

# Fired Dolphins Coach Brian Flores Exposes Damning Bill Belichick Texts in NFL Discrimination Lawsuit

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Brian Flores, one of the few Black head coaches in the National Football League's history, was in the middle of interviewing with the New York Giants last week when he learned the team was leading him on. They'd already passed him over for a white man: Brian Daboll.

According to a new class-action lawsuit by Flores alleging racial discrimination within the NFL, "The Giants would likely have gotten away with this most insidious form of discrimination if New England Patriots Coach Bill Belichick had not mistakenly disclosed it to Mr. Flores in the below text messages."

The complaint, filed in Manhattan federal court on Tuesday, lists multiple defendants including the NFL, the Giants franchise, Miami Dolphins, and Denver Broncos. Last month, the Dolphins fired Flores after just three seasons.

The lawsuit also contains screengrabs of text messages between Flores and Belichick, who apparently thought he'd texted Daboll.

"Sounds like you have landed—congrats!" Belichick wrote on Jan. 24.

"Did you hear something I didn't hear?" Flores replied.

"Giants?!?!?" Belichick responded.

"I interview on Thursday," Flores texted. "I think I have a shot at it."

But when Flores asked, "Coach, are you talking to Brian Flores or Brian Daboll," Belichick knew he had egg on his face.

"Sorry—I fucked this up," Belichick replied. "I double checked & I misread the text. I think they are naming Daboll. I'm sorry about that. BB."

Flores' lawsuit, filed on the first day of Black History Month, accuses the NFL of only paying lip service to boosting diversity and hiring Black coaches and managers. The complaint says Flores secured interviews for jobs he'd never receive, and was only called in so teams could meet their requirements under the Rooney Rule, a policy that ensures teams interview diverse candidates for senior-level positions including head coach.

"The NFL remains rife with racism, particularly when it comes to the hiring and retention of Black Head Coaches, Coordinators and General Managers," Flores' filing alleges, adding that the NFL and its 32 teams "have been given every chance to do the right thing."

“Rules have been implemented, promises made—but nothing has changed,” the document continues. “In fact, the racial discrimination has only been made worse by the NFL’s disingenuous commitment to social equity.”

Flores’ complaint says Belichick’s blunder “not only impugns and viciously exposes the sham process to which Mr. Flores was subjected but also stands to indict the Giants’ organizational hiring practices in general.”

“It is impossible to put into words the emotions Mr. Flores felt upon learning that not only would he not be getting the Giants Head Coach job—the job of his dreams—but, more importantly, that he was not even being given serious consideration for the position but being treated as a box to ‘check off’ due to his race,” adds the suit, which was filed by the law firms Wigdor LLP and Elefterakis, Elefterakis & Panek.

“While he would spend countless hours preparing to put his best step forward,” the filing continues, “the white men across the table from him saw and heard only one thing: a formality that had to be observed in order to name Mr. Daboll the Head Coach.”

Flores claims he was also treated as a formality when he interviewed with the Denver Broncos in 2019. At the time, then-General Manager John Elway and CEO Joe Ellis “showed up an hour late” and “looked completely disheveled,” the complaint states, adding that “it was obvious that they had [been] drinking heavily the night before.”

The lawsuit also alleges discrimination from Dolphins bosses, who labeled him “as someone who was difficult to work with.” Flores claims that he was on the outs with Ross and Dolphins brass after he refused to recruit a prominent quarterback, a violation of the NFL’s tampering rules.

Flores alleges Ross invited him to lunch on a yacht and informed him that the unidentified quarterback was arriving at the marina. Flores left immediately and from then on “was treated with disdain and held out as someone who was noncompliant,” the suit says. (According to one reporter, that QB was newly retired Tom Brady.)

“This is reflective of an all too familiar ‘angry black man’ stigma that is often casted upon Black men who are strong in their morals and convictions while white men are coined as passionate for those very same attributes,” the complaint says.

Indeed, despite leading the Dolphins to their first back-to-back winning seasons since 2003, Flores was fired in early January over a supposed lack of collaboration with franchise owner Stephen Ross.

Flores’ lawsuit dropped another bombshell about the Dolphins’ owner: Ross allegedly bribed the coach to “tank” the 2019 season for \$100,000 per loss.

According to the complaint, Ross wanted Flores to intentionally lose games “to put the team in position to secure the first pick in the draft.”

“Then, when the Dolphins started winning games, due in no small part to Mr. Flores’ coaching,” the suit adds, “Mr. Flores was told by the team’s General Manager, Chris Grier, that ‘Steve’ was ‘mad’ that Mr. Flores’ success in winning games that year was ‘compromising [the team’s] draft position.’”

The 40-year-old rising NFL star then had the chance to be the Giants’ first Black coach in the team’s 100-year history.

Flores alleges the Giants had him sit through a Jan. 26 dinner with the Giant’s new GM, Joe Schoen, all the while knowing Daboll had locked down the top spot.

The next day, the lawsuit states, Flores “had to give an extensive interview for a job that he already knew he would not get—an interview that was held for no reason other than for the Giants to demonstrate falsely to the League Commissioner Roger Goodell and the public at large that it was in compliance with the Rooney Rule.”

Flores’ class-action adds that the league is largely “racially segregated and is managed much like a plantation” and that “its 32 owners—none of whom are Black—profit substantially from the labor of NFL players, 70% of whom are Black.”

“The owners watch the games from atop NFL stadiums in their luxury boxes, while their majority-Black workforce put their bodies on the line every Sunday, taking vicious hits and suffering debilitating injuries to their bodies and their brains while the NFL and its owners reap billions of dollars,” the complaint states.

The lawsuit also spells out disturbing statistics that have been known for years: The league’s teams have few Black people in management-level positions.

Only one of 32 NFL teams currently employs a Black head coach (the Pittsburgh Steelers’ Mike Tomlin), while four teams have a Black offensive coordinator, and 11 teams have a Black defensive coordinator. Eight of the 32 teams have a Black special teams coordinator, three have a Black quarterback coach, and six employ a Black general manager.

“God has gifted me with a special talent to coach the game of football, but the need for change is bigger than my personal goals,” Flores said in a statement. “In making the decision to file the class action complaint today, I understand that I may be risking coaching the game that I love and that has done so much for my family and me. My sincere hope is that by standing up against systemic racism in the NFL, others will join me to ensure that positive change is made for generations to come.”