ferdinand MBE, QPR Director of Football, sponsoring founder BFP member said:

I welcome the findings and recommendations in the report and look forward to working with football to urgently take action to show that Black players can be entertainers on the pitch and leaders off it.



Michael Johnson, England U21 Coach, co-founding Director of BFP said:

I welcome the insight and recommendations in the report and I am inspired by the number of Black players that have gained qualifications, alongside their on the pitch experience, to make themselves board and management ready. After years of soul searching about racial discrimination, the game has an obligation to do better and make a step change in its efforts to reward black leaders off the pitch.



Eartha Pond, Independent Director FA Women's Board, Co-founding Director of BFP said:

I welcome the insight and findings in the report with sadness but also with a sense of déjà vu: even when we are qualified we are not allowed to secure the roles.

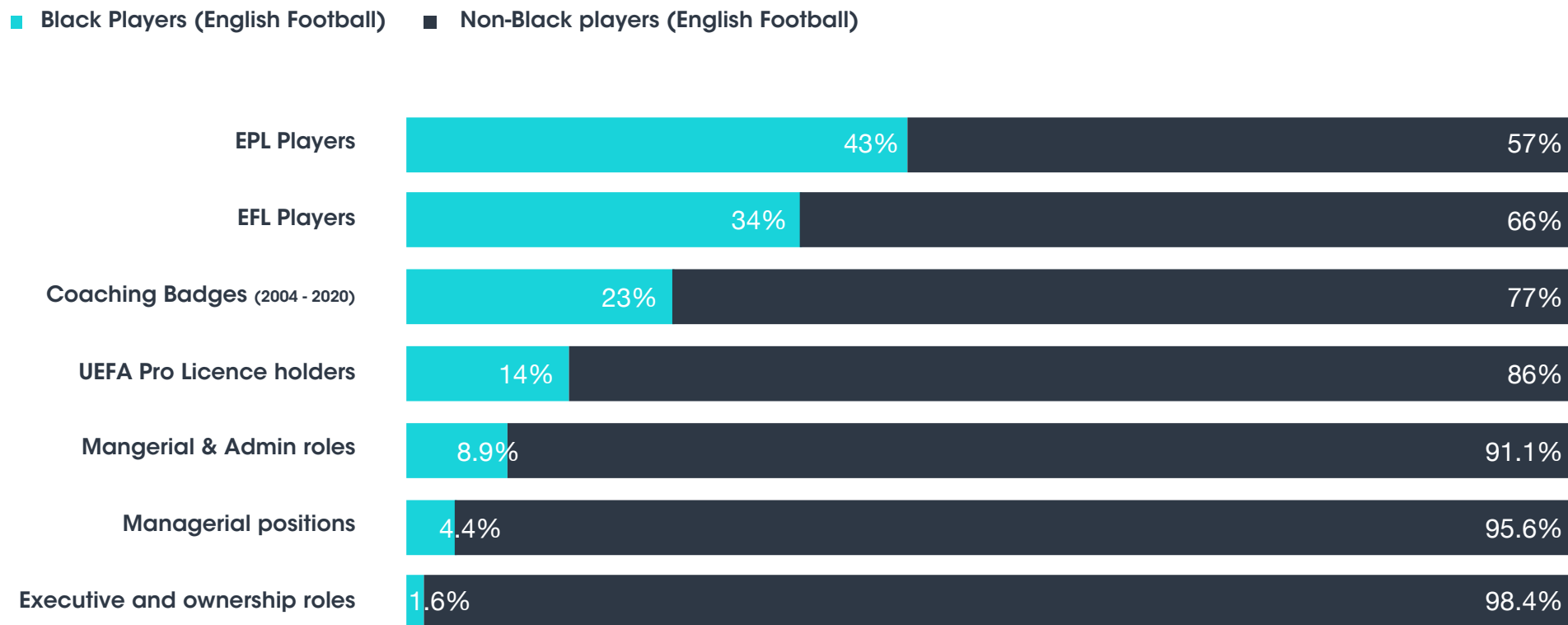
I sit on the FA Women's Board and played for Chelsea, Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspurs amongst others. You only have to look around the game to see the challenges. The women's game requires more accountability and transparency. Unless the women's game learns quickly, to recruit from a wider and more diverse pool of talent, the excitement that the men's games generates will struggle to be replicated in the Women's Super League. We require an equally honest assessment of the women's game to grow and improve the game to truly be inclusive to all.



Chris Ramsey MBE, QPR Technical Director, sponsoring founding member of BFP said:

I welcome this report as an opportunity to lift the game to new levels to benefit fans, communities and owners. But it is also quite sobering: it tells us senior leaders are not recognising Black talent off the pitch when they are qualified and ready to convert the right circumstances into success. It's gone on too long and points to a systemic problem in the game.

SZYMANSKI REPORT KEY FINDINGS



Reports: • Black Representation in English Professional Football, A Statistical Analysis by Stefan Szymanski January 2022 – Please email for a copy of the report •The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport: NBA Report card https://www.tidesport.org/_files/ugd/138a69_4b2910360b754662b5f3cb52675d0faf.pdf

Methodology: Data on players for this research was taken from the website Transfermarkt, which is one of the most reputable sources of player information on the web. The identification of Black players was undertaken by BFP, which is consistent with the groups identified under Black, Mixed White/Black African and Mixed White/Black Caribbean. Table A1 in the paper provides further detail.

The author of the report: Stefan Szymanski is the Stephen J. Galetti Professor of Sport Management at the University of Michigan. Prior to moving there in 2011, he was professor of economics at London Business School, Imperial College Business School and Bayes Business School. He has authored over 100 academic papers in peer reviewed journals, mainly on topics relating to the economics and business of sports. He has published ten books, including the international bestseller, Soccernomics (with Simon Kuper). He has provided policy advice to government on sports policy in the UK, France, Norway and at the EU. He also advised governing bodies such as UEFA, the FIA (motor sport) and ICC (cricket). He has also testified in court as an expert witness on sports matter in the UK and US.

Black Footballers Partnership (BFP): Founded in 2021, BFP is a community interest company established to be a coordinated and strategic voice and support for Black men and women professional footballers who are standing together for practical and measurable change across football. Fairness, inclusion and growth for black players and vulnerable communities drives our passion for change. BFP is the strategic evolution of Football's Black Coalition which is a group of black players, coaches and administrators from across the game formed during the pandemic and in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. BFP's priorities include representation, education and supporting diverse and disconnected communities.