

Press Release

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Black Former Players Find the Management Career Ladder Missing its First Rungs

Today the Black Football Partnership a membership organisation of present and former black players publishes their annual review of the Professional game in England and Wales. The report shows:

1. No Real Change

The number of Black former players hired in ANY managerial or executive role is little different to last year.

2. The Established Career Ladder is Missing Rungs for Black former Players

The traditional route for former players to earn their managerial stripes is to start at the bottom of the football pyramid, build a cv and move up the leagues. However, for Black former players the hiring rate at League 2 is worse than any other league, making career progression all the more difficult.

3. The FA takes Comfort in vague and misleading data

The FA's Football Leadership Diversity Code appears to give comfort through limited, self selected, data reporting. The results are partial, vague and provide only a partial, and unusually rosy, picture of the state of play. Our more detailed data shows a different picture.

With no significant change in black management-related recruitment between 2021 - 2023, broken rungs on the career ladder, and reliance on vague and partial data, BFP is calling on the game to get around the table with Black Former and Current Players to develop a meaningful partnership to achieve change.

BFP's 2023 Report shows:

Black players are not getting jobs off the pitch:

- No significant change in management numbers:
- The number of management-related positions held by black employees has risen by 8 from 49 individuals out of 1338 (3.7%) in 2022 to 57 individuals out of 1304 (4.4%) in 2023. All within the margin of error.
- New black hires barely increased:
- The number of new black hires in the previous 12 months changed from 21 out of 325 (6.5%) new positions to 26 out of 379 (6.9%)

The Traditional Career Ladder is Missing a Few Rungs for Black Former Players

- Former Players often start at the bottom and work their way up:
- But, League two has the least opportunities for Black Players; black employees are most likely to be found in the Championship (11 out of 165 new roles - 9.5%) and least likely to be found in League Two (3 out of 68 new roles - 4.4%).

The FA Find Comfort in Partial, Vague, Self Selecting Data

- The lack of concrete, evidenced, progress is in contrast to the optimistic note struck by the FA's Football Leadership Diversity Code which says that "clubs continue to exceed the target for recruitment of senior "Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage coaches."
- The reality is different when more detailed and comprehensive data are looked at. All of the figures listed in the Szymanski Report 2023 can be identified with named individuals holding specific jobs. The FLDC is opaque.

Commenting on the report, Professor Stefan Szymanski said:

'My report from 2022 to 2023 strikingly points to no evidence of significant career progression change for black employees off the pitch despite the various initiatives the game has trumpeted. Even the well-intentioned Football Leadership Diversity Code strikes an optimistic note when nothing much has changed.'

Chris Hughton, Ghana national manager and former premier league and championship manager said:

'I've been a player, coach and manager for many decades and the lack of black representation off the pitch continues to be a ingrained problem, despite the many initiatives I've seen at the LMA, PFA and now the FA Leadership Diversity Code.'

'I love the game and to see the evidence that black talented up and coming managers and coaches struggle to get on the first rung of the ladder in league two and one to build meaningful careers is disappointing. The owners and the people running the game are sincere about change but the numbers/statistics say it is not working. The game needs to engage with all potential new stakeholders to bring the changes that we all want to see.'

Delroy Corinaldi, executive director of BFP said:

'We are an evidence-based organisation because we know the game understands numbers. This numbers are stark. The game is in danger of being a one-in one-out employer of black talent even when black coaches are qualified to do the roles after contributing so much to the game as players.'

'We are ready to roll our sleeves up and help the game turn its actions into words. We hope the game is willing to do the same so that next years forgives are different.'