

Brian Flores opens up about racial discrimination lawsuit: 'We gotta change hearts and minds'

 [foxnews.com/sports/brian-flores-racial-discrimination-lawsuit](https://www.foxnews.com/sports/brian-flores-racial-discrimination-lawsuit)

Brian Flores on Tuesday made his first public comments about the class-action lawsuit he filed against the NFL, New York Giants, Denver Broncos and Miami Dolphins, alleging racial discrimination during the hiring process.

Flores appeared on CBS' morning show "CBS Mornings," along with his attorneys Douglas H. Wigdor and John Elefterakis, and said he hopes the filing would "create some change."

"We didn't have to file a lawsuit for the world to know there's a problem from a hiring standpoint in regards to minority coaches in the National Football League. The numbers speak for themselves. We filed a lawsuit so that we can create some change, and that's important to me. We're at a fork in the road right now," he said. "We're either gonna keep it the way it is, or we're gonna go in another direction and actually make some real change where actually changing the hearts and minds of those who make decisions to hire head coaches, executives, etc. We gotta change hearts and minds."

Head coach Brian Flores of the Miami Dolphins takes the field during introductions prior to the game against the New England Patriots at Hard Rock Stadium on Jan. 9, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Florida. (Mark Brown/Getty Images)

In the lawsuit, Flores alleged the Giants told third parties they were hiring Buffalo Bills offensive coordinator as Brian Daboll as their next head coach. Flores pointed to a text message exchange with Bill Belichick, who appeared to think he was texting Daboll and not Flores about getting the job. Flores had yet to actually interview.

Flores said on CBS he was humiliated.

"It was a range of emotions. Humiliation. Disbelief. Anger. I worked so hard to get to where I am in football to become a head coach. For 18 years in this league, to go on what felt like or what was a sham interview. I was hurt," he said, adding he still went to the interview because he still had hope.

He said he thought that some organizations were using the Rooney Rule to check a box.

"The Rooney rule is intended to give minorities an opportunity to sit down in front of ownership, but what I think it's turned into an instance in which guys are just checking the box," Flores said. "And that's been the case. I've been on some interviews in the past where I've had that feeling. There's always no way to know for sure, but you know. I know I'm not alone."

He agreed that companies should have the right to hire the best and most qualified people regardless of race but said he felt like people he knew who are minorities and more than qualified for some openings were being overlooked.

Buffalo Bills offensive coordinator Brian Daboll attends warmups before an NFL divisional playoff football game against the Kansas City Chiefs, Jan. 23, 2022, in Kansas City, Missouri.

"That's very reasonable to me," he said. "At the same time, I know a lot of very capable coaches, executives who are minorities and in a lot of cases are as qualified, more qualified or quite frankly better than their White counterparts. They're not given an opportunity."

In the lawsuit, Flores also alleged that Dolphins owner Stephen Ross told him he would be paid \$100,000 for every loss during his first season in order for the team to tank and get a hire draft pick. Flores also alleged Ross pressured him to recruit a top unnamed quarterback to join the team, but when he refused he was allegedly cast as the "angry Black man" who was difficult to work with.

He said the alleged incidents with the Dolphins led to his ouster.

"This game has done a lot for me. I grew up not far from here in the projects in Brownsville, Brooklyn. I didn't grow up with a lot. This game changed my life. So, to attack the integrity of the game, that's what I felt was happening in that instance and I wouldn't stand for it," he said. "I think it hurt my standing within the organization and ultimately was the reason why I was let go."

Flores said he told the two teams with which he interviewed for their head coaching jobs that he was going to file the lawsuit. He called the lawsuit "bigger than coaching."

"I understand the risks. And, yes, it was a difficult decision, and I went back and forth," he said of filing the lawsuit without having a coaching job. "And like I said, I love coaching. I do. It's something that I'm passionate about. It brings me joy. I love helping young people reach their potential and become the best versions of themselves. I'm gifted to do that."

Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores during the second half of an NFL football game against the New England Patriots, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Florida.

The Giants, Dolphins, Broncos and the NFL all pushed back on Flores' claims.

"We are pleased and confident with the process that resulted in the hiring of Brian Daboll," the Giants' statement read. "We interviewed an impressive and diverse group of candidates. The fact of the matter is, Brian Flores was in the conversation to be our head coach until the eleventh hour. Ultimately, we hired the individual we felt was most qualified to be our next head coach."

The Dolphins added: "We are aware of the lawsuit through the media reports that came out this afternoon. We vehemently deny any allegations of racial discrimination and are proud of the diversity and inclusion throughout our organization. The implication that we acted in a manner inconsistent with the integrity of the game is incorrect. We will be withholding further comment on the lawsuit at this time."

The Broncos called Flores' allegations "blatantly false."

The NFL said: "The NFL and our clubs are deeply committed to ensuring equitable employment practices and continue to make progress in providing equitable opportunities throughout our organizations. Diversity is core to everything we do, and there are few issues on which our clubs and our internal leadership team spend more time. We will defend against these claims, which are without merit."

The Rooney Rule

The NFL says the Rooney Rule was instituted to promote "diverse leadership among NFL clubs to ensure that promising candidates have the opportunity to prove they have the necessary skills and qualifications to excel."

The NFL requires teams to interview at least two diverse candidates from the Career Development Advisory Panel List or a diverse candidate not employed by the team. Teams must interview at least one external minority candidate for any GM or head coaching position.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in the past that updates to the Rooney Rule bolster the previous requirements and "are intended to create additional opportunities for diverse candidates to be identified, interviewed, and ultimately hired when a vacancy becomes available."

After the latest round of head-coaching firings, there was only one Black head coach remaining in the league – the Pittsburgh Steelers' Mike Tomlin.