

Boise State Coaches History



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The history of Boise State University's athletic programs is richly woven with the accomplishments and legacies of its coaches. From humble beginnings to becoming a powerhouse in college sports, particularly in football, the coaches at Boise State have played pivotal roles in shaping the institution's reputation and success. This article explores the evolution of coaching at Boise State, highlighting key figures, their contributions, and the impact they have had on the university's athletic programs.

Early Years and Foundation of Coaching at Boise State

Boise State began its journey in collegiate athletics in the early 20th century. Initially competing in small-scale sports, the university's coaching staff consisted of local educators and athletic enthusiasts.

The First Coaches (1932-1960)

- 1932: Boise Junior College, as it was then known, hired its first official football coach, George "Bunny" McMillan. His leadership laid the groundwork for future athletic programs.
- 1950s: The college transitioned into a four-year institution, and with this change came a need for more specialized coaching. Coaches like Lyle Smith emerged, who would later become a legendary figure in the university's history.

The Rise of Football: Key Coaches and Their Impact

One of the defining aspects of Boise State's athletic identity has been its football program. Coaches

have come and gone, but a few have left indelible marks on the legacy of Boise State football.

Lyle Smith (1947-1968)

Lyle Smith is often credited with establishing the foundation of the Broncos' football program. His tenure is notable for several reasons:

- **Winning Record:** Smith led the team to a remarkable winning record, including multiple conference championships.
- **Innovative Strategies:** He introduced innovative training methods and emphasized the importance of teamwork and discipline.
- **Transition to University Status:** Under his leadership, Boise State transitioned from a junior college to a four-year university, increasing the visibility and competitiveness of its athletic programs.

Pokey Allen (1987-1992)

Pokey Allen took over the football program in the late 1980s and is credited with turning the team into a competitive force within Division I-AA (now FCS).

- **Revitalization of the Program:** Allen revitalized the Broncos, leading them to their first-ever playoff appearance in 1990.
- **Legacy of Excellence:** Allen's coaching style emphasized resilience and determination, traits that would define future Boise State teams.

Dan Hawkins (2001-2005)

Dan Hawkins took the reins of the football program and further elevated Boise State's status in collegiate athletics.

- **Record-Breaking Seasons:** Under Hawkins, the Broncos enjoyed unprecedented success, including a historic 13-0 season in 2006.
- **Cultivating Talent:** Hawkins was instrumental in developing players who would go on to achieve great success in the NFL.
- **Bowl Game Victories:** His leadership helped secure several bowl game victories, including a win at the 2007 Fiesta Bowl, which catapulted the program into the national spotlight.

Chris Petersen (2006-2013)

Chris Petersen succeeded Hawkins and built upon the foundation laid by previous coaches, ushering in the most successful era of Boise State football.

- **National Recognition:** Petersen led the Broncos to multiple BCS bowl games, including a victory in the 2010 Fiesta Bowl against TCU, solidifying Boise State's place in college football lore.

- Innovative Offense: Known for his innovative offensive strategies, Petersen's teams were a force to be reckoned with, consistently ranking among the top in the nation.
- Player Development: He was highly regarded for his ability to develop talent, with several players going on to have successful careers in the NFL.

Brian Harsin (2014-2020)

Brian Harsin took over the program after Petersen's departure and continued to build on the winning tradition.

- Maintaining a High Standard: Harsin's tenure was marked by a commitment to maintaining the high standards of excellence established by his predecessors.
- Mountain West Championships: He led the Broncos to two Mountain West Conference championships and several bowl appearances.
- Coaching Changes: Harsin's time included significant coaching staff changes, which were both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

Current Coaching Era: Andy Avalos (2021-Present)

Andy Avalos, a former player and assistant coach at Boise State, was named head coach in 2021. His return to the program signifies a full-circle moment for the university.

- Defensive Focus: Avalos is known for his defensive acumen, having previously served as the defensive coordinator at the University of Oregon.
- Building a Competitive Team: He aims to restore Boise State to its former glory, focusing on recruiting local talent and fostering a strong team culture.
- Challenges Ahead: As the landscape of college football continues to evolve, Avalos faces the challenge of adapting to new dynamics while maintaining the Broncos' winning traditions.

Other Notable Coaches in Boise State History

While football has garnered much of the attention, Boise State's athletic programs encompass various sports, each with its own set of distinguished coaches.

Basketball Coaches

- Leon Rice (2010-Present): Rice has transformed the men's basketball program, leading the team to multiple NCAA tournament appearances and fostering a culture of competitiveness.
- Kathy Olivier (2000-2006): The women's basketball program saw significant growth under Olivier, advancing to the NCAA tournament and raising the profile of women's athletics at Boise State.

Other Sports Coaches

- Track and Field: Coaches like Mike Keller have guided the track and field teams to national recognition, contributing to the overall success of Boise State athletics.
- Soccer: The women's soccer program has seen success under coaches like Jim Thomas, who have developed competitive teams in the Mountain West Conference.

The Legacy of Boise State Coaches

The legacy of Boise State's coaches is characterized by a commitment to excellence, resilience, and innovation. These coaches have not only shaped their respective sports but have also contributed to the cultural fabric of the university.

- Student-Athlete Development: Coaches have emphasized the importance of academic success alongside athletic performance, ensuring that student-athletes are well-rounded individuals.
- Community Engagement: Many coaches have fostered strong ties with the local community, promoting engagement and support for Bronco athletics.
- Tradition of Winning: The consistent success of Boise State's athletic programs can be traced back to the dedication and vision of its coaches.

Conclusion

The history of Boise State coaches reflects the evolution of a university that has grown from modest beginnings to become a recognized name in collegiate athletics. Each coach has contributed to the program's success and has left a lasting legacy that extends beyond wins and losses. As the university continues to build its future, the influence of its coaches remains a vital part of the Bronco spirit, inspiring future generations to strive for excellence both on and off the field.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first head coach of the Boise State Broncos football team?

The first head coach of the Boise State Broncos football team was John K. McKay, who led the team from 1933 to 1934.

Which coach is credited with leading Boise State to its first major bowl victory?

Chris Petersen is credited with leading Boise State to its first major bowl victory in the 2007 Fiesta Bowl against Oklahoma.

What significant achievement did coach Bryan Harsin accomplish during his tenure?

During his tenure, Bryan Harsin led Boise State to a 10-win season in 2014 and secured the Mountain West Conference Championship.

How many seasons did Chris Petersen serve as the head coach of Boise State?

Chris Petersen served as the head coach of Boise State for eight seasons, from 2006 to 2013.

Who was appointed as the head coach of Boise State in 2020?

In 2020, Andy Avalos was appointed as the head coach of Boise State, returning to his alma mater after previously serving as the defensive coordinator.

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