



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY

By Kerry Schmidt 11-09-2008

Geeze, the above headline is sure shocking. Who woulda thought? Well, in sports anyway, money IS the guiding light. It's the engine that makes the train run. Pro sports? The amount of dollars is staggering. And in major college sports, while the players don't get paid (hee hee), the coaches sure do. And the amount of money generated by major sports would feed about 50 starving countries. AH, let 'em starve, We need our sports!

Of the big three pro sports, baseball, by far, is the richest pot at the end of the rainbow. The average salary of a MLB player this year is \$3.4 million. The NBA is actually higher, with the average money grab about \$6.2 million per, but with only 12 players on NBA teams, hell, it's a cheap sport. You have over 50 NBA players whose contracts total at least \$50 million, covering from just one or two years, to five or six. 17 players have long term contracts worth over \$100 million. Cleveland's LeBron James' contract is up this year. What do you think he will make. Many are saying he could get a multi-year deal worth about 35 million – PER YEAR!

Now the NFL, where the average life span of a player is 3.1 years, is the lowest paid of the big three. I say this sucks, because they play the most brutal sport of all. Plus, only a very few of the top players have guaranteed contracts. If you suffer a career ending injury, you only receive the remainder of that year's money, except for the chosen few. But the NBA and MLB, those contracts are guaranteed. Alex Rodriguez's 10 year deal is worth \$165 million. If he were to get hurt, thus ending his playing days, the club still owes him all that money. Ditto the NBA

Since this is NFL time, let's take a look at some of the highest paid players. Some of these may really surprise you. Arizona's WR Larry Fitzgerald will make \$17,103, 480 this year. Hell yea, don't forget that 480. LB Carlos Dansby (WHO?) is second with a paltry 8 mill. Half the team make over one million. Atlanta: Michael Turner (who again), a RB, makes \$16.03 mil and change. No.1 rookie draft pick Matt Ryan's salary is only 6 ½ mil. But, he received a guaranteed 27 million sign on bonus. Keeping with the "who's that," the Ravens top guy is Terrell Suggs, at 8 plus mil. All world LB Ray Lewis is only 4th.

Would take up the entire column to list each, so I'll just cover a few surprises. Detroit has the lowest top paid player, WR Calvin Johnson, at a paltry 6.2 mil. No wonder they haven't won a game yet. The highest player, by far, is Pittsburgh's QB, Ben Roethlisberger, at \$27.7 mil. At least he has the longest name, so maybe that is why the big bucks. Some other no name top earners. Dallas' Flozell Adams, OL, makes 14 mil. Packer's DE Kabeer Ghaia-Biamila rakes in over 10 mill, which is about 1.9 mil per letter. Colts' TE Dallas Clark makes more than Manning. The Vikings have Jared Allen, a 21 mil DE! New England. Randy Moss makes almost twice what Tom Brady does. Giants O lineman, Chris Snee, blocks for the other Manning, so he makes 5 mil more than Eli. Ole Brett Favre tops the Jets at 12 mil. The suck-ass Raiders have suck ass QB JaMarcus Russell at nearly 17 mil.



And, the ever so suck ass Raiders have, by far, the highest team payroll at \$152 million. Talk about wasted money. Screw you, Al Davis.

The Saints' DE Will Smith is nearly 13 mil. Top rated QB Drew Brees? He's 8th on the list.

Most coaches make about 50% of the average of all players.

Enough of this boring stuff. At the half way point of the NFL season, you have perennial power houses Indianapolis, Dallas and New England fighting to make the playoffs, while Tennessee is undefeated and the "other" Manning, Eli, has his Giants at 7-1 in arguably the toughest division in the league, the NFC East.

Who cares.

College coaches make millions also. Tennessee just fired coach Phillip Fulmer. It will cost them 6 mil to fire him (what's left on his contract).

Hey, fire me for 6 mil!!!

Five other college coaches that have been fired will still rake in almost another 6 mil total.

No dollar figures on how much money college players make under the table.

Speaking of coaches that left their old schools.

Rich Rodriguez bailed out on West Virginia with three games left last season. Just left a letter saying "I'm gone."

Michigan lured Rick, making him richer, by paying him over 4 mil plus other perks.

Results?

Rich has taken Michigan from the "Go Blue" to the Woe Blue.

For his 4 mil, Rodriguez has given Michigan their first losing season since 1967, and thus their first non-bowl season, which is hard to do, given that nearly half of all I-A teams go to a bowl.

He has lost five in a row, and with three games left, he could end up 3-9.

Rich has lashed out at the press, cussed his way into the sports pages, and insists he is "on the right track." Says it just takes a little time.

West Virginia fans are smiling big time.

OK, but look at Nick Saban at Alabama.

When Saban arrived at Alabama just 22 months ago, Bama was in much worse shape than Michigan was when rich Rich came in. When Gene Stallings left in 1996, 'Bama won just over 50% of their games and were on probation for three years.

Saban has Alabama at No.1 with a chance to play for a national championship.

So, Michigan, like the Raiders, spent a lot of money for a loser.

'Bama is paying Saban 32 million bucks over eight years, but, see results above.

Speaking of Saban and Alabama.

Saban built LSU into a national champion in 2003, then left for the Miami Dolphins. After 3 losing seasons, he signed with LSU's arch rival and SEC nemesis, Alabama.

Thus, the once God-like coach from LSU is now the reviled demon who is hated more than LSU students hate to go to classes.

'Bama played at LSU yesterday, but the build up to his return has stirred up more emotion than the second coming of Christ.

You have to understand SEC football. It is not a game. It is a religion! Every game is akin to looking for the holy grail, and with a win, the fans stay drunk until the next week. If they lose, they stay drunk until next week. Then, repeat.

Near the LSU stadium, a couple of billboards have been put up. They say, "Welcome back Nick," with some not so subtle other sayings. Also, there is a picture of Saban, showing him on fire, with the calling for LSU fans to come to a "Burn Bama Burn" fire Friday night. 75,000 drunks will be there, I can assure you.

To put it mildly, the once beloved hero is now the hated traitor, worse than the devil himself.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

“He’s a carpetbagger and a turncoat, and some other words I can’t say to the paper,” said LSU fan Gary Perkins of Pineville, LA.

He added, “I appreciate what he did, but now he went to rival Alabama. We don’t respect him. Once we loved him, now we hate his guts.”

Sounds like a woman talking about her just divorced husband,

LSU is ranked No. 15 at 6-2, while No. 1 Alabama is 9-0. With a win in Baton Rouge, Alabama will earn a spot in the December 6 SEC title game.

A win there, and a likely spot in the BCS Championship game will follow.

Bama fans are already dreaming of another Bear Bryant era, and the “good ole days,” wherein they won a record 21 SEC titles and 55 bowls.

But they need to remember, this is today. Unlike yesteryear, when coaches would stay forever, the ever waiting big bucks are always luring out there, so whose to say that Saban, if he wins a title, won’t bolt in a couple of years for even more money.

But back to yesterday. As I write this on Friday afternoon, I look out my office window and see streams of cars heading to Baton Rouge with their LSU flags flying and, I’m sure, enough booze to stock any French Quarter bar. Even some large motor homes are headed up there. They don’t tailgate as much as they build large resort like areas. I have seen places where they import a ton or so of sand, built fake palm trees, have a bamboo bar, blenders, shelves of over 20 different types of happy juice, a large screen TV and the total set up covers over 1000 square feet! And, many of these people do not even have tickets. They just start their party at 5 PM Friday night, and don’t leave until Sunday afternoon.

Like I said, SEC football is a religion.

If LSU should upset Alabama, the entire state would erupt into an 8.2 earthquake, and a state-wide holiday would be declared. They might even call it “Holy Week,” as in a religion!

But as I said above, either way, they will be drunk for a week.

Back to money. Real money. And, it’s for the average Joe.

POKER.

Yep, a game that once was a back room illegal gambling is now one of the biggest games on TV. The World Series of Poker.

When it first started nearly 30 years ago, maybe 50 or so top pros would participate and the winner got, maybe, a hundred thousand or so.

This year, over 9,000 paid \$10,000 to try to win the biggest title in poker, the Texas Hold Em title. The tournament started in July and the players started playing at noon and stopped at 3:30 AM.

Many of all the legendary old pros entered, as usual, but for the last four years, an “average Joe” has won it. And it will be the same this year.

The WSOP has gotten so popular, that ESPN has, for the last 10 weeks, has TV’s two hours of live gaming.

And, it will show the “final table,” which is comprised of the last nine of the 9,000 entrants. It will be live on Tuesday, from 8 – 10 Central time.

The winner will take home \$9.15 million! Hell, that’s more than a few pro athletes make!

The chip leader is a 53-year old trucking account manager from St. Louis.

As an avid poker player myself, I have been watching from the start.

ESPN estimates that more than 7 million will watch the final table, as it is called. And again, it will be great to watch some average Joe take home over 9 mil!

With the old pros, they used to say winning the coveted bracelet was what they were really after, but, believe me, these average Joes, well 9 mil is their goal.

And, each one of the final nine will come away with at least one million.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

A few years ago, Texas Hold Em poker was something very few, except for the pros and avid players, had even heard of this game.

Now, more people will watch this final than many of the NFL and college games this weekend! So, you have NFL football, college ball, coaches jumping around, players making more than the GNP of some small countries. Add in the nine million some lucky poker player will win Tuesday, and it is, as it most always is and forever has been and will be, **ALL ABOUT MONEY**.

I know, this column sucks. I did not even want to write one today. Bad cold and lousy attitude. But, nothing some money bought single malt can't fix.