

Another thrilling postseason of NFL Football leads us to the anti-climactic two-week wait to crown a champion. The tone has already been set for this year. It was set early, and in Jarad Regano's opinion, a bit too thick. Lovie Smith and Tony Dungy will become the first African-American head coaches to lead their respective teams into the big game. A great honor, and eventually, a great trivia question. Regano says these two superb coaches are being cheated. By not being recognized for their accomplishments on the field this season, and only for their skin color.



### **Super Bowl Coaches Deserve More From Media**

Another thrilling postseason of NFL Football leads us to the anti-climactic two-week wait to crown a champion. Per usual, what lies ahead are endless breakdowns in strategy, sappy vignettes, and the never-ending media week leading up to the big day.

The tone has already been set for this year. It was set early, and in my opinion, a bit too thick. Lovie Smith and Tony Dungy will become the first African-American head coaches to lead their respective teams into the big game. No doubt, both men are surely filled with great pride for their accomplishments in this regard. Are they not being robbed, though, of more acknowledgment of their incredible successes under their job title: NFL head coach? For their rigors and efforts, the casual fan has learned but one fact about both men this week. They are black.

As Tony Dungy walked off the field, staving off a last minute drive by the antagonistic Patriots

and celebrating an AFC Championship, his first question from an on-field reporter touched on the Super Bowl and its two black coaches. Dungy, as classy as always, answered politely and then quickly turned the attention to Peyton Manning. He was proud that his quarterback was able to get over his personal mountain.

Dungy's road to his first Superbowl has been a tough one. After getting Tampa Bay on the NFL map for the first time, many would argue he was sent packing perhaps a year early. Jon Gruden stepped in and swiftly led the Dungy assembled Buccaneers to a Super Bowl title. Dungy graciously moved on to Indianapolis with little fanfare. He has struggled through several tough playoff appearances in which his favored Colts could not close the deal. Last December, he was admirable and strong in going through the hardest thing a parent ever can go through; the loss of a child.

Even after a disastrous 21-3 start against the Patriots on Sunday, the Colts found a way to avoid repeating history. Dungy and the Colts' road to Miami should be celebrated and talked about.

On the other sideline will be Lovie Smith, who is the incumbent NFL Coach of the Year. He is largely responsible for putting Chicago football back on the NFL map. The Bears were the class of the NFC for the majority of the season, and Smith deserves much of the credit. The way he handled the quarterback controversy, or lack there of, was absolutely textbook. He simply would not allow one to exist.

Rex Grossman was about as inconsistent as a signal caller could be. Lovie would not waver on him being "his man." He remained confident that with the Bears' other strengths, Rex was good enough to get his team to the Super Bowl. The way he made a non-issue out of something that everyone else made an issue may very well be the reason Chicago has a chance at a title. Of all cities, Clevelanders should appreciate his leadership. Could you imagine Butch Davis and how he would have handled the '06 Bears? Forget panic attacks, Davis would have stroked out.

## **A Racy Issue**

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We are now in 2007. Maybe I am being somewhat naïve, but two weeks of talk about Dungy and Smith's race will not open new doors for other black head coaches. Those doors should be wide open already. If there is a franchise hiring on color and not talent at this stage of the game, that organization is playing at a huge disadvantage.

Twenty years from now, Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith will be the answer to a great trivia question. For the time being, though, they deserve to be recognized simply for their accomplishments and not their skin color.