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From financial standpoint, Hayden Fry was born too soon

 **Mike Hlas**
Jun. 29, 2015 12:07 pm



Hayden Fry at his introductory press conference as Iowa's football coach in 1978. Behind him is then-Iowa athletic director Bump Elliott. (Gazette photo)

MESQUITE, Nev. - Hayden Fry said he never worried about how much money he was making while he was a college football coach, but he clearly has remembered his salaries.

"I coached for 47 years," Fry said. "I coached in the Marine Corps and in high school, and I was an assistant coach in college. For 37 years I was a college head coach. You know what my attitude was when I was coaching? It was that the coaches got paid a pretty good salary."

But Fry's first-year salary as the University of Iowa's head coach was an unspectacular \$40,000 when he took the job in late 1978. That's about \$54,960,000 less than the cost of the school's new football facility and close to 1 percent of what current Hawkeyes coach Kirk Ferentz earns per year.

"Today it's astronomical," said Fry. "I've got five assistant coaches who are head coaches now who make more money in one year than I made in 47. That's how much it's changed."

There was a time when Fry was near the top of his field in wages.

"I was the third highest-paid high school coach in Texas at \$8,600 (in 1958 at Odessa High) and I took an assistant's job coaching the defensive backfield at Baylor for \$8,000. My second year, we led the nation in pass defense.

"The head coach at Arkansas, Frank Broyles, had been my backfield coach at Baylor when I was quarterback for them. He hired me as offensive coordinator. So I jumped in salary to \$13,200 at Arkansas."

Arkansas had a Sugar Bowl team when SMU hired Fry to become its head coach.

"When I got my first check at SMU I looked at it and said 'My God, that's not as much as I was making at Arkansas. I was making \$13,200 at Arkansas, and only \$13,000 at SMU as head coach."

Years later, Fry was the head coach/athletic director at North Texas State when he was hired to be head coach at Iowa.

"I didn't even know where Iowa was located," he said. "(Athletic Director) Bump Elliott and Vice President (Edward) Jennings flew down to interview me at an airport in Dallas. I even paid for their hotel rooms."

Fry said he connected with Elliott because Elliott had been a head coach in the Big Ten at Michigan. Like Fry, Elliott was a former Marine.

"I had a great athletic director," Fry said. "When Bump Elliott hired me he said 'Coach Fry, if you need me, call me.' He didn't tell me what to do. He believed in me, and I believed in him."

In Fry's third season at Iowa, the Hawkeyes ended a string of 19 straight nonwinning seasons, won the Big Ten, and went to the Rose Bowl.

"I even got a pay raise," Fry said.

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