



## **Master Coaches Poll** **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What is the Master Coaches Poll?**

The Master Coaches Poll is a college football Top 25 poll made up of 17 football experts. They are all highly successful former college coaches, 11 of whom are currently members of the College Football Hall of Fame.

### **What is the history of the Master Coaches Poll?**

The Master Coaches Poll pioneered in 2005 in response to the 2004 undefeated Auburn team being shut out of the BCS national championship game. After USC thrashed Oklahoma in the championship game, many former coaches wondered how the existing polling system could be so flawed as to omit Auburn from the title game. Sixteen prominent retired football coaches were persuaded to form a new poll that would try to eliminate the problems of the existing polls. The Master Coaches Poll is entering its third season of operation in 2007.

### **Which Coaches Currently Make Up the Master Coaches Poll?**

John Cooper	Ohio State, Arizona State
Terry Donahue	UCLA
Vince Dooley	Georgia
Pat Dye	Auburn
LaVell Edwards	BYU
Hayden Fry	Iowa
Don James	Washington
Frank Kush	Arizona State
Dick MacPherson	Syracuse
Bill Mallory	Indiana, Colorado
Don Nehlen	West Virginia
Tom Osborne	Nebraska
John Ralston	Stanford, Utah State
John Robinson	USC
R.C. Slocum	Texas A&M
Gene Stallings	Alabama
George Welsh	Virginia

Bo Schembechler, who passed away in 2006, was a founding member.

### **What are the problems with the existing polls?**

1. Active coaches who voted in the Coaches Poll didn't get to see other teams play across the Top 25, but were expected to rate teams from 1 to 25.
2. Like the active coaches, AP writers didn't see many games weekly either, and, in addition, did not possess the skill necessary to adequately rate the teams.
3. Active coaches could use their vote for personal agendas. They could deny votes to conference rivals with whom they would be waging annual recruiting battles.
4. Even if the active coaches were able to see 20 games a week, they couldn't take the time away from preparing for their next opponent to vote in a poll. Many coaches did (and still do) delegate their voting responsibilities to Sports Information Directors or interns.
5. Fans never could see how the individual coaches were voting each week.

### **Why is this Poll important?**

The Master Coaches Poll is important because of the coaches who make up this poll. No other poll has the cast of voters with the success level and experience of the Master Coaches. They have a combined record of over 3,000 wins and 8 national championships. Eleven of the Master Coaches are in the College Football Hall of Fame, and the remaining six are all strong candidates for election in the near future.

### **How is this Poll different?**

1. The Master Coaches actually watch DVDs of all the relevant games each week.
2. They review game statistics from the games they watched.
3. They have the opportunity to discuss their views with each other on a weekly conference call.
4. No other poll affords its voters the opportunity to do even one of these activities.

### **What procedures do the Master Coaches follow to generate their Poll?**

The Master Coaches are provided game DVDs each week of the football season. The number of DVDs varies, depending on how many teams are still actively in the running for the top ten to twelve positions in the poll. More DVDs are provided in the first four weeks to give the Master Coaches a chance to see a great number of teams before conference play begins. Each DVD is accompanied by a complete statistical package for that game. The Master Coaches view the games on portable DVD players that are equipped with remote fast forward and rewind buttons. The DVDs have been edited to show only the game plays; huddles, time outs and other play stoppage have been eliminated. The Master Coaches can refer back to these game DVDs at any time during the season to compare a team's later performance to an earlier one.

The Master Coaches perform four other tasks weekly. They vote every week on their own Top 25 list. The executive director of the Master Coaches Poll tallies the votes, giving 25 points for a first place vote down to one point for a twenty-fifth place vote. The teams are then listed from # 1 to # 25 based on the aggregate number of votes each received.

The Master Coaches participate in a weekly conference call that lasts one hour. Besides watching the vast array of games provided each week, each coach is assigned approximately four teams to follow closely for the entire season. As teams fall away during the season the executive director reassigns the enduring contending teams, which results in more coaches becoming experts on the top remaining teams. Each coach has the opportunity to speak uninterrupted for a few minutes discussing his teams. Afterwards, any coach can take a turn to make comments or put forth opposing arguments. The total accumulation of knowledge of all the discussions is used by the coaches to shape their own vote. The Master Coaches also discuss the Lott Trophy candidates and provide expert commentary for football fans that is disseminated through various media, including the Master Coaches Poll web site ([www.mcspoll.com](http://www.mcspoll.com)).

### **Why is the Master Coaches Poll better?**

1. It is the only poll where voters see all the relevant games each week. The Coaches Poll and Harris Poll voters do not even have access to all the relevant games.
2. It is the only poll that allows the voters the opportunity to discuss and argue the merits of each team. No other poll has this feature.
3. The conference call enlightens all the Master Coaches about news from other regions and acts as a check against any coach who would think about subverting the system by voting for his old school in an inappropriate slot.
4. The Master Coaches Poll voters are not connected to their old schools anymore. They are not beholden to vote based upon favoritism. They vote objectively based upon what they see on the DVDs.
5. The Master Coaches Poll voters are strong-willed individuals who are not swayed by journalists' opinions when formulating their vote.
6. A team's relative position in the Master Coaches Poll can change drastically each week, since the poll evaluates the teams' play, not where they were last week in the poll. This prevents teams from taking an early season spot at or near the top of the poll and just riding out the season with pedestrian play, but still going undefeated. (See Oklahoma from 2004 season). Remember, the purpose of the Master Coaches Poll is to find the best two teams at seasons end.

## **Does the Master Coaches Poll publish a Pre-Season Poll?**

No. Making pre-season predictions is like asking a doctor to diagnose a patient without seeing or talking to him. It is hard enough to try to judge the merits of teams from different conferences vis-à-vis each other during the season. It is impossible to do it during the pre-season. Many teams get massive make-overs from year-to-year, with older players leaving while newer ones arrive. All these factors have to be sorted out. And the only place that can happen is on the field. So how can anyone honestly predict where any team will place during the pre-season?

The real problem with pre-season polls is that they “shape” the structure of the polls used in the BCS process. Does anyone honestly think that current head coaches who vote in the USA Today Coaches Poll sit down in late July and look to see how teams from the various conferences stack up against each other? Coaches don’t have the time. What can you really compare? So no sincere effort goes into the first poll which “shapes” what happens in subsequent polls. Because of this “shaping” effect, the Master Coaches Poll doesn’t think the pre-season poll concept is reasonable. Consequently, the Master Coaches Poll does not vote on a pre-season poll.

## **When is the first Master Coaches Poll be published during the season?**

The Master Coaches Poll doesn’t vote until after the third game of the season. By then, the Master Coaches have seen DVDs of over 80 games from the first three weeks of the season and have participated in over two hours worth of discussions among themselves via conference calls before they cast their first vote of the season. No other voting group comes close to giving that kind of attention to the voting process. This is certainly a better method and a fairer practice than what currently occurs with the other polls.

## **Can the fans see how the Master Coaches vote?**

Every week the Master Coaches Poll will be posted on the Master Coaches Poll’s web site ([www.mcspoll.com](http://www.mcspoll.com)). In conjunction with the poll, fans will be able to view a page that shows a matrix of 17 columns containing 25 slots each depicting the Top 25 teams from each coach’s ballot. The fans will be able to see the breakdown of votes from each coach. When the Master Coaches Poll was founded in 2005, some of the Master Coaches feared that they would come under undue pressure from the fans of their old schools if their voting record was released each week. As a compromise, the Master Coaches allowed the executive director to post the results anonymously, but in a mode that allows fans to see where teams are receiving their votes. Eventually, with the public’s acceptance of the Master Coaches Poll as the most legitimate poll, the fears of the Master Coaches should subside, and full transparency can be achieved. All previous weeks’ coaches’ votes are archived on the web site.

### **Will the fans and the media members be able to interact with the Master Coaches?**

Yes. The fans, and even the media members, will be able to take advantage of the interactivity features on the Master Coaches Poll web site ([www.mcspoll.com](http://www.mcspoll.com)). There will be web chats featuring Master Coaches, along with weekly radio vignettes including interviews and blogs by the Master Coaches. Fans and media members will be able to submit questions to the Master Coaches and receive direct answers from them. No other poll has this capability. The Master Coaches Poll is the only "Poll with a Face."

### **Won't the Master Coaches just vote for their old schools no matter what their record is?**

No, because all of the Master Coaches see each others' votes and would not hesitate to challenge a coach who voted inappropriately. Plus, the Master Coaches have so much integrity that they wouldn't jeopardize their sterling reputations for fairness just to try to influence the vote.

### **What are some of the other advantages of the Master Coaches Poll?**

As voting members in a college football poll, the Master Coaches have a vast number of contacts in the active coaching field that they can call upon at anytime to get updated information. For example, there are currently 16 active head coaches that either played for, or coached with Hayden Fry. If Hayden wants to find out how a certain program is operating, all he has to do is pick up the phone.

A number of the Master Coaches still live near the campus of their old schools. Many take advantage of their proximity by attending practice on a regular basis. Teams such as Georgia, Indiana, Louisville, Arizona State, Virginia, Auburn, UCLA, Ohio State, BYU, Washington, Syracuse, West Virginia, Texas A&M and Nebraska can expect to have visits from Master Coaches during the season. This keeps the Master Coaches in greater touch with the college football scene than any other poll voters.

### **How will future vacancies on the Master Coaches Poll be filled?**

As the years pass by, a number of currently active head coaches will be retiring. When a vacancy occurs in the Master Coaches Poll, the executive director will send out an invitation to a prominent retired coach, based on the recommendation of the Master Coaches.

### **What is the purpose of the Master Coaches Poll?**

Although the Master Coaches Poll votes on the Top 25 teams during the season, the purpose of the poll is to consider the complete body of work by all teams during the entire season, and to determine which two teams are the best by season's end, and earn the right to face off in the national championship game. Even if the BCS changed to a 4, 8 or 16 team playoff format in the future, there still will be the need for the Master Coaches Poll to select and seed these playoff teams.

### **What is the ultimate goal of the Master Coaches Poll?**

The ultimate goal of the Master Coaches Poll is to become part of the official BCS selection process. The current components of the BCS selection process are the Coaches Poll, the Harris Poll (which replaced the AP writers' poll) and the six computer polls.

### **Why isn't the Master Coaches Poll a part of the BCS official selection process?**

On the face of what the Master Coaches Poll offers, it would seem like it would be a "No Brainer" that the Master Coaches Poll should be a component, if not the sole component, of the BCS selection process. However, the structure of the BCS is a complex arrangement among six key conferences (ACC, Big 12, Big East, Big Ten, Pac-10 & SEC) and the five other football playing conferences (C-USA, Mountain West, WAC, MAC & Sun Belt). No new idea will ever take the BCS hierarchy by storm, no matter how good it appears to be. It normally takes time for a new idea, however excellent it is, to be accepted. Accordingly, in the past two years the Master Coaches Poll has proved itself as a credible and legitimate poll. The 2007 season will make three full years of experience for the Master Coaches Poll. The time has come for the BCS to give serious consideration to the Master Coaches Poll.

## **How can the fans help the Master Coaches Poll become part of the BCS process?**

If the fans think that the Master Coaches Poll is a better system than some of the polls the BCS is currently using, they should light up all the message boards on all the college football web sites, including the Master Coaches Poll site ([www.mcspoll.com](http://www.mcspoll.com)), with their protests. They should write letters to their home town sports editors asking why the BCS isn't using the Master Coaches Poll in its selection process. And finally, they should register their complaints with the conference commissioners from the BCS conferences. For your convenience, their names and contact phone numbers and e-mail addresses are provided below.

If you want to ensure the best teams get selected to play in the national championship game, contact the commissioners and let them know you would like to see the Master Coaches Poll included as one of the components in the BCS selection process.

ACC –John Swofford 336-851-6062 [cdiamico@theacc.org](mailto:cdiamico@theacc.org)

Big 12 –Dan Beebe 469-524-1000 [melanie@big12sports.com](mailto:melanie@big12sports.com)

Big East –Mike Tranghese 401-453-0660 [mtranghese@bigeast.org](mailto:mtranghese@bigeast.org)

Big Ten –Jim Delany 847-696-1010 [jdelany@bigten.org](mailto:jdelany@bigten.org)

Pac – 10 –Tom Hansen 925-932-4411 [sstafford@pac-10.org](mailto:sstafford@pac-10.org)

SEC –Mike Slive 205-458-3000 [kpoe@sec.org](mailto:kpoe@sec.org)

WAC –Karl Benson 303-799-9221 [kbenson@wac.org](mailto:kbenson@wac.org)

Mountain West - Craig Thompson 719-488-4040 [jhedlund@themwc.com](mailto:jhedlund@themwc.com)

C-USA –Britton Banowsky 214-774-1300 [chubbell@c-usa.org](mailto:chubbell@c-usa.org)

MAC –Rick Chryst 216-566-4622 [RChryst@mac-sports.com](mailto:RChryst@mac-sports.com)

Sun Belt –Wright Waters 504-299-9066 [waters@sunbeltsports.org](mailto:waters@sunbeltsports.org)

## **Master Coaches Survey – Other Affiliations**

### **What is the Lott Trophy and how is it associated with the Master Coaches?**

The Lott Trophy, named after NFL Hall of Fame player Ronnie Lott, goes to the college football Defensive IMPACT Player of the Year; a player who has had the biggest impact on his team both on and off the field. IMPACT stands for Integrity, Maturity, Performance, Academics, Community and Tenacity, all characteristics exhibited by Lott during his illustrious playing career.

2006 Winner - Daymeion Hughes, Cal-Berkeley

2005 Winner - Demeco Ryans, Alabama

2004 Winner - David Pollack, Georgia

The Lott Trophy administrators asked the Master Coaches to help select the Lott Trophy winner in 2006. Their reasoning was that since the Master Coaches watch so many games during the season, they would be the logical selectors for this trophy. Currently, the Master Coaches have approximately 40% of the voting power in the Lott Trophy balloting. The use of the Master Coaches for selecting this award validates the reasons why the Master Coaches Poll should be a part of the official BCS selection process.

### **What is the MCS Nike Game Ball Award?**

Each week during the football season the Master Coaches select an offensive, defensive and special teams player of the week, along with an outstanding offensive and defensive coordinator. The Master Coaches especially wanted to honor assistant coaches since they remember how little recognition those hard working subordinates receive while working in the shadow of the head coach. News releases are sent to the schools of the weekly award winners, where they are promptly posted on the school's web site. Nike has partnered with the Master Coaches to be the official MCS game ball.

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