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Report

“Black NFL Quarterbacks’ Attrition
and
Unequal Pay”

By

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Introduction

“If you ever needed the Lord before,
Shore do need him now”

That’s from a jubilee song we used to sing in the sanctified church I grew up in. Can I go ahead and adapt the lyric? If Black people ever needed to demand to get theirs, they sho’ do need to—right now. Just outside the span of my lifetime, with the reintroduction of Black men to major league baseball in 1947, Black folk have been infatuated with the prospect of leveling up in professional sport. There is this idea that athletics may be the most likely path to lifting oneself out of poverty, out of disenfranchisement, out of the ghetto. While this is certainly not true, and while it is almost infinitely easier to become a brain surgeon than to become a NBA superstar or the next Patrick Mahomes, brain surgeons and epidemiologists don’t appear in the “hood” very often and they are certainly not associated with bling and glam.

Meantime, our most recent mistreatment by the government in a natural disaster presents us with our latest opportunity to “Wake Up!” Mere days into the daily computation of confirmed cases and deaths by way of infections with the Coronavirus, the numbers began to add up. Black folk in America contracted the disease and were being killed by COVID-19 at rates significantly higher than our representation in the population. This was not surprising to anyone who had lived during the hurricane named Katrina. Abraham Lincoln said, “Now we are engaged in a great Civil War, . . . ” Black folks have got to respond to these undeniable evidences of our exploitation, disenfranchisement, and dehumanization in this American system like it’s a great Civil War. If nothing else, it is time for the American people to embrace this notion: This American system will not reform itself.

Black NFL Quarterbacks’ Attrition

I’m betting no one will counter my argument that no public enterprise more emphatically executes the war against Black men like the National Football League (NFL). As a metaphor for the American war against our men of the darker hue, the NFL presents such a confusing picture—the battle on the field most often pits one brother hitting the other brother with devastating ferociousness, while the game protects the only White man on the field from hits by Black gladiators.

The players on the field, the fans in the stands, the mobile viewers, and the at-home spectators viewing via Direct TV, have all bought into the big lie. While many may now understand that the original stance governing the NFL as promoted by William Marshall, a previous owner of the Washington Redskins, prohibiting Black quarterbacks, most of us do not know that today there is a cap on the number of Black quarterbacks—Black starting quarterbacks.

Yet, this cap is so easily observed with very little study of the league’s operation. What we don’t know is how we (the league) arrived at the limit of six and who is responsible for the management of that operational objective. The most recent NFL season and the aftermath is the strongest evidence of the league’s determination to adhere to this ceiling on Black quarterbacks. In spite of all the coordinated efforts to hold the numbers down, during the 2019 season, eleven (11) Black

men filled the role of starting quarterback in the NFL. At the end of the season, this required rather extreme action to push the number back down to six. This coordinated effort required the league to:

1. Fire the statistically second most prolific quarterback in the history of the NFL. Replace that Brother with another Brother, but with half the talent, distracting from media scrutiny.
2. Fire the statistically most prolific quarterback and passer in the 44-year history of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after just 72 games in five seasons.
3. Relegate a 27-year old quarterback to back-up in favor of a 39-year-old quarterback, signed as a free agent. Philip Rivers compiled 52 touchdowns and 32 interceptions in his most recent 32 games, while Jacoby Brissett compiled 40 TDs and 13 interceptions in his 32 professional starts. Which coach prefers a touchdown-to-turnover ratio of 1.62 to 3.07?

Table 1 shows the White quarterbacks in starting quarterback roles during 2019:

Table 1.—White Quarterbacks in Starting Roles, 2019

No.	Draft Rank	Name	Age at First Start	Age at End of 2020	Yards Per Pass Attempt	TD-to-INT Ratio	Yards per Run Attempt
1	1	EManning	23	38	7.02	1.53	1.80
2	1	Stafford	21	32	7.20	2.02	3.44
3	1	Mayfield	23	25	7.40	1.26	4.06
4	1	Goff	22	26	7.61	2.21	1.92
5	2	Trubisky	23	26	6.64	1.90	5.49
6	2	Wentz	24	28	6.91	2.85	3.81
7	2	Mariota	24	27	7.48	1.98	5.78
8	3	Darnold	21	23	6.89	1.39	2.60
9	3	Ryan	23	35	7.51	2.25	3.10
10	4	Rivers	25	39	7.81	2.02	1.67
11	6	Jones	22	23	6.60	2.16	6.20
12	8	Tannehill	24	32	7.40	1.91	4.48
13	10	Rosen	21	23	5.67	0.63	5.81
14	18	Flacco	23	35	6.75	1.66	2.33
15	24	Rodgers	25	37	7.75	4.67	5.08
16	32	Brees	23	41	7.62	2.41	1.57
17	35	Dalton	24	33	7.10	1.92	3.10
18	36	Carr	23	30	6.88	3.16	2.83
19	42	Lock	23	24	6.54	2.33	4.28
20	62	Garrappolo	25	29	8.28	2.19	1.23
21	76	Rudolph	24	25	6.24	1.44	2.00
22	102	Cousins	24	31	7.66	2.39	0.83
23	178	Minshew	23	24	6.96	3.50	5.13
24	199	Brady	24	43	7.47	3.15	1.71
25	207	Driskel	25	27	6.01	2.16	5.98
26	250	Fitzpatrick	23	38	6.87	1.42	4.54

No.	Draft Rank	Name	Age at First Start	Age at End of 2020	Yards Per Pass Attempt	TD-to-INT Ratio	Yards per Run Attempt
27	Undrafted	Hodges	23	24	6.64	0.63	0.67
28	Undrafted	Keenum	25	32	6.87	1.72	3.77
29	Undrafted	KAllen	22	24	6.90	1.38	3.38

Note the following about Table 1 statistics:

- Only 14 of 29 White quarterbacks had seven or more yards per throw.
- Fourteen of the 29 White quarterbacks had a TD-to-INT ratio of greater than 2:1; Brady, Carr, Minshew, and Rodgers had a ratio above 3:1, Rodgers 4.67.
- Only two White quarterbacks—Rodgers and Mariota—achieved more than 5 yards per run and 7 yards per throw.

In contrast, consider Table 2 carefully and the record of individual performance by the eleven Black NFL quarterbacks in starting roles during the 2019 season.

Table 2.—Black Quarterbacks in Starting Roles, 2019

No.	Draft Rank	Name	Age at First Start	Age at End of 2020	Yards Per Pass Attempt	TD-to-INT Ratio	Yards per Run Attempt
1	1	Murray	22	23	6.87	3.78	5.55
2	1	Winston	21	26	7.59	1.49	4.21
3	1	Newton	22	31	7.48	2.22	5.15
4	10	Mahomes	22	25	8.56	4.44	5.55
5	12	Watson	22	25	8.07	2.93	5.68
6	15	Haskins	22	23	6.72	1.00	5.05
7	32	Jackson	21	23	7.58	6.00	5.89
8	32	Bridgewater	22	28	7.15	1.68	3.26
9	75	Wilson	24	32	7.87	3.62	5.55
10	91	Brissett	24	28	6.51	3.08	3.97
11	135	Prescott	23	27	7.62	3.28	5.07

Take note of the following concerning Table 2 statistics:

- Eight of the 11 Black quarterbacks averaged 7 or more yards per throw.
- Eight of the 11 Black quarterbacks had a TD-to-INT ratio of greater than 3:1.
- Eight of the 11 Black quarterbacks had yards per run of greater than 5 yards--72.7 %.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate why Black Americans operate under the assumption that “to make it, you’ve got to be at least twice as good as a White man.” The NFL is the only proof you need if you never knew.

This begins with the hiring process, of course. Table 3 reveals that efforts to limit Blacks begin at the entry level.

Table 3.—Drafting Round of White Versus Black Quarterbacks Who Started in 2019

Drafting Round	White	Black
#1	4	3
1st round	15	8
2d round	5	0
Rounds 3-7	6	3
Undrafted	3	0
Totals	29	11

In spite of efforts by Mel Kiper, Jr. and the other draft gurus to control the number of Black quarterbacks who are drafted, the NFL is consistently forced to draft Black quarterbacks in the first round based on performance at a significant football event, such as the national championship game. Drafted in the first round means that a quarterback is given the job. That means that a Jalen Hurts sitting in the 53rd position in the 2019 NFL Draft, is completely unusual and rare. Undoubtedly, it also means that Hurts should have been the first quarterback taken, not Joe Burrow. Being a one-season wonder would only work for a White quarterback, particularly when judged against Hurts four-year record at Alabama and Oklahoma and on the heels of Kyler Murray’s 2018 season at Oklahoma and this past season in the NFL with the Arizona Cardinals.

Forced to select Black quarterbacks in the first round, the NFL is circumspect in then eliminating every other possible quarterback in rounds 2-7. This current snapshot—the 2019 season only—is revealing. Just three Black starting quarterbacks were drafted in rounds two through seven and there were absolutely no undrafted Black quarterbacks.

While the NFL has mastered the techniques required to limit the hiring possibilities for Black quarterbacks without condemnation from the fans, the media, or the government, the reality is that they can only do so by breaking the law. In this country, it is wrong and against the law to limit the ability of any person to hold a job on the basis of race, religion, or gender. In other words, if a woman could play the position of quarterback or defensive tackle, then the NFL cannot comply with the law and prevent that female from taking a job because she might get her monthly cycle in the middle of a game. The NFL, however, has convinced many fans—Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian—that White quarterbacks are better and running quarterbacks cannot lead the to the Super Bowl.

The activity during this 2020 off-season, during the first death peak of the Coronavirus pandemic, has been resolutely successful in diminishing the number of Black quarterbacks for the 2020 season—if we should happen to have a season. Early attrition is one of the handiest and most often means of limiting the number of Black men in professions in America. I have witnessed the effects of early attrition since my early days as a professional while in the military. Corporations are constantly refining the ability to bring in Blacks to avoid not “looking like America,” then making sure to push Blacks out—early—and recruit the next batch of unsuspecting victims. Ironically, a number of corporations have habitual relationships with HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) to facilitate this charade.

You would have to be a fool to believe that Michael Vick, Vince Young, Josh Freeman, Robert Griffin, Tyrod Taylor, Tavaris Jackson, Donovan McNabb, Cam Newton, and Jameis Winston could all be pushed out of their job as a NFL starting quarterback because they could not learn the plays, read defenses or—could not play anymore.

The actions taken by the NFL to force early attrition is part of the old adage Black men also know about from childhood: “Last hired, first fired.”

The Unequal Pay of Jameis Winston

Before we conclude this report however we must review the most transparent instance of the practice of Black men being paid as little as only 70% of what White men get paid. Like firing high performing players because of their dark skin, enforcing a pattern of paying Black men 70% of the pay to White men doing the same job is breaking the law. And, it is not hard to prove. The salaries of NFL players are public record. Before we look at the actual numbers, we should think about how these young men allow themselves to get punked like this.

Perhaps writing at a different time, there would be some merit in suggesting some sort of collective effort, punctuated by protest and lobbying to the NFL authorities—the owners—or alternatively to elected officials. Admittedly, following the Civil Rights model has a certain sentimental appeal. This is 2020, however, and the Coronavirus pandemic should make it clear that begging for mercy will not work. Each individual quarterback, each individual NFL worker being shorted by the NFL by not being drafted in the seven rounds, nor given the opportunity to pursue a position as an undrafted free agent has sufficient grounds to bring litigation against the NFL for breaking the law. Don't worry, figuring out the exact statute is not your job.

Leading the way in this suite of lawsuits alleging civil and criminal liability should be some of the biggest stars in the game of football. Jameis Winston has a track record of five years performing at a high level. Fired by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and replaced by Tom Brady, this is a stunningly transparent instance of the League's normal practice of collusion to restrain Black quarterbacks' ability to engage in interstate commerce. As a monopoly, the NFL continues to refuse to operate in deference to the law and Congress and has insisted that it operates within the law.

When Jameis Winston signed a contract with the New Orleans Saints—a one-year contract with no signing bonus for \$1.1 million—he let the league off the hook. Winston need not have a single iota of social consciousness about the exploitation of Black people, but he is obligated to provide for his family and gain as much material wealth for their health and welfare as possible. In that respect, Jameis Winston failed his family. Unlike what he would claim to do in respect to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers—give them 100% and be the last player out of the building—Jameis Winston failed to look out for the best economic and financial interests of his family. By not doing his homework, he is therefore a disgrace to his family for not figuring out a reasonable game plan to get a max contract as an NFL starting quarterback. That was his responsibility. I do not know Winston like that so I cannot just say “tough love.” However, every Black man who accepts such maltreatment and mistreatment and with self-professed humility only makes it more difficult for the next.

You might ask, “How badly was Winston treated?” More than that specific question is the reality that White men take pleasure in exploiting Black men, in ripping them off as they grin and say, “Yassuh, boss!”

We are going back to the year the NFL recognized it had to implement “Operation Hold a Black Quarterback Down—Way Down.” That would be 1999 when three Brothers got selected in the first round of the NFL draft—Donovan McNabb, Akili Smith, and Daunte Culpepper. This was totally unprecedented and was an uncoordinated attack against White hegemony at the quarterback position. It precipitated the coordinated responses that have extended until now and, specifically, to Winston’s firing. We will only look at number one draft choices and will go back to just one year prior to 1999 to include Peyton Manning. We will compare each quarterback drafted in the number one position of the NFL draft since 1998 with respect to their first 70 games.

Table 4.—Key Statistics for NFL Quarterbacks Drafted in the Number 1 Position After 1998

Age at 70 Games	Names	Total Games	Total Completions	Total Pass Attempts	Total Yards	Total TDs	Total INTs	Total Sacks	Total Playoff Yards	Rating	Total Running Yards	Playoff TDs
24	Russell	(31) 25	354	680	4,083	18	23	70	657	40	175	1
26	Couch	54	1,025	1,714	11,131	64	67	166	1119	124	556	2
27	David Carr	(71) 70	1,178	1,967	12,843	58	60	237	1385	254	1216	8
28	Alex Smith	(74) 70	1,213	2,072	13,327	73	59	184	1112	197	687	4
27	E Manning	(72) 70	1,265	2,265	14,504	98	74	119	839	109	215	3
26	PManning	70	1,506	2,452	18,002	121	89	96	653	132	455	8
25	Winston	(72) 70	1,563	2,548	19,737	121	88	169	1025	248	1044	10
29	Palmer	70	1,477	2,333	16,746	114	73	118	774	120	215	3
26	Stafford	70	1,693	2,863	19,953	122	81	143	1004	146	436	11
29	Bradford	70	1,554	2,535	16,505	87	53	169	1164	132	281	2
27	Vick	(88) 70	973	1,801	12,050	75	52	195	1200	572	4094	23
26	Newton	70	1,276	2,169	16,246	96	63	165	1227	540	2914	38
27	Luck	70	1,570	2,651	19,078	132	68	156	990	286	1442	14

Table 4 provides important details about each quarterback’s performance. However, we can distill Table 4 to just three primary metrics, which show a significant linkage to winning and to losing. We do this in Table 5.

Table 5.—Key Statistics for Number 1 Drafted Quarterbacks that Contribute to Wins and Losses Over Their First 70 Games

Age at 70 Games	Names	Yards per Pass Attempt	TD-to-INT Ratio	Yards Per Run Attempt
24	Russell	6.00	0.83	4.38
26	Couch	6.49	0.99	4.48
27	David Carr	6.53	1.10	4.79
28	Alex Smith	6.43	1.31	3.49
27	E Manning	6.40	1.36	1.90
26	PManning	7.34	1.45	3.45
25	Winston	7.75	1.49	4.21
29	Palmer	7.18	1.60	1.79
26	Stafford	6.97	1.64	2.99
29	Bradford	6.51	1.68	2.13
27	Vick	6.69	1.88	7.16
26	Newton	7.49	2.13	5.40
27	Luck	7.20	2.15	5.04

Table 6 provides a ranking of selected NFL number 1 draft choice quarterbacks since 1998 with respect to their performance over the first 70 games.

Table 6.—Ranking of 3 NFL Number 1 Draft Choice Quarterbacks Since 1998 for Selected Categories Vis-à-vis Their First 70 Games

Rank	Names	Yards Per Passing Attempt
1	Winston	7.75
2	Newton	7.49
3	PManning	7.34
Rank	Names	Interceptions
1	PManning	89
2	Winston	88
3	Stafford	81
Rank	Names	Total Passing Yards
1	Stafford	19,953
2	Winston	19,737
3	Luck	19,078

We compare only number one draft choices at the quarterback position because it is the fairest direct contrast. Number one draft choices are generally assigned to teams with recent poor performance and are in some early stage of rebuilding. They are forced to play under the most difficult conditions and the extreme majority of opponents will be superior to the talent on their team as early starter. In the four seasons prior to Winston’s arrival, Tampa Bay’s won-loss record was 17-47. In his 70 starts Winston accumulated at 28-42 record. We want to find the most reasonable comparison of first round selections—close in terms of recent history. We easily narrow it to the four previous selections: Mathew Stafford (2009), Sam Bradford (2010), Cam Newton (2011), and Andrew Luck (2012).

We immediately eliminate Luck and Newton—their teams went 38-26 and 29-35, respectively, in the four seasons prior to their entry into the NFL. Both Indianapolis and Carolina strangely went 2-14 in the year preceding their entry earning the number one pick in the draft.

Before drafting Matthew Stafford, the Detroit team compiled a 17-41 record and improved to 31-39 in Stafford’s first 64 games. However, in the immediate first 64 games the team went 22-42 and Stafford’s record was 17-28. In Stafford’s first seventy starts his record was 31-39. Remember, Jameis Winston’s record after seventy starts is 28-42. That’s a difference of just three wins.

We could put Winston side by side with Bradford, but the comparison breaks down because Bradford performed so poorly. In his first five seasons, Bradford managed to start just 49 games and win only 18. Bradford threw 59 touchdowns and averaged only 6.3 yards per throw, which is terrible. In the four seasons prior to Bradford’s arrival, the St. Louis team accumulated just 14 wins. In the five years after Bradford’s arrival the Rams racked up the whopping 18 wins in the games he started.

Clearly that leaves Stafford as an appropriate player to contrast with Winston.

Table 7.—A Comparison of Winston and Stafford Playing Statistics

Names	Com- ple- tions	Total Passing Attempts	Passing Yards	Pass- ing TDs	INTs	Runs	Running Yards	Running TDs	Yards per Comple- tion	TD-to- INT Ratio	Yards per Carry	Comple- tion %
Winston	1,563	2,548	19,737	121	88	248	1,044	10	7.75	1.49	4.21	61.3%
Stafford	1,693	2,863	19,953	122	81	146	436	11	6.97	1.64	2.99	59.1%

There is very little daylight between the performance level of Winston and Stafford. You understand, though—Stafford is “White” and Winston is “Black.” I came to know from observation, and I did not need these numbers to confirm. Winston is a better runner—a much more effective runner than Stafford. Unfortunately for Winston, he has not capitalized in the red zone to score perhaps ten more touchdowns. Also, Winston has almost one additional pass completion per game. That is not to suggest Winston is a more accurate passer, only that he tends to complete more passes against the same number of passes. But, undeniably, Winston is much better at completing pass down the field—say, passes greater than 15 yards downfield. That comparative advantage would play heavily in Winston’s favor given the fact that Stafford first five seasons paired him with an all-time great, Calvin Johnson. Since all things are not equal and favor Winston, he is the more valuable commodity as an NFL starting quarterback and he will be 26 years old at the end of the 2020 season compared to Stafford’s 32.

Why, then, did Stafford make so much more money than Winston and be retained by his team that drafted him number one?

Table 8.—A Comparison of Winston and Stafford Pay
(Millions of Dollars, Rounded)

Names	Playing Seasons	Salaries	Bonuses	Total Pay	% Bonus
Stafford	2008-2013	\$11	\$74	\$84	87%
Winston	2015-2020	\$24	\$23	\$47	49%

You can do the math.

A quick Google check just got me informed—again. Black men make 73% of what White men make for doing the same job. It’s persistent. That’s racism. It doesn’t do any good to name it. But black men obviously claim it. Why would Jameis Winston allow himself to be paid 55% of what Matthew Stafford got paid when they are essentially identical in all respects for computing what they should be paid. And—Winston, at least in one critical area, performed significantly better.

Review Table 8 again. Why is Stafford getting 87% of his pay as a bonus in his first six seasons? I do need to add that I included Winston’s pay for 2020. Don’t get sick. Winston signed a contract with the New Orleans Saints to be a backup, not a starting quarterback, for \$1.1 million. But why would Stafford get paid 87% of his money as a bonus. Is that at this scale, the tax rate for millions is 35% for salaries, while the tax rate for “bonuses” tops out at 22%?

Who’s the Best after 124 Games

Winston and Cam Newton, both performing at the highest levels, allowed themselves to be fired by owners who had just exploited them for large sums of money. It bears repeating that Cam Newton is statistically the second most prolific quarterback in NFL history. Just to give you a sense lets contrast his numbers over the first nine seasons against these so-called legendary quarterbacks. The legendary quarterbacks are measured after 124 games, Newton’s career total.

It is important to note that Russell Wilson passed the 124-game threshold during the 2019 season. Once Wilson reached that milestone, his combined statistics pushed him ahead of Cam Newton. His number of interceptions sets him apart. Before the end of this season Wilson’s status was confirmed—he is statistically the most formidable quarterback through 124 games in NFL history.

Table 9.—Newton’s and Wilson’s NFL Statistics Versus Legendary White Quarterbacks

Names	Won-Loss Record	Total Yards	Total TDs	Yards per Passing Attempt	TD-to-INT Ratio	Yards per Carry	INTs
Newton	68-55-1	33,847	240	7.30	2.22	5.15	108
Brees	70-54	31,978	214	7.37	1.91	1.66	112
PManning	78-46	33,068	250	7.31	1.95	2.75	128
Brady	79-45	30,852	226	7.30	2.33	1.93	97
Wilson	85-39-1	32,763	241	7.89	3.60	5.61	67
Marino	77-47	33003	253	7.50	1.82	0.03	139

Conclusion

The data are sufficient to show what the commentators do not tell fans during the games or Monday through Saturday on all the talk shows. Flooding the public discourse with fantasy about GOAT, notwithstanding that these young Brothers have already demonstrated their lead in any legitimate pecking order. These commentators are generally able to obfuscate the obvious by refusing to credit the run aspect of the quarterback performance. It's too far gone, though. The day of undervaluing the quarterback who happens to be Black and happens to run real well is done. Those touchdowns by running count even more than those through the air. Quarterback touchdown runs are the most positively associated factor with winning—even more positively correlated with winning than interceptions are with losing.

To finish out our report we need to look back at Jameis Winston's poor decision to sign a \$1.1 million dollar contract to practice as a back-up in New Orleans. I believe I got it right—Taysom Hill signed a \$21 million contract with the Saints and he did not score one touchdown in the NFL by age 25. Hill will be 30 at the start of the 2020 season and this is all he has done in three seasons—scored two running touchdowns and six touchdowns in the passing game—as a receiver. As a passer he threw an interception. Right. An interception in 13 pass attempts.

Apparently, Winston never even considered that, if the Miami Dolphins rookie quarterback goes out with an injury during training camp, then he won't be able to take that job. Or that the Saints can use him as an arm during training camp, but then cut him before the season starts claiming he was not a “good fit.” This contract represents a 95% pay cut from the \$20 million Winston reportedly received in Tampa last season. Jameis Winston has no obligation to become socially conscious and fight the power. He does, however, have an obligation to gain as much wealth as he can to put his family in a position of prosperity as possible. I hope he does not feel he can point to his new contract as an example of providing for his family in the best possible way. He missed another opportunity to secure his son's future. Winston got paid \$46 million over the past five seasons. He should have maybe \$25 million? Accepting \$1.1 million is beneath any sense of dignity. Had he laughed at the Saints' offer and publicly insisted on being paid as a starting quarterback at the same level as his White counterparts he would contribute hugely to defeating the NFL's commitment to unequal, low pay for Black quarterbacks. His stand could provide momentum for erasing the 30% deficit in Black men's pay compared to White men doing the same job.

Sources:

Players' performance statistics from www.pro-football-reference.com.

Players' salary information from www.spotrac.com.

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