

Another extension for Mizzou football coach Eli Drinkwitz? Here's what could be coming.

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Behind the story: Midway through the 2025 football season, Missouri coach Eli Drinkwitz's name began to circulate as a potential candidate for other high-profile jobs — LSU, Auburn, Penn State and the like. After a weekend talking with sources around the football program and university administration, I wrote this piece articulating their thoughts and what they were prepared to offer him as a contract extension. Two months later, that deal came together as loosely outlined in this story that set the stage for something of a boardroom saga.

Full text: COLUMBIA, Mo. — Another week, another prominent college football program firing its head coach, another instance of Missouri coach Eli Drinkwitz's name popping up as a potential candidate.

Last week, it was Penn State. This week, it's Florida. Given the apparent proclivity of schools to dismiss coaches midseason in 2025, there will probably be others soon enough.

Where's it all headed for Drinkwitz and Mizzou?

It's still too early for anyone involved to confidently say, but there's optimism in MU's administrative circles that this turn of the coaching carousel will end with the popular coach still in Columbia.

Drinkwitz, 6-1 so far this season with 27 wins and counting in the past three years, is immensely favored among the University of Missouri's power brokers. That's evidenced by the persistent contract extensions awarded to him in each of the past three years, the investment in Mizzou's football facilities, the availability of funds to build eight-figure rosters and the ongoing \$250 million renovation of Memorial Stadium's north end zone.

The athletics department has adopted a motto when it comes to its recent wave of on-field success: "Why stop now?"

The same saying will likely apply toward MU's investment in Drinkwitz should interest from other schools materialize.

Administrators have signaled a willingness to once again increase his compensation in order to keep Drinkwitz coaching the Tigers. If he leaves — a thought that Missouri does not seem too concerned about right now — the university does not want that to be for financial reasons.

He's making \$9 million this season, which puts him tied for the 10th-largest salary in college football before bonuses come into play. His most recent contract extension, signed in February, did not include a raise. It pays out \$46.5 million across five years.

The next extension for Drinkwitz — which seems like more a matter of when than if — would almost certainly come with another raise.

Another \$2 million per year would elevate Drinkwitz above \$11 million per season and put him in or around the top five highest-paid coaches, depending on how other coaching deals around the country shake out.

That benchmark is a significant one: Indiana last week signed coach Curt Cignetti to a new eight-year fully guaranteed deal that will earn the coach an average of approximately \$11.6 million per season. Drinkwitz's current deal average's \$9.3 million per season.

Could the Cignetti extension become an approximate bar for other schools looking to retain popular coaches?

There are other contractual strings that could be retuned to sweeten Drinkwitz's deal. His buyout could be raised from 75% of what's left on the deal to something closer to fully guaranteed. UM System regulations require special approval from the Board of Curators for any head coach contract to exceed five years, but given Drinkwitz's favorability among that group, such an exception could probably be managed.

Whether any of that is on the table, or what kind of raise MU might offer, remains to be seen.

There's a thinking among some administrators that the cost of even a substantial raise for Drinkwitz that would vault him closer to the top of college football's highest-paid coaches would be worth it. The calculation could come down to that expense compared to what it would cost to hire a successor, replace players who may leave and a potential revenue shortfall should the Tigers struggle on the field.

There are moving parts to all of it.

One precedent between Missouri and Drinkwitz worth recalling is his second contract extension, which both parties agreed to after a 10-win 2023 regular season.

That deal came with approximately a 50% raise, bumping his salary from \$6 million to \$9 million and bringing him from the lower half to the upper half of SEC coach earnings. The timing of that extension was also notable: It was signed Dec. 5, 2023, which was 11 days after the regular season ended.

The deal came together quietly and was not announced until after Mizzou won the Cotton Bowl at the end of the month.

If or when MU and Drinkwitz come to terms on another contract extension, both sides may choose to do so quietly once again. The national perception of Drinkwitz is different now than it was then, though, and word of an agreement emerging from either side would serve as an indication that the coach is staying in place.

Last week, Drinkwitz called his name appearing on hot boards and possible candidate lists “a distraction that you shouldn’t even worry about.”

“As far as my name associated with everything: That’s awesome for the University of Missouri,” he said. “Means we’re doing something really good. Means that our administration is committed to excellence. It means all the investment that the people here have made has resulted in our success. That’s what I’d say: It’s a tip of the hat to the University of Missouri. Has nothing to do with me, has everything to do with the players and the support staff.”

It’s still not clear how serious of a look other programs will have at Drinkwitz. Penn State may find his recent recruiting success in Pennsylvania, which included the acquisition of former Nittany Lions quarterback Beau Pribula in the transfer portal, appealing. Florida may like his success in moving Mizzou up the SEC hierarchy. The same would apply to Auburn, if that job does end up opening.

A college football landscape that has shifted rapidly also means the job quality margins between Missouri and those schools has shrunk quickly. Programs like Penn State and Florida are no longer vastly better spots to be a head coach than Mizzou. The resources available to Drinkwitz at MU are on par with other high-end schools.

There may not be any update to Drinkwitz’s future for several weeks yet. Though schools with head coach openings could be calling around now, serious discussions likely won’t happen until the end of the regular season. Other job-market dominoes still have to fall.

But when December comes around, Missouri seems to be serious about keeping Drinkwitz in place and prepared to spend more to do so.