

Condoleezza Rice got a chance to set the record straight during a press conference on Monday. The Stanford University professor and former U.S. Secretary of State said the NFL's Cleveland Browns did not ask her to be their head coach during a 2018 search.

[In a report filed on Nov. 18, 2018](#), ESPN NFL insider Adam Schefter claimed the Browns wanted Rice to interview for their head coaching job. After both Rice and the Browns denied Schefter's claims, ESPN updated its story on the situation.

On Monday, Rice said Browns owners Jimmy and Dee Haslam wanted her input on the search, rather than her coaching expertise.

"I live on the West Coast, right? So, you don't know what it's like to wake up and your phone is blowing up with people who think you're about to be interviewed to be the Cleveland Browns' head coach," Rice said. "I tell people that, I thought, probably, what my friends Jimmy and Dee Haslam said was that they would like to talk to me about what they're doing with the coaching position."

When Schefter's report surfaced in 2018, John Dorsey, Cleveland's general manager at the time, said Rice was not on his team's list of potential head coaching candidates. Rice responded to Dorsey's statement via her official Facebook page. She wrote that she was not ready to coach an NFL team but hoped more women get coaching opportunities in professional football. Rice also noted that she'd happily call plays for the Browns, if asked.

Rice's feelings on coaching for the Browns have likely changed since then, as she became part of the Walton-Penner sports group in July 2022. Led by Walmart heir Rob Walton, the conglomerate purchased the Denver Broncos for \$4.65 billion last August.

“I still do love the Cleveland Browns,” Rice said Monday. “I’ve pulled for them since I was three, but I’m all-in with the Denver Broncos now. I became a part of the Walton-Penner ownership group. You have to understand that they paid \$4.65 billion for the Broncos, so I own like four helmets of the Broncos.”

Rice added that she assisted in the Broncos most recent coaching search, traveling the U.S. to interview candidates. Denver ultimately settled on Sean Payton, who went 152-89 and won a Super Bowl in 16 seasons with the New Orleans Saints from 2006-21.

Rice was also part of Stanford’s search committees that hired head football coaches Dennis Green, Tyrone Willingham and Troy Taylor in 1989, 1994 and 2023, respectively. Green and Willingham posted records of 16-18 and 44-36-1, respectively, during their stints with the Cardinal. Taylor has yet to coach a game at Stanford Stadium.

“I don’t know if you know this, but hiring coaches is sort of my side hustle,” Rice said. “... I’m qualified to comment on coaching, I’m not qualified to be a coach.”