

Black Representation in English Professional Football: A Statistical Analysis

Stefan Szymanski
January 2022

Paper commissioned by the Black Footballers Partnership (BFP).
A community interest company established to be a voice and
a support for black professional footballers.

BFP | Black
Footballers
Partnership

Executive Summary

This report examines the representation of Black people in English football at the playing level and at management levels. It shows that while Black players represent a very large fraction of all players, their representation in management is negligible. Since most managerial positions in football are taken by former players, this is serious cause for concern.

Section 1 reveals that 43% of players in English Premier League (EPL) and 34% in the English Football League (EFL) were Black in 2021. Black players represent an even larger share of the total market value of players in these leagues.

Section 2 shows that on 4.4% of managerial positions usually taken by former players are taken by Black employees. At the level of executive, leadership and ownership positions, only 1.6% are Black.

Section 3 argues that while discrimination can be overcome on the pitch, where talent is readily observed, it is much harder to overcome prejudice in managerial positions where assessments are more likely to be subjective and based on limited observation of actual performance.

Section 4 shows that only 8.9% of players who were active in professional English football between 2004 and 2020 and progressed into club managerial or administrative roles usually taken by former players were Black. Former Black players are particularly under-represented in the roles of scouting or junior coaching levels.

Section 5 shows that Black players accounted for 14% of known UEFA Pro Licence holders who graduated under the FA, and 23% of all those Licence holders who were professional players between 2004 and 2020. This suggests that the under-representation of Black players in managerial positions is not attributable to a lack of qualifications.

Section 6 suggests three policy conclusions from the research: (i) there is a need for an organization to represent the interest of Black players and promote their entry into management (ii) the FA's voluntary code on diversity needs to be replaced by a compulsory code and (iii) Black players should be provided training and development advice in order to improve their chances of progressing from playing to management.

Executive Summary

Black Players in English Football

Half a century ago there were few Black players in English football. In those days, international mobility of players in the global game was extremely limited, even after the Black population of Britain had grown with the arrival of the Windrush generation in the 1950s. By the 1960s, Black people with British citizenship started to break into professional football, and their numbers began to increase steadily throughout the 70s and 80s. After the Bosman judgement in 1995 led to the end of national quotas, English football saw a large influx of foreign players who could benefit from freedom of movement within the European Union. A significant proportion of these foreign players were also Black.

Data on players for this research was taken from the website Transfermarkt, while the identification of Black players was undertaken by the Black Footballers Partnership.

Black players today represent a very large percentage of all professional football players in England at all levels. In the 2020/21 season, 225 out of 527 players (43%) who played any minutes in the English Premier League (EPL) were Black. Black EPL players accounted for 39% of total minutes played and 48% of the goals scored. Goalscorers are generally the most valuable players on the pitch, and this is reflected in the estimated value of players produced by the Transfermarkt website: Black players accounted for 45% of the estimated value of all EPL players.

The picture in the EFL Championship is broadly similar, although the representation of Black players is a little lower. In 2020/21, Black players accounted for 34% of the total number of players, 32% of the minutes played, 41% of the goals scored, and 39% of the Transfermarkt value (see Table 1).

Table 1: Black Player share in the EPL and Championship 2020/21

	EPL	Championship
Players	42.7%	34.4%
Minutes	39.3%	32.1%
Goals	48.3%	41.2%
Value	44.7%	38.5%

Transfermarkt data also identifies player nationalities - both a primary and a secondary nationality, the latter frequently being acquired through residency rather than by birth. Primary nationality is generally (though not always) associated with the national team identity of a player. Players with a primary English nationality accounted for 36% of EPL players and 50% of Championship players. As far as Black players are concerned, primary English players accounts for 38% of EPL players and 49% of Championship players. In other words, there is little difference in the representation of Black players by nationality in the top two English leagues (see Table 2).

Table 2: Share of Black English (primary nationality) in total of Black players in EPL & Championship 2020/21 (Source: Transfermarkt)

The representation of Black players among the English players (by primary nationality) is out of all proportion to their share of the general population. In the 2011 census, only 3.3% of the population of England and Wales self-identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and 86% self-identified as White (the remaining categories being "Mixed/Multiple ethnic group", "Asian/Asian British" and "Other ethnic group") Adding of those who identify as "Mixed White/Black African", "Mixed White/Black Caribbean" and "Mixed other", the percentage of the population of England and Wales still only amounts to 4.9% of the population. Table 3 shows that among English players (by primary nationality), Black players accounted for 46% of the total in the EPL and Championship, with similar percentages of goals and somewhat higher percentage of the value recorded in Transfermarkt.

Table 2

	EPL	Championship
Players	37.8%	48.6%
Minutes	37.4%	45.9%
Goals	37.4%	40.3%
Value	37.4%	44.2%

Table 3: Share of Black English (primary nationality) in total of English players in EPL and Championship 2020/21 (source: Transfermarkt)

Black players have proven their value in English football against a background of prejudice and discrimination. Racial taunting by crowds has a long history. It is less prevalent on the terraces today, but the torrent of racial abuse on social media after England's penalty shoot-out defeat at Euro 2021 demonstrates that racist sentiment is still commonplace among English football supporters. The collective decision of England players to take a knee in protest of racism drew widespread support, but was also booed among some fans, with apparent support from the Home Secretary.

While abuse from fans can be demoralizing, in itself it is unlikely to be a barrier to a professional career, in contrast to prejudice among decision makers inside the clubs. In the early days, crude stereotypes were openly expressed by managers and club chairmen. In 1991, Ron Noades, then chairman of Crystal Palace, famously said: "The problem with black players is they've great pace, great athletes, love to play with the ball in front of them. . . . When it's behind them it's chaos. I don't think too many of them can read the game. When you're getting into the mid-winter you need a few of the hard white men to carry the athletic black players through." In 2004, Ron Atkinson, whose lengthy managerial career included stints at Manchester United, Aston Villa and other EPL clubs, was recorded making derogatory racist comments about Marcel Desailly while working as a TV pundit. In 2020, Greg Clarke, then FA Chairman, was forced to resign after a series of gaffes which showed remarkable insensitivity about diversity issues. John Barnes makes clear in his recent book that racist "banter" was commonplace in the game when he played, but he argues that he was personally little affected because his own talent and stardom were beyond question.

The term "Black" is used throughout this paper as synonymous with those self-identifying as wholly or partially Black in the 2011 UK Census: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18>. See the appendix for further discussion.

Table 3

	EPL	Championship
Players	45.7%	32.8%
Minutes	39.3%	29.5%
Goals	46.6%	35.1%
Value	49.2%	36.4%

Rather, he argues, the racism aimed at football players is part of a broader, systemic racism in British society, which provides a genuine obstacle to those unable to prove their talent in the way that he was. In a highly cited peer reviewed academic paper, Szymanski showed how racism affected English players in the 1970s and 80s. At the time, there were relatively few Black players in the English leagues, and they appeared unevenly distributed around the clubs. The wage expenditure of clubs is a highly accurate predictor of team performance in football, since wages reflect the ability of players, and player ability drives team success. Given the predictability of this relationship, discrimination against Black players would be evident not in their complete absence from the labour market, but from their underpayment relative to white players. The data bore that out: until the early 90s, teams with an above average share of black players were more successful even though their total wage spending was similar to teams with lower shares of Black players. In other words, hiring Black players was a cheap way to succeed because Black players were being undervalued. John Barnes illustrates this dynamic with an anecdote of a friend who said he would not support Liverpool until they sign an "average" black player to go alongside all the average white players. For a long time, Black players had to be exceptional to get a game.

Subsequent research, however, has shown that this effect has since disappeared. A peer reviewed paper by Pierre Deschamps and José De Sousa, published in 2021, showed that evidence of underpayment to Black players disappeared around the time of the Bosman judgment in 1995. This, they argue, is a causal effect – the Bosman judgment opened up the market for players, meaning that Black players had better employment opportunities, forcing clubs to offer more competitive wages or risk losing their best players. They find that Black players also moved clubs more frequently after the Bosman judgment, an implication of an increasingly competitive market for talent. This is a plausible account, but is not essential to this study. The important point is that Black players have come to represent a very large fraction of all professional players in the English leagues.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/priti-patel-taking-knee-boo-england-b1865409.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/nov/10/fa-chairman-greg-clark-resigns-after-unacceptable-comments>

The Uncomfortable Truth about Racism, 2021. Headline Publishing.

Szymanski, Stefan. "A market test for discrimination in the English professional soccer leagues." *Journal of political Economy* 108, no. 3 (2000): 590-603.

Black Managers in English football

The representation of Black people in the running of football clubs contrasts sharply with their presence on the pitch. As well as listing all active players, the Transfermarkt website lists personnel in administrative positions inside football clubs. These can be divided into three broad categories. First, those that typically require experience as a professional player. This includes posts such as manager, assistant manager, or a positional coach (e.g. goalkeeping coach) – it is rare for these positions to be filled by someone without professional playing experience. Second, those support functions which require generic skills, for which professional playing experience is largely irrelevant. There is a very wide range of functions included in this category, from kit manager or stadium announcer to fitness coach and club doctor. Former professional players often take up some of these roles, but they do not necessarily have a competitive advantage in competing for these jobs and some are unlikely to gain the necessary qualifications (e.g. medical doctor—though 5% of UK physicians identify as either Black or mixed race). The third area are senior management positions connected to the overall administration of the club, as well as ownership, in part or in whole. Again, past professional players are not unknown in these roles, but status as a former professional is seldom critical to taking the role.

Table 4 lists all those administrative positions held in EPL and EFL which are typically associated with professional experience as a player, and the percentage of those positions that were held by Black people. The data relate to positions held rather than individuals, since several people held more than one post in 2021. The most prominent positions, such as manager and assistant manager, are comprehensively covered, while positions that are less prominent in the public eye are less comprehensive.

Deschamps, Pierre, and José De Sousa. "Labor mobility and racial discrimination." *European Economic Review* 135 (2021): 103738.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC516646/>

Table 4: Administrative positions typically associated with professional playing experience in English clubs (EPL and EFL) in 2021 (source: Transfermarkt)

Overall though, the data gives us a good snapshot of the representation of Black people in over 1,000 club posts where professional experience is the norm: 4.4%. This contrasts sharply with the percentage of current professional players who are Black – 43% in the EPL and 34% in the Championship. Given that the overwhelming majority of these positions were held by former professional players, the under-representation of former professional Black players is extreme. If Black players were represented in proportion to their share of players in the top two English divisions, there would be in the region of 400 positions held by Black people – almost ten times the number we observe.

The data on for the other two groups of positions is more sparse. Table 5 reports the figures for those support positions which do not typically require experience as a professional player (although around 25% of these positions were in fact filled by former professional players).

FUNCTIONS	NUMBER OF POSITIONS	Black	%Black
Assistant Manager	277	20	7%
Manager	166	7	7%
Goalkeeping Coach	133	1	1%
Scout	81	0	0%
Academy Manager	62	3	5%
Chief Scout	37	0	0%
Caretaker Manager	34	2	6%
Sporting Director	24	1	4%
Loan Player Manager	15	0	0%
Youth Coach	14	1	7%
Club Representative	14	3	21%
Technical Coach	14	0	0%
Youth Scout	14	1	7%
Chief Analyst	12	0	0%
Technical Director	12	0	0%
Video Analyst	12	0	0%
Head of Scouting	12	1	8%
Director of Football	11	0	0%
Development Coach	10	0	0%
Advisor	10	1	10%
Head of Academy Coaching	8	0	0%
Academy Goalkeeping Co-ordinator	7	0	0%
Individual Coach	6	1	17%
Athletic Coach	6	0	0%
Director of Professional Football and Scout	5	0	0%
Match Analyst	5	0	0%
Coordinator of talent management	4	1	25%
Director of Development	4	1	25%
Youth Chief Scout	3	0	0%
Scout Goalkeeping	3	0	0%
Advisor of management	3	0	0%
Trainer Scout	3	1	33%
Performance Manager	3	0	0%
Head of Youth Scouting	3	0	0%
Head of Football Operations	2	0	0%
Opponent Analyst	1	0	0%
Strategic Advisor	1	0	0%
Head of Soccer School	1	0	0%
Squad Planner	1	0	0%
Strategic players marketing manager	1	0	0%
Team Official	1	0	0%
Chief Instructor	1	0	0%
Head of International Relations and Scouting	1	0	0%
Managing Director Professional Football	1	0	0%
Youth Scouting Co-ordinator	1	0	0%
Total	1051	46	4.4%

Functions	NUMBER OF POSITIONS	Black	%Black
Fitness Coach	37	1	3%
Physiotherapist	26	1	4%
Medical Director Physiotherapy	12	0	0%
Sports Scientist	10	1	10%
Club Doctor	8	0	0%
Conditioning Coach	8	1	13%
Kit Manager	6	1	17%
Head of Medical	5	0	0%
Masseur	4	0	0%
Nutritionist	3	0	0%
Rehab Coach	2	0	0%
Medical Department	2	0	0%
Lead Academy Physiotherapist	2	0	0%
Translator	1	0	0%
Stadium Announcer	1	0	0%
Head of Marketing	1	0	0%
Head of Methodology	1	0	0%
	129	5	3.9%

Table 5: Support positions which do not typically require experience as a professional player in English clubs (EPL and EFL) in 2021 (source: Transfermarkt)

The extent of under-representation in this category depends on the relevant reference group. Relative to the 4.9% self-identifying in one the Black categories in the 2011 Census, the under-representation is not large. But, given that 33 of these positions were held by former players, then one would expect 10-15 of these positions to have been filled by former Black players, while at least an additional 5 positions would have been filled by black personnel who were not former professional players, yielding an expected total of around 15-20 rather than the 5 we actually observe. So it appears that there is also significant under-representation in this category.

The third category consists of executive, leadership and ownership positions. As Table 6 shows, of the 129 positions identified only two were held by individuals categorized as Black – they are Ben Robinson the long-time owner of Burton Albion, and Ryan Giggs.

Table 6: Executive, leadership and ownership positions in English clubs (EPL and EFL) in 2021 (source: Transfermarkt)

This reflects the pattern of under-representation of Black people that we observe in the UK professions more generally. A study in 2020 found that just 54,900 of the 3.9 million managers (1.4%), directors and senior officials in the UK are Black.

Functions	NUMBER OF POSITIONS	Black	%Black
President	37	1	3%
Owner	34	1	3%
Chairman	11	0	0%
Board Member	10	0	0%
Chief Executive Officer	10	0	0%
Honorary President	6	0	0%
Member of administrative Board	5	0	0%
Director	4	0	0%
Investor	3	0	0%
Vice-President	2	0	0%
Vice Chairman	2	0	0%
Head Of Finance and Human Resources	1	0	0%
Finance Director	1	0	0%
Shareholder	1	0	0%
Deputy Chairman of the Board	1	0	0%
Chairman Of The Board	1	0	0%
	129	2	1.6%

Why are there so many Black football players and so few Black people in managerial positions in football?

The world of sports is both a practical laboratory for studying issues of race in modern society and a minefield of potential misunderstandings. In response to the high proportion of successful Black athletes across many sports, there is a wide-spread discourse of “natural ability”, which in a modern context is taken to mean “genetically determined”. Thus it is important to state from the outset that concepts of race are culturally, not scientifically determined. Racial categories such as Black and White go back several centuries, and are based on superficial differences such as skin tone. One consequence of the sequencing of the human genome in the early 2000s was to show that all humans carry almost identical genetic material, and that it is not possible to construct a genetic categorization which corresponds to the traditional racial categories. Moreover, studies have found very little difference between the biological potential of typical Black and White subjects.

Understanding athletic success also needs not only to account for factors such as training, ecology and culture, but also the biological uniqueness of the exceptionally gifted. It is plausible that individual ancestry plays a role, but ancestry can be an object of scientific research, unlike race, which is a “pattern based concept”, used to “connect an individual to a larger, pre-conceived geographically circumscribed or socially constructed group” which lacks scientific foundation. Research into athletic success which convincingly controls for the enormous diversity of relevant factors is almost completely lacking.

All of this means that in the specific context of Black footballers in the English professional leagues, we do not have a reliable causal theory for their extraordinary success, but that success is a fact. It is also a fact that almost all football club managers and staff who are concerned with player tactics, preparation and training are themselves former professional players. As we have seen, very few of them are Black. If we think of professional football as a career funnel, the entry level is playing football. The career path then progresses through coaching up to the level of manager. Given that there appear to be few obstacles to Black people of talent entering the funnel, i.e. being signed as players, Black players clearly face a constraint moving to the next stage in the process.

Convincing people of this fact is made harder by the long history of “scientific racism”, which was not scientific by accepted standards, but simply racist.

Yudell, Michael, Dorothy Roberts, Rob DeSalle, and Sarah Tishkoff. "Taking race out of human genetics." *Science* 351, no. 6273 (2016): 564-565.

See e.g. Carter, Robert, Samuel Cheuvront, C. Harrison, Larry Proctor, Kathryn Myburgh, Michael Brown, and Robert Malina. "Success, race and athletic performance." *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education* 4, no. 3 (2010): 207-229

Skinner, James S., Artur Jaskólski, Anna Jaskólska, Joanne Krasnoff, Jacques Gagnon, Arthur S. Leon, D. C. Rao, Jack H. Wilmore, and Claude Bouchard. "Age, sex, race, initial fitness, and response to training: the HERITAGE Family Study." *Journal of applied physiology* 90, no. 5 (2001): 1770-1776.

Yudell et al.

Why are there so many Black football players and so few Black people in managerial positions in football?

This is consistent with economic theories of discrimination. Economists have long argued that discrimination in a business environment is costly for the business itself, because the business is denied access to talent. Where this process is clearly visible, discrimination will be competed away. This is what has happened in professional football, as it has in many other professional sports. The performance of Black players on the pitch was plain for all to see, so any prejudices could be shown to be false. Any club unwilling to accept the evidence could continue to discriminate, but only at the cost of a weakened talent pool from which to draw. For any club this represented a costly strategy, and so while in the early years of Black professional football in England there were clubs that would not hire Black players, this situation did not last.

Management is different, in that the contribution of managers of all kinds cannot be followed in the same way as the performance of a player on the pitch. Management activities often taken place in private setting, and often involve complex decisions with long term consequences. Hence inferring managerial ability is difficult. Moreover, some have even argued that managers frequently make little difference. Hence, it is much easier for discrimination to persist in the market for managers.

To examine this further, the next section examines the career progression funnel in more detail.

The progression from player to management

Career progress can be measured by analyzing the composition of professional club management in 2021 and linking it to player careers. Advancement in professional football can be extremely rapid – examples in the data include Wayne Rooney, Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard, and Lee Bowyer, all of whom moved quickly to achieve managerial posts. The Transfermarkt data provides a complete record of all players who appeared in the EPL or EFL between 2004 and 2021 (over 11,000 individuals). Of these, 545 (5%) appeared in at least one management position over that period. However, the progress of Black players from this era was negligible.

To illustrate this, consider the group of management positions described in Table 4 above: positions typically associated with professional playing experience. 392 of these 1051 positions (37%) were taken by individuals who were active professional players in the four English divisions between 2004-21 (the remainder of these positions being filled largely by former professional players who retired prior to 2004). Table 7 below is the analogue of Table 4.

Table 7: Administrative positions typically associated with professional playing experience in English clubs (EPL and EFL) in 2021, occupied by former EPL and EFL players from the period 2004-20 (source: Transfermarkt)

Table 7 shows that just 35 positions out of the 392 recorded (9%) were held by Black players. If race were irrelevant to career progression, then given that around 35% of all players in this period were Black, one would expect that around 140 of the positions would have been occupied by former Black players. In fact, the number is only 35 – one quarter of that number. This is a very large difference.

80% of these roles listed in Table 7 could be classified further into one of three groups:

those senior coaching roles- manager, assistant manager, caretaker manager, player manager.

- (i) Lesser coaching – any role entailing the word “coach”
- (ii) Scouting - any role entailing the word “scout”
- (iii) This classification is not exact, since job titles are not uniform across clubs, but it does provide a general impression.

Of the senior coaching roles, 6% of the posts were held by former Black players. In either lesser coaching or scouting roles, less than 2% were held by former Black players. While the absence of Black people from senior club management has been the focus of much attention, this suggests that the bigger problem may lie at the lower levels. If former Black players are not progressing into scouting and junior coaching jobs, it is reasonable to conclude that changing the culture within clubs will remain challenging.

Table 8 below concerns those former players from 2004 to 2020 who entered positions for which a playing career is not generally considered necessary (the analogue to Table 5 above).

FUNCTION	NUMBER OF POSITIONS	Black	%Black
Assistant Manager	120	17	14%
Goalkeeping Coach	72	0	0%
Manager	70	4	6%
Caretaker Manager	21	2	10%
Scout	14	0	0%
Academy Manager	11	1	9%
Chief Scout	10	0	0%
Loan Player Manager	9	3	33%
Club Representative	8	1	13%
Technical Coach	7	1	14%
Youth coach	6	0	0%
Development Coach	6	1	17%
Academy Goalkeeping Co-ordinator	4	0	0%
Technical Director	4	1	0%
Sporting Director	4	0	25%
Advisor	3	0	0%
Head Of Academy Coaching	3	1	0%
Director Of Development	2	0	50%
Director Of Youth Department	2	0	50%
Academy Staff	2	1	50%
Strategic Advisor	1	1	0%
Strategic Player marketing manager	1	1	0%
Head of Scouting	1	0	0%
Individual Coach	1	0	100%
Director of Professional Football	1	0	0%
Chief Instructor	1	1	0%
Youth Chief Scout	1	0	0%
Youth Scout	1	0	0%
Head of Soccer School	1	0	0%
Scout Goalkeeping	1	0	0%
Director Of Football	1	0	0%
Head Of Football Operations	1	0	0%

Table 8: Support positions which do not typically require experience as a professional player in English clubs (EPL and EFL) in 2021, occupied by former EPL and EFL players from the period 2004-20 (source: Transfermarkt)

The 13 positions in total taken by former players is a much smaller percentage of the total (just 11%) than for those positions in which playing experience is generally considered a prerequisite. The fact that 23% of these positions were held by former Black players might be considered a much more encouraging outcome, but in fact the numbers are so small that little reliance can be placed on them. In the category with the largest number of former players (fitness coach), none of the employees were Black.

In the Executive, leadership and ownership category, only five former player from 2004-2020 appear, and they are all related to one club- the takeover of Salford City by the former Manchester United stars, Gary Neville, Nicky Butt, Paul Scholes, Phil Neville and Ryan Giggs.

In summary, this section illustrates three points about professional football management. First, to the extent that football is exceptional because of the disproportionate representation of Black people relative to the general population, Black players are far less likely to progress to managerial positions, even when these positions are typically reserved for former players. Under-representation in this first group of occupations should be considered relative to the very large share of Black professional players in the game (35% or more).

Second, Black people are under-represented in occupations that are generic rather than specific to the sport or specifically require professional playing experience. Former players do still enter these occupations, but they do not monopolise them in the way that former players control the first group. This means that the relevant comparison lies somewhere between the proportion of Black people in the wider UK population (5%) and the share of Black players in English professional football (35% or more). This second group of occupations can be further subdivided into two subgroups – general support functions and senior management/ ownership functions. While there is evidence of underrepresentation in both subgroups, the extent is greatest in the latter, more senior subgroup. These results reflect both the general issue of impediments to advancement that the Black population faces in all walks of life and extremely limited opportunities for Black people in senior management positions.

FUNCTION	NUMBER OF POSITIONS	Black	%Black
Fitness Coach	7	0	0%
Kit Manager	1	1	100%
Medical Director of Physiotherapy	2	0	0%
Physiotherapist	1	0	0%
Conditioning Coach	1	1	100%
Sports Scientist	1	1	100%
	13	3	23.1%

Qualifications

When black footballers were breaking into the professional games in the 1970s and 80s, claims about their alleged deficiencies, on or off the field, were commonly expressed, more often in private than in public (some of the public comments were cited at the beginning of this report). Today we recognize these comments as racist, in part because we have the evidence of our own eyes to contradict them. No doubt racist sentiments continue to be expressed in private, but is deemed unacceptable in public discourse.

Racist characterizations of Black people in relation to management positions are much harder to confront, since management activities themselves are difficult to observe and to quantify. Thus when we observe under-representation of Black people in management positions, there are many who resort to racist stereotypes about ability, interest, application and so on. Most people deny that they entertain such views, and indeed, unconscious racial bias can also be a potent force in restricting opportunity.

It is possible, at least, to provide some quantification of the commitment of Black players to pursuing a career in team management. At the end of the 1990s UEFA introduced its coaching licencing scheme, which has three levels: "B", "A", and "Pro". The FA has been running the scheme since the turn of the millienium, and while it does not publish a list of graduates, less than 500 coaches have graduated from their UEFA Pro Licence programme. A list of 309 named graduates was compiled from an internet search. Many of the graduates include famous names from football management such as Arsene Wenger, Sven Goran Eriksson and Sam Allardyce. Of the 309, 43 were Black (14%).

From this list of Pro License graduates, 94 were active players in the EPL or EFL period 2004-2021. The Pro License is an elite qualification, and graduating players in this list include people such as Gareth Southgate, Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard. Of these players, 23% were Black. By contrast, there were

<https://thebootroom.thefa.com/about/news/uefa-pro-licence-graduates-celebrate-their-achievements>

220 former players from the period 2004-2021 who reached the senior coaching roles by 2021 (manager, assistant manager, caretaker manager, player manager), and only 12% of them were Black.

Of the 94 UEFA Pro Licence holders who played in 2004-21 period, three quarters (71) held management positions in the EPL or EFL in 2021. Of these, 16 (23%) were Black. 17 of them held the position of Manager, 30 held the position of Assistant Manager. While only one Manager (Darren Moore) was Black, 8 of the Assistant Managers (27%) were Black.

One implication that can be drawn from this analysis is that where black players hold qualifications such as the UEFA Pro Licence, they are more likely to be able to make progress in management jobs. The most plausible explanation for the contrast in progress is that qualifications such as these represent objective criteria which can overcome prejudice.

A study by Steven Bradbury of Loughborough University published 2014, using data collected until 2012, found that BME representation among UEFA Pro Licence holders was only 6.4% - significantly lower than the percentage today. The study found that only 3.4% of senior coaching positions were held by BME coaches. Thus there would appear to have been some limited progress since 2012. To the extent that there has been progress since 2012, it would appear that the most powerful route is through formal qualifications such as the UEFA Pro Licence.

That hardly refutes the fact considerable problems remain. In 2020, a group of football organizations, including about half of EPL and EFL clubs, adopted a "Football Leadership Diversity Code" which committed its signatories to achieving percentage targets for Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage among new hires: 15% for senior leadership and team operations positions, and 25% for men's coaching—a discrepancy in goals that in itself is a reflection of the problem. These modest targets were watered down by allowing clubs to adjust their target "based on local demographics". The FA published a progress report at the end of 2021, which showed limited progress in meeting even these modest targets. Performance was measured in relation to the percentage of new hires from the target group. In the EPL, 8 out of 18 clubs reported zero diversity hires in senior leadership, 4 out of 19 reported zero diversity hires in team operations and 9 out of 17 reported zero diversity hires in coaching. Only six clubs reported meeting the percentage target for team operations, and only four in coaching.

UEFA licence qualifications are highly respected and, as a practical matter, it is not unreasonable to suggest that any professional footballer seeking to have a career in management should undertake professional training. This applies equally to Black players as to all other players. The evidence that the UEFA Pro Licence qualification seems to present a particular advantage to Black players should not lead one to conclude that getting qualifications is a panacea for eliminating discrimination. Rather, it seems more like the all too familiar pattern that groups facing discrimination suffer – you have to be twice as good as the rest just to get a chance..

Policy implications

The main purpose of this paper is the analysis of Black representation among players and management in English professional football. The results should be deeply troubling to anyone who supports diversity, equity and inclusion. While a detailed policy response to these facts is beyond this paper, three conclusions seem worthy of further consideration:

(i) There is a need for a body exclusively dedicated to representing the interests of Black players in 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.

(ii) Voluntary codes such as the one created by the FA are not enough. Voluntary regulation makes it too easy for clubs to sit back and find excuses for failure to make progress. This paper shows that the scale of the problem is huge- a proportionate response is needed. 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.

(iii) There is a need for more 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, while they are still players, would also be of value.

The fact that many clubs have chosen not to sign up to the code in the first place demonstrates the scale of the challenge: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-9079671/Only-27-72-EFL-clubs-foursides-League-Two-signed-FAs-diversity-code.html>

Conclusions

This paper has documented the continuing underrepresentation of Black people in English football management. This is despite the remarkably high presence of Black players in the game, and the near universal practice of hiring former players into football management. The paper shows that football clubs in England not only recruit very few Black players as a proportion of all football management staff, but that the Black population is not represented in those managerial functions in which playing experience is less likely to be a relevant qualification.

Black players have taken advantage of formal training schemes, such as the UEFA Pro Licence, which has enabled them to achieve a larger presence in senior positions, but progress remains patchy. While initiatives such as the Football Leadership Diversity Code are to be welcomed, they are modest in relation to the scale of the problem, and so far have shown only limited progress.

Conclusions

Appendix 1: Transfermarkt data

Transfermarkt is one of the most reputable sources of player information on the web. It provides a comprehensive listing of professional players around the world going back to 2004. The database currently includes over 350,000 individual players, of whom over 11,000 appeared at least once in a league game of the Premier League or the English Football League since 2004. This list is comprehensive. Transfermarkt provides detailed player histories and an estimate of player value, now deemed so reliable that it is frequently used in the player transfer negotiations. Transfermarkt's information on management positions is not comprehensive, but it provides a large sample which can be used to analyse the racial profile of club management at a more detailed level than any previous research.

Appendix 2: Defining "Black"

All racial classifications are controversial. Arguably the least controversial is to use a self-reported definition, such as the classification used in the UK Census (see Table A1 below).



Table A1: Self-reported ethnicity, England and Wales, 2011 Census

How individuals perceive themselves and how others see them can differ widely. Racial prejudice and discrimination, by definition, operate through the perceptions of others. For the purposes of identifying Black players in this research, I relied on the classification provided to me by BFP which in turn is consistent with the groups identified under Black, Mixed White/Black African and Mixed White/Black Caribbean in Table A1. Thus it does not include the different Asian or Arab heritages defined in the Census.

It is obvious that people with these ancestries are significantly underrepresented as player in English professional football. This presents another, different set of issues in relation to discrimination and prejudice, which deserve to be given their own treatment rather than simply lumped together with the issues discussed in this report.

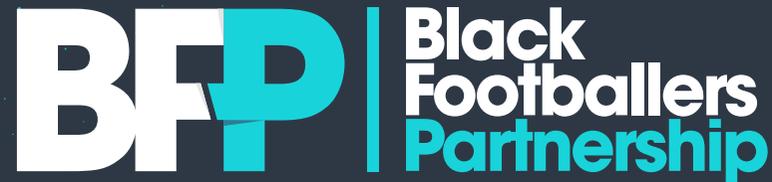
ETHNICITY	NUMBER	%
Asian	4,213,531	7.5
Bangladeshi	447,201	0.8
Chinese	393,141	0.7
Indian	1,412,958	2.5
Pakistani	1,124,511	2
Asian Other	835,720	1.5
Black	1,864,890	3.3
Black African	989,628	1.8
Black Caribbean	594,825	1.1
Black Other	280,437	0.5
Mixed	1,224,400	2.2
Mixed White/Asian	341,727	0.6
Mixed White/Black African	166,974	0.3
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	426,715	0.8
Mixed Other	289,984	0.5
White	48,209,395	86
White British	45,209,395	80.5
White Irish	531,087	0.9
White Gypsy/Traveller	67,680	0.1
White Other	2,485,942	4.4
Other	563,696	1
Arab	230,600	0.4
Any Other	333,096	0.6
All	56,075,912	100

About the author

Stefan Szymanski is the Stephen J. Galetti Professor of Sport Management at the University of Michigan. Prior to moving there in 2011, he was a 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.

A portrait of Stefan Szymanski, a man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the left. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter.

Stefan
Szymanski



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.

Eartha Pond - An Independent member of the FA Women's Board and former player for Chelsea, Everton, Charlton and Tottenham Hotspur.

Michael Johnson - England U21 coach and former player for Birmingham City and Derby County. He co-founded Football's Black Coalition.

Delroy Corinaldi - A football supporter and social entrepreneur who works with a number of organisations to deliver impactful change. He co-founded the Financial Inclusion Centre and sits as trustee for national charities.