

Former Dolphins coach Brian Flores talks about lawsuit, alleged racist hiring practices in the NFL: "Humiliation, disbelief, anger"

 [cbsnews.com/news/brian-flores-nfl-lawsuit-racist-hiring-coaches](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/brian-flores-nfl-lawsuit-racist-hiring-coaches)

On the first day of Black History Month, former Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores filed a class-action lawsuit against the NFL and three other teams—alleging several instances of racial discrimination.

Flores, joined by his attorneys Doug Wigdor and John Elefterakis, exclusively told "CBS Mornings" that they didn't need to file a lawsuit for the world to know that there's a diversity hiring problem in the NFL

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

The lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court on Tuesday sought class-action status and unspecified damages from the NFL, the New York Giants, the Miami Dolphins, the Denver Broncos and other unnamed individuals.

Flores was fired last month by Miami after leading the Dolphins to back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 2003. He was scheduled to interview to be the head coach of the Giants. But before their meeting, the lawsuit claims that the Giants had already selected Brian Daboll as their new coach.

The lawsuit showed text messages allegedly sent by New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick to Flores mistakenly congratulating him for landing the Giants coaching job. Flores described what he felt when he realized what he said was happening.

"It was a range of emotions, humiliation, disbelief, anger. I have worked so hard to get where I am in football to become a head coach . Put 18 years in this league, and it was, to go on what was going to be a, what felt like and was a sham interview, I was hurt," Flores said.

According to the lawsuit, the interview was only held to be in compliance with the "Rooney Rule."

The NFL has the Rooney Rule in place to make sure NFL teams interview minority candidates for coaching and general manager positions before making a final hiring decision.

"The Rooney Rule is intended to give minorities an opportunity to sit down in front of ownership, but I think what it's turned into is an instance where guys are checking the box. That been the case," Flores said. "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."

Among the allegations in the lawsuit, Flores claims that the Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross offered to pay him \$100,000 for every loss during the coach's first season because Ross wanted to protect the team's draft pick. Flores said standing up against Ross hurt his standing within the organization and led to his firing.

"This game changed my life. So, to attack the integrity of the game, that is what I felt was happening in that instance. And I would not stand for it," said Flores

He also claims that when he interviewed for the Denver Broncos head-coaching job in 2019, then-General Manager John Elway, and others, arrived to the interview late and hungover. The position was later given to Victor Fangio.

Today, there are three minority head coaches, including one Black man, out of 32 in the league. That's down from eight in 2018. About 70% of players in the NFL are Black.

Flores said that he understands that by filing this lawsuit he may not get another head coaching opportunity in the NFL but it is needed to bring change throughout the league.

"I understand the risks, and yes, it was a difficult decision. I went back and forth. And like I said, I love coaching. I do. It's something that I'm passionate about. It brings me joy. And I love helping young people reach their potential and become the best version of themselves. I'm gifted to do that. But this is bigger than that," he said.

In separate statements, the NFL, Dolphins, Giants, and Broncos all denied the allegations.

NFL Statement:

"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."

NY Giants statement:

"We are pleased and confident with the process that resulted in the hiring of Brian Daboll. 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."

Denver Broncos statement:

The allegations from Brian Flores directed toward the Denver Broncos in today's court filing are blatantly false.

Our interview with Mr. Flores regarding our head coaching position began promptly at the scheduled time of 7:30 a.m. on Jan. 5, 2019, in a Providence, R.I., hotel. There were five Broncos executives present for the interview, which lasted approximately three-and-a-half hours-the fully allotted time-and concluded shortly before 11 a.m.

Pages of detailed notes, analysis and evaluations from our interview demonstrate the depth of our conversation and sincere interest in Mr. Flores as a head coaching candidate.

Our process was thorough and fair to determine the most qualified candidate for our head coaching position. The Broncos will vigorously defend the integrity and values of our organization-and its employees-from such baseless and disparaging claims.

Miami Dolphins Statement:

"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."