

COACHING BONUSES

# IT PAYS TO WIN

Brand-new SUVs. A country club membership. Private jet access. And should a pink slip be necessary, a seven-figure buyout.

These are the typical perks of college football head coaching contracts.

But one piece of the money pot is far less universal. One piece varies greatly from school to school.

Performance bonuses.

Bo Pelini got a base salary bump last month from \$2.33 million to \$2.78 million.

But if Nebraska wins the Big Ten championship and a national title in 2011, Pelini will rake in \$1 million in bonuses. That's almost what he made in salary (\$1.1 million) in 2008.

An examination of head coaching performance bonuses revealed that Pelini's potential rewards

for achievement are among the highest in the country.

In 2010, according to contracts obtained by USA Today, only 10 coaches had performance bonus packages exceeding \$1 million.

Pelini, who received \$250,000 in performance bonuses each of the past two years (excluding academic achievement incentives), is set to make \$350,000 if Nebraska takes the Big Ten championship this year. And \$650,000 more if the Huskers win a national title.

What's it mean?

The cost of business in the cutthroat world of college football continues to rise. And Tom Osborne is waving a massive carrot in front of his head coach to finish Nebraska's revitalization and win the school's first national championship since 1997.

**Nick Saban had the nation's largest salary in 2010, \$5.16 million.**

But the two-time national champion coach doesn't have the largest performance bonuses. For those, go find Dennis Erickson at Arizona State.

Erickson's bonus maximum is \$1.8 million. And most of that cut has nothing to do with postseason success. If the Sun Devils go 11-1 in the regular season, Erickson makes \$850,000. If they go 12-0, Erickson makes \$1.45 million.

ASU is one of only six places where a

coach can make \$1 million in bonuses without winning a national championship.

The others: Auburn (though Gene Chizik would have to go 14-0 to get to \$1 million); Kentucky (Joker Phillips gets paid handsomely for simply winning SEC games); Washington (Steve Sarkisian earns \$400,000 alone for an invitation to a BCS bowl game).

And both schools in Iowa (see graphics).

**The strangest bonuses in the coaching profession?**

Gary Pinkel gets a \$125,000 bonus if Missouri's season-ticket sales exceed 40,000 — or if average attendance exceeds 55,000. The bonus jumps to \$150,000 if those numbers hit 45,000 and 60,000.

Central Florida's George O'Leary makes \$50,000 if his team gets through a year without an arrest, indictment, conviction or violation of the university's student codes of conduct.

Army coach Rich Ellerson earns \$50,000 each time he beats Navy or Air Force. He hasn't done it yet, losing all four "bonus" games.

**With Bob Stoops' record, championships come naturally.**

So Oklahoma has added a different kind of reward in Stoops' contract.

Stoops receives an annual "stay benefit" of \$800,000 from Oklahoma.

Longevity bonuses are common perks for high-profile head coaches. Iowa's Kirk Ferentz will get a \$375,000 bonus for staying at Iowa in 2012. That bonus increases by \$50,000 annually through 2015, when he'll receive \$525,000.

Jim Tressel and Brady Hoke have similar deals. Tressel will make \$450,000 if he's still employed as head coach on Jan. 31, 2012, then \$475,000 on Jan. 31, 2013, and so on. Hoke will earn a \$1.5 million stay bonus after his third year and another \$1.5 million if he is still leading Michigan in 2017.

Bo Pelini had a one-time retention bonus of \$500,000 if he was still employed at Nebraska in January 2015. That clause was removed last month.

— Dirk Chatelain

**NOTES:**

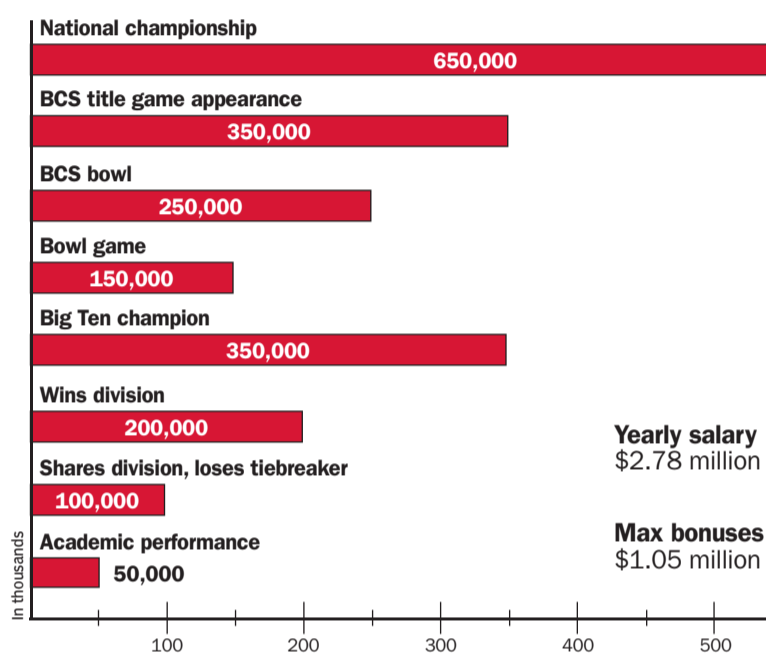
» Most data was gathered and published in December 2010 by USA Today; some contracts may have changed.

» Salary and bonus figures are approximate.

» Some private schools, including Notre Dame and Southern Cal, don't release salaries and bonuses.



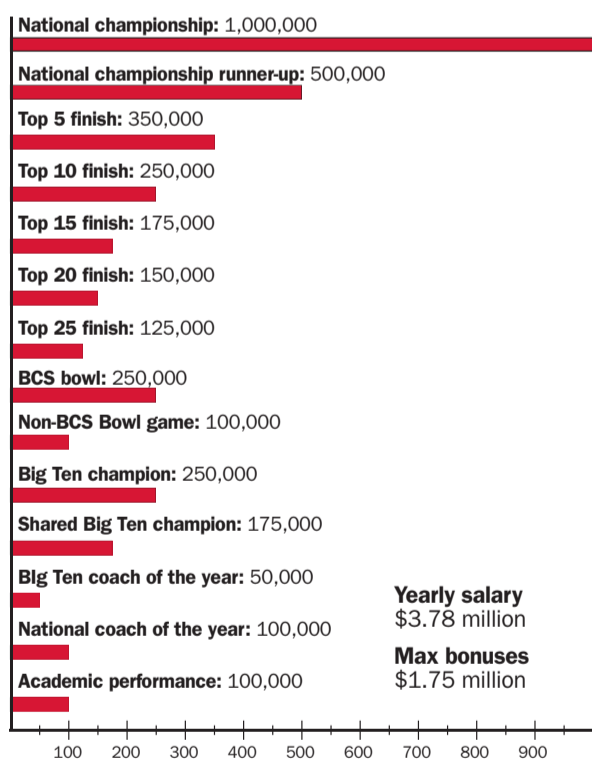
## Bo Pelini Nebraska



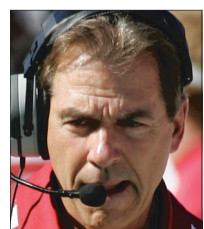
## Kirk Ferentz Iowa



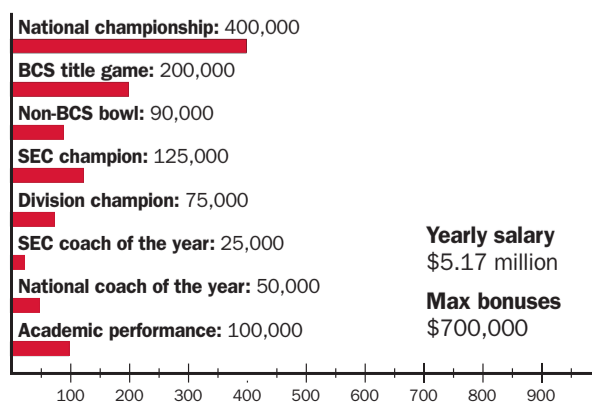
Some schools distribute bonuses based on win totals. Iowa relies heavily on the polls. If Ferentz's team finishes in the top 25 in either the AP or coaches poll, he receives \$125,000. For every five spots the Hawkeyes move up, Ferentz makes more money. The difference between finishing fifth (\$350,000) and sixth (\$250,000), for example, is \$100,000. That's one more reason to make friends in the coaching business — maybe your peers will vote you higher.



## Nick Saban Alabama



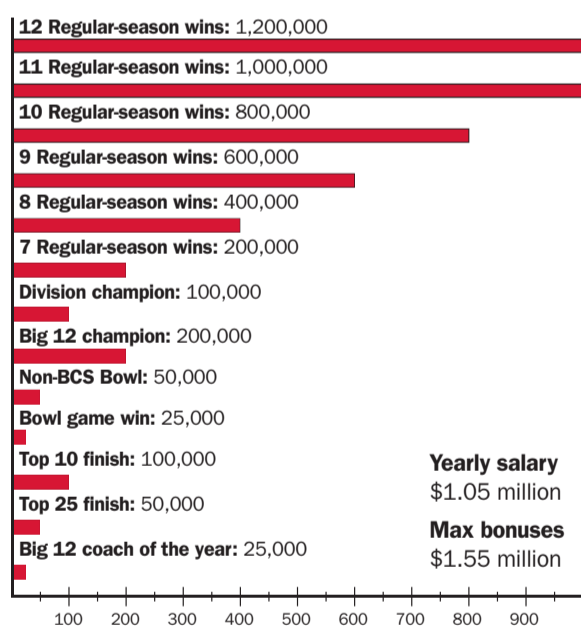
The difference in Saban's contract between winning and losing a national championship game is \$200,000. For a man who earns more than \$5 million in annual salary, that's not much. Saban's maximum performance bonus of \$700,000 barely cracked the top 20 nationally in 2010.



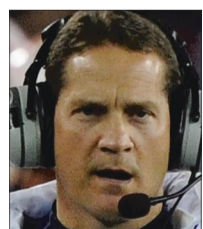
## Paul Rhoads Iowa State



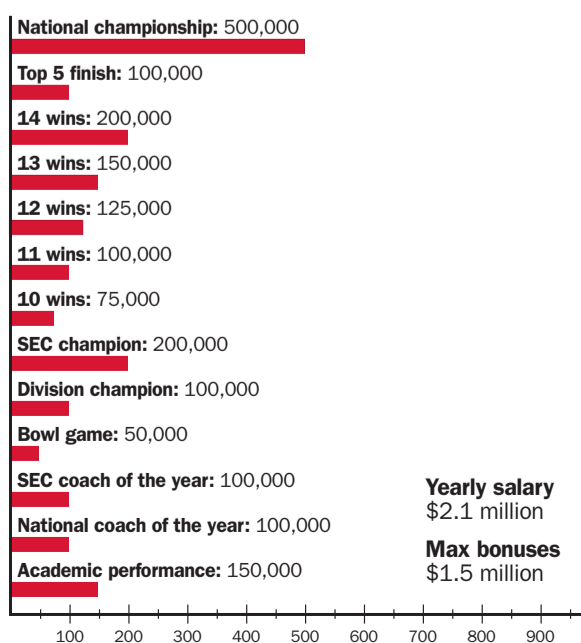
At Iowa State, every win counts. Which is why Rhoads receives \$200,000 for every single win after the sixth regular-season win. If Iowa State goes 8-4, he makes an extra \$400,000. If ISU goes 9-3, make it \$600,000. An undefeated regular season nets a \$1.2 million bonus.



## Gene Chizik Auburn



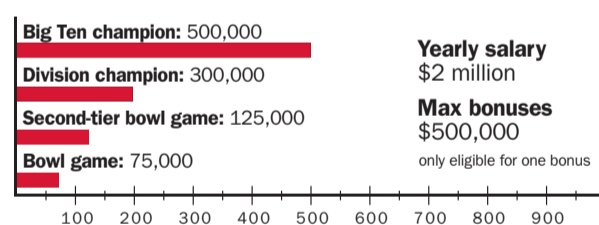
Chizik had the eighth-highest salary in the SEC in 2010 (\$2.1 million). Lucky for him, he had the largest performance bonus of any SEC coach. When Auburn won the national title, Chizik became the first college coach to earn more than \$1 million in performance bonuses in a single season.



## Brady Hoke Michigan



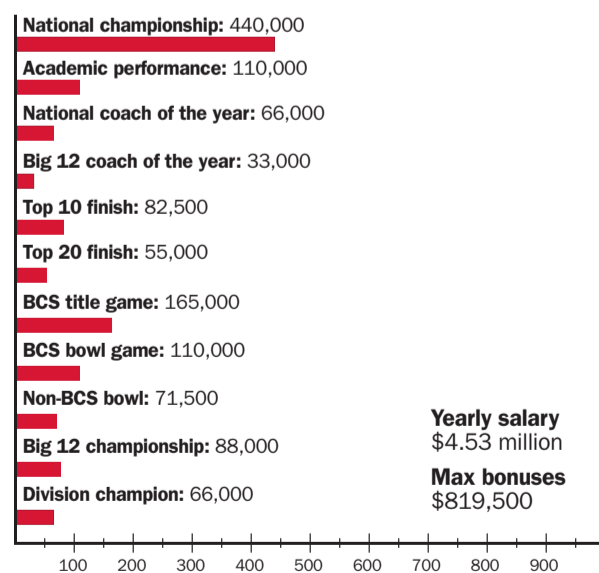
Hoke's contract is rare for a heavyweight football school. It doesn't include a national championship bonus. Hoke's incentives top out at \$300,000 for a Big Ten championship. Apparently it's one step at a time at downtrodden Michigan.



## Bob Stoops Oklahoma



Stoops' individual bonuses are small potatoes. Only \$88,000 for a Big 12 championship? That's nothing compared to his peers. But Stoops earns \$275,000 for a national championship and \$66,000 for winning national coach of the year. At Oklahoma, they set the bonus bar pretty high.



## Jim Tressel Ohio State



Not every high-profile school believes in lucrative performance bonuses. At Ohio State, Tressel has only one football-based bonus in his contract. If the Buckeyes make the national title game, he earns \$200,000. Tressel's other performance bonus is based on his players' academic achievement.

