

TEN REASONS WHY RODNEY TERRY DESERVES A RAISE

1. In a recent interview with the Fresno Bee, Fresno State athletic director Jim Bartko claimed, "(Rodney Terry is) one of the top five coaches in the league even though he's not one of the top five in salary yet." Note the word "yet." It's clear Rodney Terry's boss believes he deserves a raise. The question is: How big? The fact is: Terry was vastly underpaid last season. He received \$411,000, which ranked 7th of the 9 coaches in the Mountain West Conference (this does not include Air Force, which does not make its coaching salaries public). Even the AVERAGE salary among the other coaches (\$687,000) dwarfed Terry's modest earnings. But it was Terry who got his team to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2001.

2. This puts Terry's salary in a national perspective. Even while coaching in a true mid-major conference for a school in the state of California, where the cost of living is about as high as it gets, Terry's salary ranked just 47th among the 61 coaches in the NCAA Tournament whose salary figures were reported. It's a little embarrassing to note that coaches from the likes of Middle Tennessee and Stony Brook were north of Terry on the list.

3. While it would be easy to criticize the fact that Mountain West also-rans Colorado State and Wyoming employ coaches who earned \$947,000 and \$686,000 last season, there's little debating that college basketball coaches' salaries are on the rise. You want to save money? You get a clunker. Just ask cellar-dweller San Jose State. And yet Terry's salary was far closer to that of San Jose State's Dave Wojcik (\$331,000) at the bottom of the Mountain West list than San Diego State's Steve Fisher (\$1.03 million) at the top. FAR closer.

4. Speaking of Fisher ... he's 70 years old with just two years left on his current deal. New Mexico (Craig Neal) and Colorado State (Larry Eustachy) are another year removed from their glory days. And UNLV is ... well, starting over again with yet another new coach. The point is: The face of Mountain West basketball is changing. There's an opening for a team with an up-and-coming coach and an enthusiastic fan base. Fresno State recognized that opening and ran to daylight in 2015-16. Wouldn't they be wise to lock up one of the few things trending in a positive direction in the conference while they have the opportunity?

5. Most of this off-season's coaching openings have been filled. That's good news for Fresno State. Chances are, they'll get to keep their rising star. But what about next year? Rice, for instance, is coming off consecutive 20-loss seasons, which is not good news for Fresno State. You see, Rice is in Terry's home state of Texas. If they are the ones throwing around the millions of dollars next March, attempting to lure back an NCAA Tournament-tested young coach who got away, Fresno State probably won't want to be in a position of wishing it had locked up its Longhorn a year earlier when the price was cheaper.

6. "Whether it's right or wrong, March gives you credibility," Fresno State associate head coach Jerry Wainwright recently told the Fresno Bee. "Now (Rodney Terry) has a brand. Now he's not selling hope anymore." In that sense, Terry has a lot in common with Boise State's six-year coach, Leon Rice. One reason the Broncos are on the rise in the Mountain West is they've been able to keep their up-and-coming coach around despite outside interests. The career coaching arcs are similar ... except for the pot of gold at the end. Like Terry, Rice came to Boise (from Gonzaga) with no

head-coaching experience. And, like Terry, Rice's employer recognized his potential and rewarded him with a contract extension three years into his first deal after experiencing some early success. But unlike Terry, Rice got bumped up to a level (\$614,000) where he could say no to his begging alma mater, Washington State. Now Rice has flirted with Saint Louis, which reportedly was offering close to \$1 million. It's easier to say no when you're making \$614,000.

7. When Terry got his contract extension in 2014, then-athletic director Thomas Boeh gushed about many things, including, "Rodney Terry has changed the culture of our Fresno State men's basketball program. He has brought back the academic standards that we expect of our Bulldog student-athletes." Terry hasn't let his bosses down since then, either. Fresno State's academic progress rate (APR) in men's basketball, which was the lowest in the conference when Terry took over, has been on the rise, and was a respectable 945 when the NCAA announced its most recent figures.

8. There's never a good time to have a bad football team. But it sure helps when your basketball team can steal the headlines. Sandwiched amid the basketball team's two trips to the postseason in the past three years has been eight-and-nine-loss football disasters. Nobody likes spending more money, but Terry's rise in status to the point where he warrants a raise actually couldn't have come at a better time for the university.

9. When Fresno State drew 9,948 for its regular-season home finale, it was like old times when no opponent wanted to visit the Save Mart Center. Terry has the Bulldogs winning again, which has interest soaring again. Attendance was up almost 10 percent in 2015-16, and the future looks bright.

And thus, rewarding Terry with a raise wouldn't necessarily equate to burning cash reserves, but rather spreading the additional wealth he helped create.

10. Fresno State is well positioned to take advantage of the increased interest in its basketball program. The school's current relationships with two heavyweights –

Learfield Sports and Nike – help ensure the future of Bulldogs basketball will be as successful off the court as on it. And a happy audience means more donor support, another area in which the university has benefited in years of athletic success. That's the cycle of basketball success: The more you spend, the more you get in return. Giving Rodney Terry a raise seems like a small price to pay to keep that cycle churning.