

Joe Pa's worth goes far beyond salary



JOE PATERNO has seen better days as Penn State's head football coach. Critics have suggested that

it's time for the 80-year-old legend to step aside, pointing to four losing seasons in the last eight years.

Some of his Nittany Lions have had serious brushes with the law, tarnishing the football program's longtime reputation as a "pacesetter for integrity in the NCAA." And, just last week, Joe Pa's salary, once one of the sports world's most carefully guarded secrets, was made public.

But none of those issues should detract from his induction into the College Football Hall of Fame today. It is a well-deserved honor, just as much as the half-million-dollar salary Penn State pays him.

During his 42-year tenure as the Nittany Lions' head coach, Paterno has collected 371 career wins (just two victories behind Florida State's Bobby Bowden for most victories by a Division I football coach), two national championships (1982 and 1986), five undefeated seasons (1968, '69, '73 and '94), and 22 bowl victories (more than any coach in college football history).

In 1986, Paterno was the first college football coach to be named "Sportsman of the Year" by *Sports Illustrated*. Since joining the Big Ten Conference in

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1993, Penn State has won the Big Ten championship twice (1994 and 2005). In 2005, following an 11-1 comeback year, Joe Pa was named the Associated Press' Coach of the Year.

Those achievements make him one of the top coaches in college football history. Yet his base salary of \$512,664 is nowhere near what the highest-paid coaches earn, including: Iowa's Kirk Ferentz, \$2,840,000; Southern Cal's Pete Carroll, \$2,782,320; and Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, \$950,000.

Despite a considerable salary, Paterno has lived a modest life. He arrived at State College in 1950 as a 23-year-old assistant coach who made \$3,600 a season. In 1966, when he became head coach, Paterno's salary was \$20,000.

He could have made millions more coaching in the NFL. Paterno was offered that opportunity in the 1970s by the New England Patriots, but he turned it down to remain at the college level, viewing himself more as an educator than a coach.

In fact, money doesn't seem to be a motivator for Joe Pa. He still lives in the same modest ranch-style house he purchased when he first moved to State College

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and, until recently, walked through campus to work.

Paterno has given back to Penn State, too. Throughout his career, he and his wife, Sue, have contributed roughly \$4 million to the university, most notably for the campus library and an All Faith Spiritual Center. Nor does that figure include the time and effort he has devoted to the fundraising process.

Most important, however, is the fact that Joe Pa, the ultimate "teacher-coach," has, for most of his career, run a model football program.

He has often said that he "measures team success not by athletic prowess, but by the number of productive citizens who make a contribution to society."

Virtually all his players graduate because he makes sure that they attend class, devote the proper time to studies, and graduate with a meaningful degree.

When an educator can do something like that, his career has taken him much further than the College Football Hall of Fame.

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