



**HISTORY OF THE CALIFORNIA**  
**INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION**  
**SOUTHERN SECTION**  
**(CIF-SS)**



62<sup>nd</sup> historical “tidbit.”  
Dr. John S. Dahlem

**AARON CORNELIUS WADE**  
**CIF-SS PIONEER COACH**

Aaron Cornelius Wade was born in Beaumont, Texas on September 24, 1924. He attended Tillotsin College and was Captain as a freshman of the football team. He entered the Army in 1943 and received a field commission to Lieutenant in Germany and served until 1946. He moved to California and enrolled in Compton Junior College. He graduated with honors from Los Angeles State College with a major in Physical Education. He began his teaching credential education, but due to racial reasons, was denied the opportunity to do his student teaching at Hollywood High School. In 1951, Marian Wagstaff, Principal at Willowbrook Junior High School in Compton, offered him the opportunity to do his student teaching at her school. Marian, who was white and integrated the school, stated, “I would only hire those teachers who loved children and who were great teachers. That was all that mattered to me.”

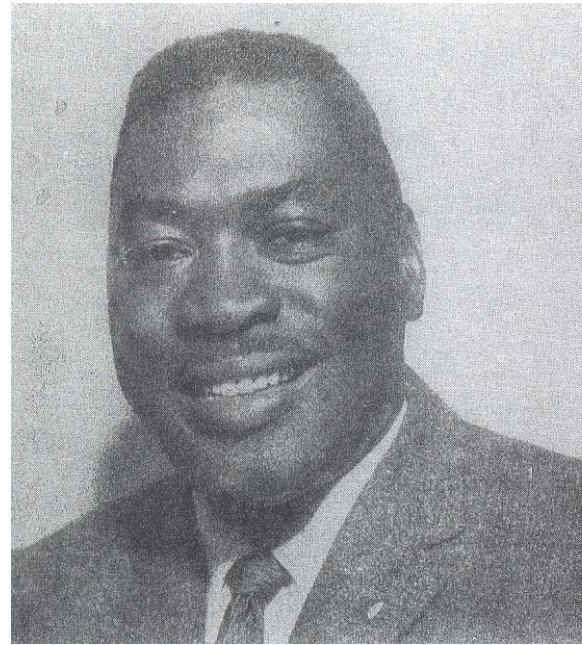
Aaron Wade moved to Centennial High School in 1953 and became the head football coach when the school opened. **He was the first black head football coach in an integrated school in the United States and the first in the California State CIF.** He also became the first black Department Chairperson in Southern California. He served as the football coach at Centennial High School for 14 years and was League Champion 12 of those years. He took his teams to the CIF-SS Championship game 3 times and was crowned CIF-SS Football Champions in 1954. Coach Wade’s star running back in 1965 was Mickey Cureton. His overall record was 99 wins 36 losses and 5 ties. He was honored as the coach of the South Team in the annual Shine High School Game during his second season in 1955.

**Aaron Wade was the first black official in the old American Football League (AFL) and the second black official in the National Football League (NFL).** He received his Doctorate from Lawrence University in Education. He became Principal at Compton High School in 1966 and was later named the Superintendent of the Compton Unified School District. He passed away on March 21, 2003.

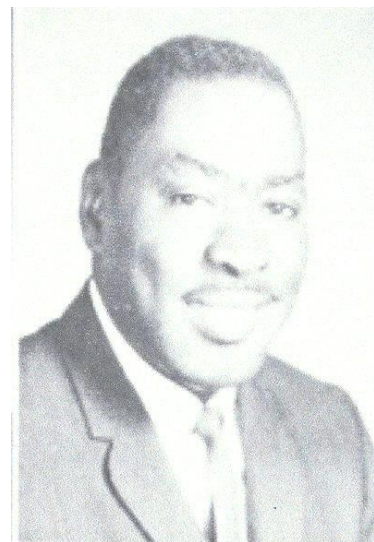




Head Coach  
Mr. Aaron Wade



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