



AP PHOTO

Cowboys coach Bill Parcells announced his retirement from football Monday. He coached the New York Giants to two Super Bowl victories.

Parcells out of football

Cowboys coach retires after four seasons in Dallas

By JAIME ARON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IRVING, Texas

Bill Parcells could have returned to the Dallas Cowboys for one more shot at becoming the first coach to lead three teams into the Super Bowl.

He could have come back to try ending the longest playoff drought in the franchise's proud history.

Or he could have come back to finish what he started in developing quarterback Tony Romo and a 3-4 defense.

Instead, 15 days after a gut-wrenching playoff loss in Seattle, Parcells decided Monday to call it a career, ending a four-year run in Dallas and a 19-year tenure in the NFL that included three Super Bowls and two championships.

"I am retiring from coaching football," Parcells said in a statement. "I want to thank Jerry Jones and Stephen Jones for their tremendous support over the last four years. Also, the players, my coaching staff and others in the support group who have done so much to help."

"Dallas is a great city and the Cowboys are an integral part of it. I am hopeful that they are able to go forward from here."

Known for a gruff demeanor and colorful quotes, Parcells leaves with the ninth-most wins in NFL history and a career record of 183-138-1. He was 34-32 in Dallas, counting two playoff losses. He had one year left at more than \$5 million on a contract extension signed last January.

"I am in good health and feel lucky to have been able to coach in the NFL for an extended period of time," the 65-year-old coach said.

Although he failed to make the Cowboys champions again, Parcells leaves the team better than he found it. The club went from three straight 5-11 seasons before he arrived to making the playoffs twice in four years.

"His contributions to the game of football and to the NFL are immeasurable," team owner Jerry Jones said in a statement. "We will always be grateful for his dedicated effort and commitment to the Dallas Cowboys."

Parcells expected big things in 2006 and, thanks to the emergence of Romo, Dallas had a two-game division lead in December. Then the Cowboys lost four of their final five games, including the final three. The capper came against the Seahawks after Romo bungled the hold of a short field goal with a little more than a minute left.

"I did the best I could," Parcells said after that game. "But it wasn't quite good enough."

The going theory was that Parcells wouldn't end his career that way. The longer he waited to make an announcement, the likelier it seemed that he would return, especially since he was going to his office every day.

Then came Monday's statement via a morning e-mail. Parcells isn't exactly rushing out the door.

"Bill will continue to come to work here at Valley Ranch throughout at least the end of this week, and we will continue to meet and address the present status of our team while also discussing the future," Jones said. "Clearly, we wanted Bill to return for next season, but I am completely understanding and respectful of his decision to retire from coaching."

A team spokesman said Jones and Parcells will discuss various aspects of the organization, but not necessarily whom Parcells thinks should take his place.

Coaches break through barriers

Dungy helped get blacks into NFL pipeline

By EDDIE PELLIS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

When Tony Dungy began his climb up the coaching ranks, one potential employer asked if he'd be willing to shave his beard "because people were looking for a certain kind of person."

In most cases, that person wasn't him. Or any other black coach, for that matter.

Indeed, Dungy has come a long way since those formative years. So has the NFL.

The leader of the Indianapolis Colts awoke Monday as a Super Bowl coach, one with a rapidly growing legacy.

In two weeks, he'll face one of his protégés, Chicago's Lovie Smith, for the league championship. They'll be the first black head coaches to pace the sidelines in the NFL's biggest game.

"I've been thinking about my generation of kids who watched Super Bowls and never really saw African-American coaches and didn't think about the fact that you could be a coach," Dungy said in the 1960s. "Hopefully, young kids now will say, 'Hey, I might be the coach some day.' That's special."

Also significant was that Monday, another of Dungy's former assistants, Mike Tomlin, was hired as the first black head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

"It's an unbelievable feeling for me," Dungy said.

The president and CEO of the NAACP, Bruce Gordon, conceded that he didn't even realize Tomlin was black until he saw the coach's picture in the newspaper.

"I said, 'Wow, he's black,'" Gordon said. "And the story wasn't about another black coach being named, it was just about another coach being named. In some respects, I look at that as being a best-case scenario."

It also was part of a plan Dungy envisioned when he entered the NFL coaching ranks as an assistant in 1981, one of maybe 15 black men in a white man's profession.

He quickly proved he could coach. As the years went by, though, he realized what a strange equation the NFL had when it came to race.



AP PHOTO

Bears coach Lovie Smith, right, and linebacker Brian Urlacher await the trophy presentation after Chicago defeated the New Orleans Saints in the NFC title game Sunday. Smith is making his first trip to the Super Bowl.

Most of the players, with the exception of quarterbacks, were black. They were coached almost exclusively by white men, and their teams were run almost exclusively by white men.

It didn't so much frustrate Dungy as it motivated him.

He vowed that if he ever got his chance, he'd try to get young, black coaches into the pipeline, and when the chance finally came, when he became head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1996, Dungy quietly went to work.

Herm Edwards and Tomlin, who are black, and Rod Marinelli, who is white, are among the current head coaches who came out of the Dungy pipeline. Smith is his most successful protégé.

The two spoke late Sunday night, well after the celebrations of their history-making wins in the conference title games had calmed down.

Smith sees the significance of their upcoming meeting and dreams of a day when two black coaches in the Super Bowl won't be seen as such a big deal.

"That day is coming some day," Smith said. "Of course, we're talking about it now. It's not here now."

The Super Bowl in two weeks

will be rife with stories about first times and big breakthroughs.

Colts quarterback Peyton Manning finally made it, rallying his team from 18 points down in a scintillating 38-34 victory against New England.

The Bears are a great story themselves, making it back to the Super Bowl for the first time since the 1985 season and doing it with a blue-collar work ethic engendered by their third-year head coach.

The Smith-Dungy coaching angle figures to get lots of play between now and kickoff Feb. 4.

Freed from the pressure of preparing for their respective title games, the coaches opened up on a subject that has long been close to their hearts.

Also important to these coaches is the fact that they've done it their way, shown they can succeed without yelling and swearing, and without sacrificing their families or their faith.

"I think as you look to young coaches coming up in the ranks, a lot of us have a picture of how a coach is supposed to be, how he is supposed to act," Smith said. "And I think what Tony Dungy showed me is you don't have to act that way."

The task of balancing out the

racial numbers, of course, is far from finished.

With Tomlin's hiring, there are now six black head coaches in the NFL, still one fewer than at the start of the 2006 season after the firings of Art Shell in Oakland and Dennis Green in Arizona.

The college numbers are less impressive; of the 119 Division I-A jobs, only seven were held by black men as of late last month.

Though Dungy got plenty of interviews when he was trying to get a head coaching job, some turned into farces.

There was the one when they recommended Dungy lose the beard.

Or another time when they told the lifetime defensive assistant that they were looking for an offensive expert with head coaching experience.

"I scratched my head at that one," he said, knowing he'd been brought in as nothing more than the token black candidate. "When you would get questions like that, you could see some people were concerned with things that weren't really related to football."

"You could see we had a way to go."

AP sports writer Rick Gano in Chicago contributed to this report.

Pittsburgh hires Vikings assistant as head coach

By ALAN ROBINSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH

Mike Tomlin didn't realistically expect to become the Pittsburgh Steelers' coach so early in his career, especially with so little experience as an NFL coordinator and at such a young age.



TOMLIN

The 34-year-old Vikings defensive coordinator was excited when the Steelers called two weeks ago and offered an interview. In Tomlin's mind, jobs like this go to Hall of Fame-caliber coaches, the kind of men he has looked up to since he became a coach 12 years ago.

"I'm somewhat of a football historian, and I've got a great deal of respect for those who came before me," Tomlin said Monday after being hired for the job formerly held by Bill Cowher and, before him, Chuck Noll.

"I'm going to try my best to provide a shoulder for those who come after me to stand on," he said.

That calm self-assurance, strong personality and a preference for Steelers-style basics — a strong running game and a nasty defense — persuaded Pittsburgh to offer him a four-year contract worth about \$2.5 million annually. Tomlin is the 16th coach in the franchise's 74-year history and its first black head coach.

"I'm still coming to grips with what that means," Tomlin said.

For those who wonder if he might have used a few more years as a coordinator before becoming a head coach, Tomlin said: "I can't worry about concerns other people might have. I've been hired to do a job here, and I intend to do it at a high level."

Not many Steelers fans knew much about Tomlin before Cowher resigned Jan. 5. And, in a rare bit of candor by team president Art Rooney II, the Steelers say they didn't, either. But Tomlin quickly convinced them during a pair of three-hour interviews he was ready for the job.

Tomlin said he will retain defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau, who at 69 is more than twice as old as Tomlin.

• Gloating

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

view the result as vindication for himself. But teammates see it differently.

They couldn't be happier for a quarterback and friend whom history was destined to judge harshly if he never led his team to the Super Bowl.

"I've said it before: The type of criticism he takes from the media is ridiculous," Colts center Jeff Saturday said. "There's 22 guys who play this game and start, and there's 53 on each team that has to play and produce and do a good job."

"Quarterbacks get way too much credit when we win and way too much blame when we lose, and the reality is there's 53 guys who've got to play."

Defensive end Dwight Freeney echoes the assertion.

"This is a team game. Like I've always said, it takes all phases of the game," Freeney said. "That's what it is; it's all about team."

But teammates still were pleased for Manning, if for no other reason than they no longer have to hear the familiar playoff slams about their quarterback.

"I'm super happy," said tight end Dallas Clark, who had game-high totals of six catches for 137 yards against the Patriots. "Anything to help that guy get the monkey off his back and let him go to bed and sleep with a smile."

"Win, lose or draw, this guy does not deserve any of the criticism about 'Can't get it done (in the

playoffs)'. But now he's the man."

In coach Tony Dungy's view, there has never been a doubt that Manning is the perfect man to direct the Colts' offense.

"Peyton is a great quarterback. He's brought us back a lot of times," Dungy said. "We haven't had this opportunity and had a chance to do it on this stage before. ... I just think it's great for him to get to the Super Bowl with a drive like that."

"Peyton Manning is a great player. Anybody who doesn't know that doesn't know much about football."

Manning's father, Archie Manning, knows a lot about football. And he, too, insists playoff criticism of his son is unfair.

Standing outside the Colts' locker room about 45 minutes after Sunday's game, the elder Manning, a former standout quarterback with the New Orleans Saints, expressed hope that his son's performance would silence critics once and for all.

"It's wonderful. We're excited for Peyton," Archie Manning said. "It's not about us (family); it's Peyton. We're just excited for him because he's worked hard and he competes hard."

Archie Manning watched the first half and part of the third quarter in a suite in the RCA Dome. But when his nerves got the better of him, he watched the remainder on a small TV in a deserted corridor near the Colts' locker room.

"I was just pacing up there a little bit. That (luxury) box is kind of a small place to pace," Archie Manning said. "This is a great place to pace down here."

so excited. I'm just proud that I did it with guys that I love to play with. These guys are awesome competitors.

"I wouldn't want to do it with any other group of men."

After trying, and failing, to reach the Super Bowl the past four years, coach Tony Dungy said players have earned the right to celebrate.

"Obviously, there's a lot of emotion in that locker room," he said. "I could not be more proud of our guys. ... Our team went the hard way the whole year, but they hung tough, and I'm so proud of them."

There's nobody down here except me and the security guard."

In the end, the dome and its loud, friendly home crowd was a great place for Peyton Manning to enhance his Hall of Fame credentials with a game-winning masterpiece.

With the Colts trailing 34-31 with 3:49 to play, he led them on a seven-play, 80-yard drive capped by a 3-yard touchdown run by rookie Joseph Addai with one minute to play.

Defensive back Marlin Jackson sealed the win with an interception of Patriots quarterback Tom Brady in the closing seconds.

When time expired, Manning didn't feel liberated of any sort of stigma. He was simply glad to be going to the Super Bowl.

The fact that his effort fueled the greatest comeback in conference title game history was little more than a sweet byproduct.

"I know how hard I've worked this season," Manning said. "I know how hard I worked this week to get ready for these guys, and it's always nice when you put it to use and come away with a win."

Perhaps wide receiver Reggie Wayne summed it up best.

"He's been through a lot," Wayne said of Manning. "A lot of critics have been doubting him, saying he can't win big games and different things. I've been part of a bunch of big games, I feel like, and we've come through and won. He's put us on his shoulders and brought us through. I'm happy for him. He deserves it."

"I'm happy for coach Dungy. I'm happy for (Colts owner) Jim Irsay. I'm happy for the city. I'm happy for everybody."

"I'm excited for our whole city, our organization, taking our team to the Super Bowl. (I) couldn't ask for a better way to end this part of the season."

Now they're focused on the central part: not just making but winning the Super Bowl.

"I want it to sink in when we've got that ring on our finger," Glenn said. "As an athlete, you can never be satisfied until that final whistle blows."

"We've got a game to play in a couple of weeks against the Chicago Bears, so we're excited for that."

• Calm

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his faith continued to soar.

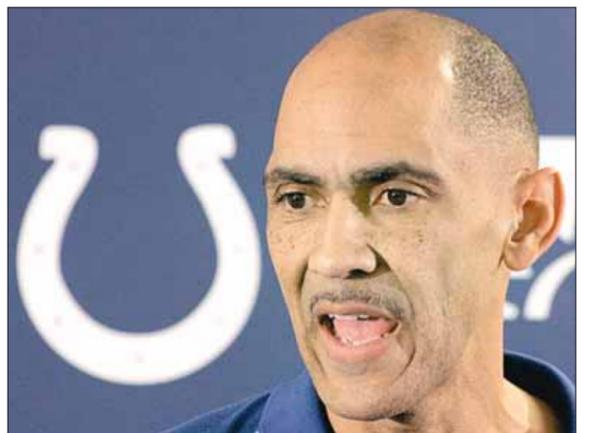
Seeing the open receivers and that Indy was moving the ball effectively was a stark contrast to the Colts' two previous playoff losses at New England. With the steady, increasingly patient hand of two-time MVP Peyton Manning running the show, Dungy refused to waver from his philosophy or his game plan.

It's a lesson Indianapolis (15-4) learned the hard way.

In their past two playoff losses, as the Colts found themselves scrambling to catch up with the Patriots and Steelers, they virtually abandoned the ground game in the divisional round. Running a combined total of 29 times in those two games, Pittsburgh and New England found it easier to defend the Colts' potent offense.

This time, the Colts followed Dungy's script perfectly. Manning methodically guided Indianapolis to scores on six of its final eight possessions, scoring more points in one half than New England had allowed in any game this season.

He also continued to call running plays for Joseph Addai and Dominic Rhodes, and eventually Addai's 3-yard touchdown run with 1 minute left won it.



AP PHOTO

Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy said Monday that his team's ability to stay calm was a key factor in Sunday's AFC Championship Game victory.