

Gods of the Gridiron: The Racial Characterization of Quarterbacks in *Sports Illustrated*

Senior Comprehensive Project
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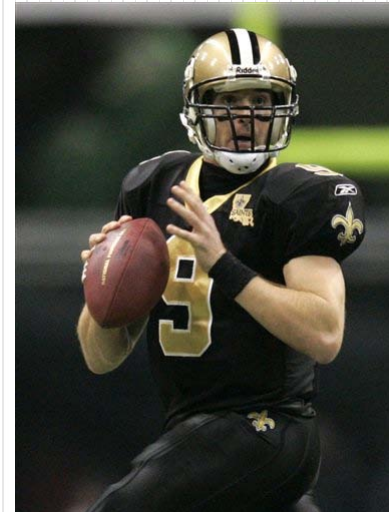
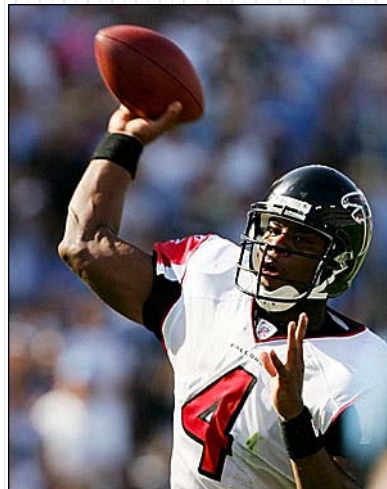
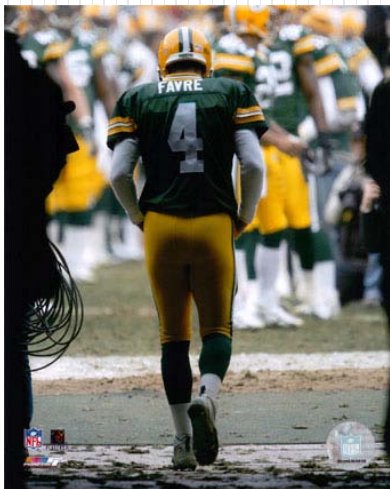
The Quarterback

- In the game of football quarterbacks are the leaders of the offensive side
- They are responsible for overseeing the football field and for calling plays
- They have the most contact with the ball and are typically seen as the most visible and important member of the team
- Dominated by white players
- The Michael Vick Effect

Research Questions:

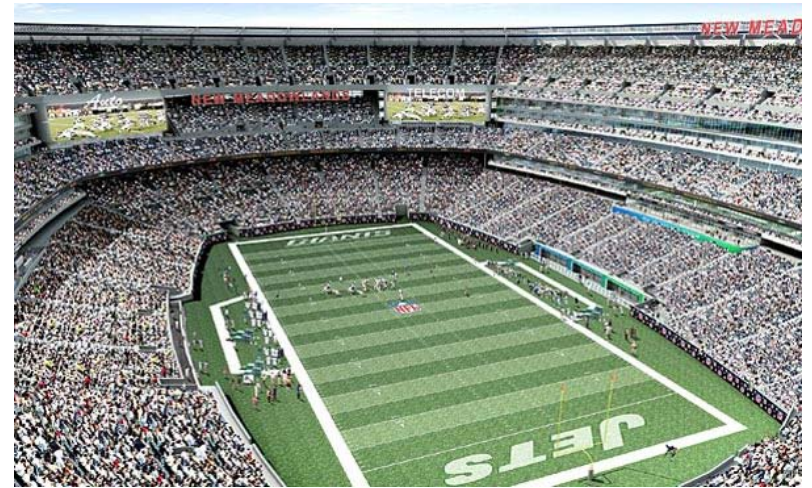
What are the different ways the media frames black and white quarterbacks?

Are white quarterbacks seen as better leaders of an National Football League (NFL) team?



Thesis

- Despite recent media attention focusing on the black quarterback, white quarterbacks are portrayed in *Sports Illustrated* as better leaders on and off the field.



Review of the Literature

Perception of
Black NFL
players:

Dufur &
Feinberg
(2008)

--'walking the
plank'

--Combine



Review of Past Literature

- Bigler & Jeffries (2008)
 - physically stronger
- Niven (2005)
 - 'The Rush Limbaugh Effect'
- Buffington (1999)
 - silence
- Primm, DuBois & Regoli (2005)
 - 'fraternity of white quarterbacks'
- Shermar (2000)
 - No hierarchy

Theory

- *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise and Fall of the Black Athlete* by William Rhoden (2006)
- Dilemma of physical bondage; root of black athletes strength and aggression
- The Conveyor Belt; push into supporting roles
- Inclusion without power; no control over careers
- Alienation; the process consisted of buying and selling

Methodology

Content Analysis

- Date range: January 1st, 2007-December 31st, 2009
- Used 'The Vault' on www.si.com
 - Narrowed archives by sport, NFL football
 - Narrowed by 'cover'
 - Narrowed by description in table of contents
 - Narrowed by writer
- Tim Layden, Paul Zimmerman, and Peter King are considered Senior writers and experts. (www.si.com)
- Could not be a part of commemorative or special issues nor could they be opinion columns, interviews or weekly columns.

Methodology

- Quantitative and Qualitative
- Listed quarterbacks and races
- Each article coded for 'quarterback' and labeled 'black', 'white', or 'other'.
- Coded for:
 1. Leadership
 2. Arm Strength
 3. Accuracy
 4. Speed
 - and agility
 5. Intelligence
 6. Natural talent
 7. Family life
 8. Work Ethic
- Direction: positive or negative

Sample:

- 35 issues
- 85 articles

**Sports
Illustrated**

Findings

- Table 1: Individual Quarterback Mentions Throughout the Sample

Individual Quarterbacks	Mentions
White Quarterbacks	33 (76.7%)
Black Quarterbacks	10 (23.3%)
N=	43 (100%)

Findings:

- Table 2: Physical Traits, Race, and Direction

	Arm strength	Speed	Accuracy	Natural Talent
Black-Positive	7 (14.89%)	10 (58.83%)	6 (3.31%)	9 (75.00%)
Black-Negative	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	8 (4.42%)	0 (0.00%)
White-Positive	35 (74.47%)	6 (35.29%)	123 (67.96%)	3 (25.00%)
White-Negative	5 (10.64%)	0 (0.00%)	44 (24.31%)	0 (0.00%)
n=	47 (100.00%))	17 (100.00%))	181 (100.00%))	12 (100.00%))

Findings

- Table 3: Personality Traits, Race, and Direction

	Leadership	Intelligence	Family Life	Work Ethic
Black-Positive	7 (5.6%)	1 (2.44%)	0 (0.00%)	8 (14.29%)
Black-Negative	13 (10.3%)	3 (7.32%)	1 (2.78%)	1 (1.79%)
White-Positive	86 (68.3%)	30 (73.17%)	30 (83.33%)	43 (76.78%)
White-Negative	20 (15.8%)	7 (17.07%)	5 (13.89%)	4 (7.14%)
n=	126 (100.00%)	41 (100.0%)	36 (100.0%)	56 (100.0%)

Discussion

- Black quarterbacks: 58.2% for speed and 75% for natural talent (positive)
- Intelligence and accuracy
- Natural Talent, work ethic, and leadership
- White intelligence and leadership

Discussion

- Importance of findings'
- Lack of black quarterbacks in sample
- Subjectivity and bias
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Further research



Questions? Comments?

Thanks for listening!

