

Greetings Hiring Committee,

My name is Van Malone, and I serve on the Board of Directors for the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) and as Chairman of the AFCA Minority Issues Committee. I was a four-year letterman at cornerback for the University of Texas, played four years for the Detroit Lions, and served as a football coach at the highest levels of the game for more than two decades at North Dakota State University, the University of North Texas, Texas A&M, the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma State University, Southern Methodist University and Kansas State University, where I currently serve as Assistant Head Coach and Cornerbacks Coach.

I am writing to recommend Paul Markgraff for your team. I had the privilege of working closely with Paul during his involvement as a member of the Minority Coaches Advancement Association (MCAA) and his work with the AFCA Minority Issues Committee, particularly in the examination of racial disparities in head coaching positions within NCAA Division I Football. Paul's earnest endeavor to foster a constructive dialogue on systemic racism, especially amidst the turbulent times following the tragic death of George Floyd, stands as a testament to his internal drive and moral fortitude.

In the aftermath of the aforementioned incident, Paul took the initiative to engage myself and numerous African American football coaches nationwide to cast a light on the glaring hiring discrepancies in the upper echelons of America's revered sport. His inquiries were thoughtful and sensitive, demonstrating a profound respect for the experiences and opinions of those he interacted with. More than merely posing questions, Paul exhibited an unflinching ability to listen, absorb, and report on the stark realities faced by black coaches and professionals at elite programs across the United States.

What distinguishes Paul further is his willingness to transcend mere discussions and venture into the realm of actionable insight. His endeavors went beyond superficial engagement and delved into a genuine quest for understanding the systemic underpinnings of racial disparity in our society. The comprehensive reporting he conducted on behalf of *AFCA Magazine* not only reflected the personal narratives of African American coaches but also highlighted the unequivocal statistical underrepresentation that pervades the professional landscape in our nation.

Paul sincerely views addressing systemic racism not as a fleeting cause but as a fundamental imperative for the healthy advancement of our society. His conviction, coupled with a respectful and open-minded approach to discourse on racial disparities, significantly contributed to widening the scope of understanding and awareness among his peers and the football coaching community.

I am confident that Paul's profound commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, along with his exceptional interpersonal skills and sincere drive for positive change, will make him a valuable asset to your team. I strongly endorse his application and am available as a reference should you desire further information.



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