Why College Baseball Coaches Earn Less Than Football Coaches

College baseball coaches earn far less than college football coaches in amount and percentage of professional coaches’ salaries. This disparity arises because college baseball coaches are less likely than football coaches to sign with an agent to represent them in contract negotiations.

**Keywords:** coaches, baseball, football, salaries, college, professional, Major League Baseball, National Football League.

Universitetų beisbolo treneriai uždirba gerokai mažiau nei futbolo treneriai tiek vertinant absoliučia suma, tiek procentine profesionių trenerių atlyginimų dalimi. Šis skirtumas atsiranda dėl to, kad universitetų beisbolo treneriai, tikėtina, rečiau nei futbolo treneriai pasirašo susitarimus su agentu, atstovaujančiu jiems derybose dėl sutarčių.

**Raktažodžiai:** treneriai, beisbolas, futbolas, atlyginimai, universitetas, sportininkas profesionalas, Pagrindinė beisbolo lyga, Nacionalinė futbolo lyga.

**JEL Classifications:** G20/G22.

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**Introduction**

College baseball serves as a model for studying leadership in general in organizations (Keidel, 1984). Indeed, whether transformational/transactional leadership or leader-member exchange is a more effective management model for a baseball coach has been explored. Incidentally, the leader-member exchange model is deemed more effective for coaching a baseball team in terms of the team but especially the individual players (Chen, 2010).

In many ways then, the job of a college baseball coach is far more difficult than a college football coach or any professional coach. After all, a college baseball coach has less skilled players than Major League Baseball (MLB) managers have and must effectively develop them to play perhaps the sport requiring the most skill (Hardin, Bennett, 2002).

Coaching baseball development is definitely challenging. Educating an outfielder on catching a long drive requires, believe it or not, some knowledge of physics (Chapman, 1968). Furthermore, batters must be taught not only to view but also hear and feel what a good swing is like (Gray, 2009). In addition, baseball coaches must sort
through the numerous statistics available to pick the ones most relevant to making decisions, such as hitters’ slugging percentage and pitchers’ percentage of strikeouts to walks. Statistics that individual players can control are more relevant. After all, batting average alone does not truly indicate power productivity, and the bullpen has too much responsibility for wins and losses to use such statistics to judge starting pitchers (Porter, Scully, 1982).

The previous anecdotes emphasize skill development but do little to discuss the power of the mental side of baseball coaching. Berra (1979) famously said, “Ninety percent of baseball is half mental.” While obviously illogical, the quote has some truth to it in terms of how powerful the mental side of the game is. Baseball could well be the most mental of sports, requiring baseball coaches to do much more than just put players in certain spots.

In an experiment showing an inning of pitching to 12 college baseball players and 12 novices, baseball players were more mentally engaged in predicting the pitch sequence to follow. Indeed, the baseball players, unlike the novices then, developed strategies to update their pitch predictions and were ultimately more refined (McPherson, 1993).

Ultimately, probit analysis shows that, after removing the effect of team skill differences, winning relies on the manager’s baseball-specific knowledge base. Not just do team results improve with a good manager, but also individual results elevate as well (Singell, 1993). Overall, college baseball coaches, to succeed, must be experts. This expertise includes emphasizing development, being more democratic than autocratic, socially supporting, and providing positive instructions, all of which to establish more cohesive teams (Gardner et al., 1996).

The research objects are two parts. First, this paper seeks to determine whether college baseball coaches earn less than their college football coaches. Second, it explores the relationship between college baseball coaching salaries and Major League Baseball (MLB) manager salaries and compares it to the relationship between college football coaching salaries and National Football League (NFL) coaching salaries.

The desired outcome is to explain why such disparities exist. Such disparities deserve examination. The sample is taken from the SEC (Southeastern Conference) for 2013.

The tasks include the following:

- Determining the average salaries for college baseball, college football, MLB, and NFL coaches.
- Comparing the average salaries between college baseball and football coaches.
- Taking the average college baseball coaching salary divided by the average MLB managing salary.
- Taking the average college football coaching salary divided by the average NFL coaching salary.
- Comparing the percentage of professional salary for college baseball coaches vs college football coaches.

The ultimate objective is to explain anecdotally why any discrepancies exist in these comparisons. Perhaps, it is the lower percentage of agents representing college baseball coaches as contrasted with college football coaches, MLB managers, and NFL coaches. On the other hand, it could just be the lack of a market for college baseball coaches for MLB jobs unlike for college football coaches and NFL jobs.
Literature Review

Revolutionary academic articles certainly appear in the baseball literature. They range from Bryant et al’s (1977) study of the difference between metal and wooden bats, eventually leading college baseball to use metal bats playing as if they were wooden, to the importance of video review of pitchers in baseball preparation (Fadde, 2006). In another revolutionary article, Ashley (1990) discussed, in the context of how to drive the ball, the greater benefit from increased swing pace and from lighter bats as it significantly outweighs the benefit of more mass at contact. Finally, anticipating pitches having a positive effect on on-base percentage became a game changer (Müller, Fadde, 2016). This paper seeks to be in line with these revolutionary discourses but this time regarding college baseball coaching salaries.

Bryant et al. (1977) determined that metal bats allowed 3.85 miles per hour greater pace to be generated than wooden bats. The metal bats also had a greater contact area with small reaction forces at the handle. The ultimate finding was that the metal bat had a larger percussion center.

Fadde (2006) mentioned the importance of video review of pitchers to increasing pitch recognition response time. Using videos to prepare for pitchers was statistically significantly related to higher individual batting averages.

Ashley (1990) showed why the average bat weight had declined from 40 ounces in the 1920s to the 32 ounces in the 1950s. Of course, this trend continued as players age.

Müller and Fadde (2016) showed that being able to anticipate the pitch at front-foot impact related statistically significantly to base-on-balls percentage. Similarly, better anticipation of a fastball vs a change-up was statistically significantly related to base-on-balls percentage and on-base percentage.

Again, all this background relates to how ideal baseball is for reviewing general leadership principles (Keidel, 1984). Leader-member exchange theory can be better understood through baseball (Chen, 2010).

Of all coaching jobs, college baseball coaches face possibly the most hurdles (Hardin, Bennett, 2002). Knowledge of physics (Chapman, 1968), listening for good contact (Gray, 2009), sorting through statistics (Porter, Scully, 1982), and teaching batting strategy (McPherson, 1993) are all important job requirements that other coaches do not have to exhibit. MLB managers can assume these skills are already learned.

Sample

Because of the scarcity of data, sometimes only a single year can be analyzed. This single year can be sufficient for many purposes. The sample year is 2013 because of the availability of data in all areas for that year. The SEC is the college conference of emphasis in contrasting the salaries of college baseball and football coaches. Data on MLB manager salaries and NFL coaching salaries are accessed for that year to offer a professional comparison.

Methodology

The average salaries for college baseball, college football, MLB, and NFL coaches are determined. Then, the average salaries in the SEC are contrasted between college baseball and football coaches. Next, the quotient of the average SEC college baseball coaching salary over the average
MLB managing salary is derived. Then, the quotient of the average SEC college football coaching salary over the average NFL coaching salary is developed. Finally, the percentage of average professional salary for college baseball coaching salaries is contrasted with the percentage of average professional salary for college football coaching salaries.

In Tables 1–2 the name stands for the name of the coach. University represents the university for which the person coaches. Salary is the total compensation of the individual. % Football Coach signifies the percentage of the respective school’s football coach compensation that the baseball coach earns. % Baseball Coach indicates the percentage of the school’s baseball coach compensation that the football coach earns. In Table 3–4 Ave. Baseball Coach Salary stands for the average baseball coach compensation in the SEC for 2013. Ave. MLB Manager Salary represents the average MLB manager compensation for 2013. Ave. Football Coach Salary stands for the average football coach compensation in the SEC for 2013. Ave. NFL Coach Salary represents the average NFL coach compensation for 2013. In Table 3 % of Professional Salary indicates what percentage of the average MLB manager compensation that SEC baseball coaches earn. In Table 4 % of Professional Salary also shows what percentage of the average NFL coach compensation that SEC football coaches receive.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>% Football Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainieri</td>
<td>Louisiana State</td>
<td>$1,199,434</td>
<td>26.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawlowski</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>$691,985</td>
<td>19.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Horn</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>$650,000</td>
<td>12.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen</td>
<td>Miss. St.</td>
<td>$637,470</td>
<td>23.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holbrook</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>$585,000</td>
<td>17.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Sullivan</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$573,000</td>
<td>20.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serrano</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>$547,500</td>
<td>11.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianco</td>
<td>Ole Miss.</td>
<td>$537,083</td>
<td>14.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>$492,167</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perno</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>$468,000</td>
<td>14.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaspard</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$424,005</td>
<td>7.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childress</td>
<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
<td>$416,400</td>
<td>13.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamieson</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>$378,256</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$584,638.46</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15.40%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Solomon (2013)
Results

The results include tabular summaries of the SEC baseball coaches’ salaries and football coaches’ salaries for 2013. They are the output of the methodology.

The estimates are from adjusting data to 2013 dollars from the following source: The Best Schools (2017).

The SEC college baseball coaches average $584,639 in total compensation (rounding up to the next dollar). This average compensation amounts to only 15.40 percent of the average compensation of the football coaches in the SEC.

Strikingly, the Alabama baseball coach earns 7.65 percent of what the Alabama football coach receives. At least, the Louisiana State baseball coach earns 26.90 percent of what the Louisiana State football coach receives.

Yes, Pawlowski does earn 19.16 percent of the football coach’s salary at Auburn. Van Horn has the opportunity to generate 12.60 percent of the football coach’s compensation at Arkansas. Cohen finds a way to get 23.61 percent of the compensation of the Miss. St. football coach. Holbrook manages to get 17.73 percent of Steve Spurrier’s salary. O’Sullivan gets 20.95 percent of the Florida football coach’s compensation. Serrano only gets 11.27 percent of the Tennessee football coach’s compensation. Bianco does reasonably well getting 14.95 percent of the Ole Miss. football coach’s salary. As the Kentucky football coach’s data is unavailable, no percentage could be generated for Henderson. Perno gets 14.21 percent of what Richt earns. Childress reaches 13.43 percent of Sumlin’s compensation. Finally, Jamieson does get to 13.51 percent of what Pinkel generates.

SEC college football coaches’ salaries for 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>% Baseball Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saban</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>$5,545,852</td>
<td>1307.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bielema</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>$5,158,863</td>
<td>793.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>$4,860,000</td>
<td>887.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles</td>
<td>Louisiana State</td>
<td>$4,459,363</td>
<td>371.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malzahn (estimate)</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>$3,612,364.45</td>
<td>522.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeze (estimate)</td>
<td>Ole Miss.</td>
<td>$3,593,251.41</td>
<td>669.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spurrier</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>$3,300,000</td>
<td>564.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richt</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>$3,292,500</td>
<td>703.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumlin</td>
<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
<td>$3,100,300</td>
<td>744.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinkel</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>$2,800,200</td>
<td>740.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muschamp</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$2,734,500</td>
<td>477.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullen</td>
<td>Miss. St.</td>
<td>$2,700,000</td>
<td>423.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$3,614,908.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>649.15%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gamedayr (2013)
As Vanderbilt is a private university, its salary information is not publicly accessible, therefore, not presented in Table 1. However, the lack of this information should not skew the results.

The SEC college football coaches average $3,614,909 in total compensation (rounding up to the next dollar). This average compensation is 649.15 percent of the baseball coaches’ average compensation.

Louisiana State’s football coach earns only about 4 times what the Louisiana State baseball coach receives. However, the Alabama football coach earns 13 times what the Alabama baseball coach receives.

Bielema gets 7.9 times what the Arkansas baseball coach does. Jones receives nearly 9 times what the Tennessee baseball coach garners. Malzahn is at 5.2 times the Auburn baseball coach’s salary. Freeze gets almost 7 times what the Ole Miss. baseball coach receives. Spurrier is close to 6 times what the South Carolina baseball coach gets. Richt manages 7 times what the Georgia baseball coach earns. Sumlin is 7.4 times the Texas A&M baseball coach gains. The Missouri football coach gets 7.4 times the Missouri baseball coach. Muschamp is at 4.8 times the Florida baseball coach. Mullen gets 4.2 times the Miss. St. baseball coach.

As Vanderbilt is a private university, its salary information is not publicly accessible, therefore, not presented in Table 2. Similarly, Kentucky football compensation data were not available. Estimates had to be made for Auburn and Ole Miss. However, the lack of this information should not skew the results.

SEC baseball coaches earn only 23.39 percent of what their MLB counterparts do. This extreme discrepancy indicates a lack of a market at the MLB level for college coaches.

SEC football coaches earn 50.58 percent of what their NFL counterparts do. This discrepancy is constantly closing. Thus, there seems to be a ready market for college football coaches in the NFL. In fact, so early as 1946, a college coach was tabbed for an NFL coaching job. Brown, Kelly, Saban, Spurrier, Holtz, Erickson, Petrino, Coughlin, Harbaugh, Johnson, and Switzer are some others who have made the jump from college to the NFL (Reineking, 2013). Interestingly enough, individuals who have coached in college, gone to the NFL, and then returned to college, right

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ave. Baseball Coach Salary</th>
<th>Ave. MLB Manager Salary</th>
<th>% of Professional Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$584,638.46</td>
<td>$2,500,000</td>
<td>23.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Solomon (2013)

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ave. Football Coach Salary</th>
<th>Ave. NFL Coach Salary</th>
<th>% of Professional Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$3,614,908.65</td>
<td>$7,146,250.00</td>
<td>50.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Gamedayr (2013); Smith (2013)
WHY COLLEGE BASEBALL COACHES EARN LESS THAN FOOTBALL COACHES

now are some of the highest paid coaches in all football. In fact, Harbaugh is paid more to coach the University of Michigan football team than any NFL coach is paid to coach an NFL team (The Best Schools, 2017).

Unbelievably, the following college football coaching salaries are paid these days: Harbaugh, University of Michigan, $9 million; Saban, University of Alabama, $7 million; Stoops, University of Oklahoma, $5.5 million; Fisher, Florida State University, $5.25 million; Strong, University of Texas, $5.2 million; Sumlin, Texas A&M University, $5 million; Malzahn, Auburn University, $4.725 million; Freeze, Ole Miss., $4.7 million; Ferentz, University of Iowa, $4.5 million; Swinney, Clemson University, $4.5 million; Miles, Louisiana State University, $4.3 million; Dantonio, Michigan State University, $4.3 million; Mullen, Mississippi St., $4.2 million; Jones, University of Tennessee, $4.11 million; Bielema, University of Arkansas, $4.1 million; Patterson, Texas Christian University, $4 million; Richt, University of Miami, $4 million; Petrino, University of Louisville, $4 million; Gundy, Oklahoma State University, $3.75 million; Smart, University of Georgia, $3.75 million; and Whittingham, University of Utah, $3.65 million (The Best Schools, 2017). Incredibly, Smart is in his first year of coaching and already earning $3.75 million annually. Of this list then, Harbaugh, Saban, Ferentz, and Petrino have previously coached in the NFL.

These compensation packages are still lower than at least some Fortune 500 CEOs' total compensation. The CEO of Valeant Pharmaceuticals earned $143 million in compensation in 2016. The CEO of Masimo Corporation was up there in those digits with $119 million in the same year. Then a big drop occurred to the Solar City Corporation CEO at $77 million. Gamco Investors CEO received the same type of figure at $75 million. An Internet Security firm CEO then came in at $67 million. The CBS CEO made $57 million. Interestingly enough, CBS has part of the NFL broadcast contract, so it would seem proper for this CEO to make more than the coaches' helping to generate advertising revenue on his network. The Cheniere Energy CEO garnered $54 million. The Oracle Corp. CEO took in $53 million. The Regeneron Pharmaceuticals CEO gathered $47 million. The Vector Group CEO took in $43 million. The General Growth Properties CEO found his way to $39 million. The Comcast Corporation CEO garnered $36 million. The Salesforce.com CEO earned $33 million. The General Electric CEO received nearly $33 million. The AT&T CEO gathered $25 million. In fact, the lowest total compensation of the top 100 CEOs was $19 million (AFL-CIO, 2016).

Implications

While the MLB manager must oversee spring development, 162 regular-season matches, and possibly the post-season, the college coach has just 25 percent of that game responsibility. Nonetheless, the college coach works nearly the identical number of days (if not much more) with recruiting thrown into the equation (Pauline et al., 2007).

At the end of the day, the college baseball coach’s job is actually more taxing than that of the MLB manager (Pauline et al., 2007). The strategic considerations are essentially identical (Lindsey, 1963). However, the college baseball coach must also recruit the players (Pauline et al., 2007).

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) limits the compensation given to college players generally to
scholarships, making it even more difficult to put together a good team (Pauline et al., 2007). Projecting the ability of a player with limited opportunities (unlike MLB with seemingly unlimited selection rounds and free-agent signings) because of scholarship restrictions can be extremely difficult (Whiteside et al., 2016).

How difficult can it be to find a good college pitcher? Ball flight kinematics do not necessarily relate to pitching success. As such, other, less-visible factors must be considered to identify future good college pitchers (Whiteside et al., 2016).

Some argue that coaches who have never played in the major leagues cannot manage in the Major Leagues (Schempp et al., 2010). It is an argument used to eliminate many college coaches from MLB managerial job consideration. Nevertheless, no statistically significant relationship exists between the duration of a coach’s MLB playing career and MLB coaching success (winning percentage), which should, in fact, open the door for college baseball coaches. This study looked at MLB, NBA, and NFL coaches from 1997–2007 and found that as the length of the professional playing career increased, the worse was the manager, again apparently opening the door to college baseball coaches. In fact, the study acknowledged that gaining knowledge beyond just professional playing experience was necessary to be a successful coach (Schempp et al., 2010).

Furthermore, former MLB players who were not stars but did play many years are more likely to become successful MLB managers than star players (Singell, 1991). While not the ultimate evidence in favor of hiring college baseball coaches, it does illustrate an important point. If the game is so easy for a player (as a star then), it becomes more difficult to coach others who are not stars. How much better is it to consider college baseball coaches who not only are not necessarily former MLB stars but also have more experience developing the skills of even lesser of players?

Worst of all, though, regarding MLB managing choices, MLB general managers who constantly hire managers from the minors or majors instead of from colleges do not even pay MLB managers based on their efficiency but instead based on their experience (Smart et al., 2008). This methodology is obviously greatly misplaced and provides further evidence of the lack of efficiency in the MLB managerial market.

Again, why then are there not more college baseball coaches who rise to MLB managerial positions? The answer again appears to be the lack of college baseball coaches seeking agents’ representation or the lack of those agents being successful in helping college baseball coaches transcend the apparently great divide between coaching in college and managing in the Majors.

College coaches may rely on declining college sports budgets as an excuse for not continuing to pursue higher salaries but especially for not seeking out an agent. Yes, programs have been eliminated, but baseball can more consistently generate revenue than Olympic sports programs (Wolverton, 2009). Thus, this excuse should have no bearing on the choice whether to seek out agent representation.

Furthermore, university presidents are still earning far more than college coaches. Gee left his university with a $6 million compensation package in 2013. Loftin earned $1.6 million at Texas A&M at College Station (Adams, 2014). Childress received roughly $400,000 in that year as the baseball coach at that school. Sumlin gathered $3.1 million as the football coach that
year. Obviously, the baseball coach, at least, still earns less than the college president. It is enough less to argue for increased compensation based on results and on equity.

Shirvani received $1.3 million from the North Dakota University System in the same year. Khator earned $1.3 million as president of the University of Houston. Mason received $1.1 million as president of the University of Iowa. Coleman gained $1 million as president of the University of Michigan (Adams, 2014).

In addition, the SEC university athletic departments certainly have enough money to pay their baseball coaches more money. In 2013 alone then, each SEC university received $20.9 million from the SEC. This money is in addition to the ticket revenues the individual universities earned (Solomon, 2014).

References


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KODĖL UNIVERSITETŲ BEISBOLO TRENERIAI UŽDIRBA MAŽIAU NEI FUTBOLO TRENERIAI

S a n t r a u k a