

Auburn going for the crown

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By [Bob Martin](#) , Publisher

Congratulations to Gus Malzahn and the Auburn football team for securing the football championship of the Southeastern Conference against the University of Missouri this past weekend at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

This was the second SEC title Malzahn has played a significant role in winning for Auburn, first as coach of the offense in 2010 and now as the team's head coach. The win moved the Tigers to No. 2 in the Nation and will give them a shot at their second national title in four years if they can beat the Florida State Seminoles in the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) Title Game at the Rose Bowl on January 6 in Pasadena.

The powers at Auburn thought so much of Malzahn's turnaround of the football program on the Plains that they anted up before the Tigers demolished a good Missouri team 59-42 in the SEC Championship Game Saturday night before a packed house of 75,632 mostly Auburn fans at the Georgia Dome. The score would have been worse had Auburn not coughed up the ball three times in the first half.

Since the SEC Championship game was initiated in 1992 Auburn and the Alabama Crimson Tide have been a participant in the 22 Championship Games 12 times, Alabama 7 times and Auburn 5 times. The Tide has a record of 3-4 and The Tigers have a 3-2 mark. Let's all wish for another national championship for our teams in Alabama.

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Malzahn gets big reward

One day before the SEC Championship game Auburn announced it had struck a new six-year pay deal with Malzahn which will pay him \$3.8 million next year with increases of \$250,000 each year for the duration of the contract. This would guarantee him a salary \$5.3 million in the final year of the contract. It won't quite match the pay grade of Nick Saban but it's certainly nothing to sneeze at.

The new deal reportedly adds two years to the five year \$2.3 million contract Malzahn was signed for in December of 2012. The total value is estimated to be \$27 million. Not bad for a country boy from Arkansas.

How much longer in Atlanta?

The SEC event has a very positive economic impact for Atlanta where it has been played since 1994 and the SEC is bound by contract to hold the SEC Championship Game there through 2017. But, after that the future of the Atlanta site may be in jeopardy. Why? Well the Southeastern Conference's geographical boundary has doubled in size with the addition of Missouri and Texas A&M and the most central major city is now Memphis.

The Georgia Dome is slated for demolition in 2017. If the SEC Championship Game stays in Atlanta, it would have to be moved to the Atlanta Falcon's new stadium, if, in fact, it is completed on time.

Dan Coroso of the Atlanta Sports Council has been quoted as saying the Falcons will handle negotiations with the SEC to continue hosting the Championship. SEC Communications Director Chuck Dunlap said in response that "the host contract is for the city, not the venue. He said moving to a new stadium probably won't mean moving the game, which brings in about \$30 million in revenue, to a new city.

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"You've got the Hall of Fame Coming and Atlanta is becoming the central hub for college football and specifically the SEC football and we are proud to be a part of that and look forward of the future of that," he recently told the Atlanta media.

Dunlap said the conference will likely begin negotiations with the Falcons in 2015 with regard to a new contract for the SEC championship game.

What Atlanta officials obviously don't realize is the boundary of the conference has taken a giant leap westward and northwestwardly. It now reaches from Gainesville, Fla. north to Lexington, Ky., west to Columbia, Mo., southwest to College Station, Tex.; then east to Baton Rouge, La. and back to Gainesville. If you look at this geographical area the most central location for the SEC title game would be Memphis, and that Tennessee city would not be exactly in the center.