



NEWS RELEASE

Leading By Example

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Renowned basketball leaders and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation are opening lanes
Renowned basketball leaders and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation are driving change and opening up lanes through Black Coaches United.

Before he established himself as a premier basketball coach and respected leader, Paul Hewitt was a young coach looking to make his mark.

Hoping to soak up every opportunity he could, Hewitt served as a counselor at the basketball camp of legendary Georgetown coach John Thompson. The Hoyas coach was one of the impactful leaders in all of sports and an advocate for the ascension of Black coaches into leadership roles.

"Seeing coach Thompson and going to his camp was motivation for me," Hewitt recalled. "We need to see diversity like that in our leadership."

Today, Hewitt is the Executive Director and a founding member of Black Coaches United (BCU). The group is made up of some of the biggest names in hoops, including Harvard coach Tommy Amaker, Florida State coach Leonard Hamilton, University of Delaware coach Natasha Adair, and Monumental Basketball's Vice President of Player Engagement John Thompson III, who just so happens to be the son of the coach Hewitt learned under years ago. Visit the [BCU website](#) for a full listing of the founding members and their impressive resumes.

The founders of BCU are among the most respected and accomplished leaders in basketball.

BCU is dedicated to using its collective reach to advocate for change, foster a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for future leaders, and create programs designed to support basketball coaches at all levels of the game, from youth to the pros.

"BCU provides a voice, opportunities and education for minority coaches -- helping to drive not only their advancement, but a better future for the athletes they coach," said Mark Rooks, Vice President of Community Marketing and Sports Matter at DICK'S Sporting Goods. "We're committed to using our resources to help BCU support athletes, coaches and administrators at all levels of the game."

"We're just getting started said Hewitt, who continues to coach with the Los Angeles Clippers' organization. "For DICK'S to do what they're doing, it's a tremendous show of faith in the people running our organization, and we cannot thank them enough."

For years, Hewitt has observed the coaching landscape and noticed an imbalance in the number of qualified Black coaches getting an opportunity to lead a program. The issue, he said, is even more pronounced in women's basketball.

The numbers back that up. According to NCAA statistics, only 18 percent of college basketball coaches during the 2019-2020 season were Black, while nearly half of all players (45 percent) were Black. At the highest level, Division I, 28 percent of coaches were Black, and the majority of players (56 percent) were as well.

In women's basketball, only 17 percent of all college coaches were Black. It's slightly better at the Division I level, yet still only 25 percent compared to 46 percent of the players.

"It's not that there's a lack of qualified people," said Hewitt. "People aren't looking. As we are getting to know the issue more, it's really disheartening, especially on the women's side, for them not to see role models who are Black."

A pipeline of players to the bench can bring knowledge and experience to a program. Hewitt, who is a former player, coached Georgia Tech in the prestigious ACC and steered the Yellow Jackets to the NCAA men's National Championship game in 2004. He also led George Mason and Siena. During his 18-year college coaching career, he racked up an impressive 322-256 record from 1997-2015.

Even if players are not interested in becoming coaches, the life lessons that sports leaders impart on their athletes have a lasting impact and reach far beyond the hardwood. Hewitt knows firsthand the total value of sports from his time as an athlete. He played basketball on scholarship at St. John Fisher College, which coincidentally is the alma mater of Ed Stack, our Executive Chairman & Chief Merchant, who also is a longtime advocate of the power of

sports to change lives and the importance of education.

“I was able to get a college education through sports,” Hewitt said. “That education has opened so many doors for me. I can tell you that so many positive things have come out of being in sports, especially learning how to work together as a team.”

Hewitt, BCU and The DICK’S Sporting Goods Foundation are determined to amplify the voices of Black coaches and open doors that welcome them.

“We’ve seen some things that have slipped over the years,” said Hewitt. “We looked at each other and said, ‘How can we make it better?’ We want to amplify these bright, talented coaches of color and give them an opportunity. We hope to illuminate that blind spot.”

