

UCF Forum

4-29-2015

Does Major League Baseball Look Like America?

Richard Lapchick
University of Central Florida

 Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Sports Studies Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum>

Information presented on this website is considered public information (unless otherwise noted) and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credit is requested. We recommend that UCF data be acquired directly from a UCF server and not through other sources that may change the data in some way. While UCF makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as names, telephone numbers, etc. may change prior to updating.

STARS Citation

Lapchick, Richard (2015). Does major league baseball look like America?. UCF Today, 2015-04-29. Retrieved from <https://today.ucf.edu/major-league-baseball-look-like-america/>

This Opinion column is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCF Forum by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.



Does Major League Baseball Look Like America?

By Richard Lapchick
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, April 29, 2015

The 2015 Major League Baseball Racial and Gender Report Card recently released by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport shows the league had an **A** on the issue of racial hiring practices, a **C/C+** for gender hiring practices, and an overall grade of **B**.

Are we playing fair when it comes to sports? Does everyone, regardless of race or gender, have a chance to play or to operate a team? When releasing these reports, most focus on the percentages for players and how we grade the players. The studies, while focusing on equality across all spectrums of sport, are really about the League Office and front-office hiring practices.

We at the institute based at the University of Central Florida support the hiring of the best candidates, including players, but challenge whether there are open and fair processes in regards to finding the best candidates.

The 2015 MLB report was released on the 68th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier, and as director of the institute I believe that it remains vital that we focus on the dream he set forth for baseball. Robinson wanted to see a diverse mixture of people on the field as coaches and players, as well as those in the front office running the teams.

On the racial-hiring issue, the greatest areas of concern for the 2015 season are that there are only two managers of color (the fewest in more than 22 years), four general managers of color, and the percentage of African-American players remains near the all-time low in the modern era. On the gender side, MLB's grade dropped to 74.4 points from 77.5 in 2014. MLB gender hiring practices are better than the NFL and colleges and universities, but its declining grade raises concerns.

The two managers of color represent a 10 percent decrease from 2014. The number of managers of color has decreased since the 2009 season, which started with 10 people of color. The two managers of color (6.7 percent of the league) at the start of the 2015 season were Fredi Gonzalez of the Atlanta Braves (Latino) and Lloyd McClendon of the Seattle Mariners (African-American).

At the team level, which has historically been far behind the League Office, the racial grade for team professional administrator positions was the only score that improved slightly, while senior administrators and professional administrators in the gender category increased. The team front offices need to continue to make an effort to create a work force that mirrors America.

In addition to managers, there was a decrease in the percentage of people of color as coaches and team senior administrators, while there was an increase in the percentage of people of color in the team professional administrator positions in the League Office and in general manager positions. All changes were small except in the manager position.

There was an increase in the percentage of women as team professional administrators and team senior administrators while there was a decrease for women in the League Office and team vice presidents.

Although the total percentage of players of color has steadily risen over the years, there has been a concern in Major League Baseball about the relatively small and declining percentage of African-American players. This concern is shared by leaders in the African-American community and all groups supporting diversity and inclusion. The percentage of African-American baseball players in MLB only increased by .1 percent, from the low of 8.2 percent recorded in 2014.

However, the 41.2 percent of players who were people of color also make the playing fields look more like America, with its large Latino population. Latino players saw a slight increase from 28.4 percent in 2014, to 29.3 percent of all baseball players for the 2015 season.

Commissioner Emeritus Bud Selig had set the example as Commissioner for hiring in the League Office. As Rob Manfred took over as the new MLB Commissioner last year, the League Office maintained the good grades achieved under Selig with an **A+** for

hiring people of color and **B-** for gender hiring practices. However, the percentages for both declined slightly for the fourth consecutive year.

Overall, the League Office has had a strong positive impact on the diversity record for Major League Baseball. MLB continued to have an outstanding record for diversity initiatives, which included the ninth annual Civil Rights Game, Jackie Robinson Day, Roberto Clemente Day and the 2014 MLB Diversity Business Summit, which was held in New York City. MLB's efforts are led by Wendy Lewis, senior vice president for Diversity and Strategic Alliances.

It is imperative that sport teams play the best athletes they have available to win games. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport strives to emphasize the business value of diversity to sports organizations when they choose their team on the field and in the office.

It is obviously the choice of the organization regarding which applicant is the best fit for their ball club, but the institute wants to illustrate how important it is to have a diverse organization involving individuals who happen to be of a different race or gender because it can provide a different perspective, and possibly a competitive advantage for a win in the board room as well as on the field.

Richard E. Lapchick is chair of UCF's DeVos Sports Business Management Program and director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, which annually publishes racial and gender report cards on MLB, the NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLS, college sports, and Associated Press sports editors. He is the author of 16 books that primarily focus on racial and gender issues and ethics in college sport. He can be followed on Twitter [@richardlapchick](https://twitter.com/richardlapchick) and on facebook.com/richard.lapchick. He can be reached at rlapchick@ucf.edu.