

Highest Paid Sportsmen in World

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Read this article to know about World's 15 Most Highest-Paid Sportsmen.

1. Tiger Woods - \$110 million

Woods has earned almost \$900 million in prize money, endorsements and appearance fees during his 13-year professional golf career and next year is poised to become the first athlete to earn \$1 billion during a career. Woods racked up more than twice the earnings of any other athlete over the past 12 months despite being sidelined for eight months after knee surgery thanks to lucrative endorsement deals with Accenture, Gillette and Nike as well as a thriving golf course design business.

2. Kobe Bryant - \$45 million

Bryant secured his place among the NBA's all-time greats when he won his fourth NBA title with the Los Angeles Lakers in June. The Black Mamba's popularity is at its zenith as his No. 24 jersey is the top seller in the U.S., Europe and China. Bryant pads his \$21 million Lakers salary through endorsement deals with Nike, Upper Deck, Activision and VitaminWater.

3. Michael Jordan - \$45 million

MJ retired as a player for the third and presumably final time six years ago, but he is still the most famous athlete in the United States. The Jordan Brand is approaching \$1 billion in sales for Nike which turned Jordan into a marketing phenomenon. Jordan is on the short list of potential buyers for the Charlotte Bobcats where he is head of basketball operations and a minority owner.

4. Kimi Raikkonen - \$45 million

Formula One's highest-paid driver finished a disappointing third in the World Championship standings last year after winning the title in 2007. This year has been even worse for the Iceman who sits in 10th place in the current standings. Ferrari resigned Raikkonen in September to a one-year contract extension keeping the Finn behind the wheel for Ferrari through 2010.

5. David Beckham - \$42 million

Becks is far from the best player on the pitch, but he is still the most famous which is why companies like Adidas, Giorgio Armani and Motorola pay him millions for his endorsement. Beckham spent five months on loan this year playing for AC Milan before his planned return to play for the Los Angeles Galaxy in July when the MLS season is half over.

6. LeBron James - \$40 million

The NBA's MVP led the Cleveland Cavaliers to the league's best record and had a playoff performance for the ages this year, but his team was bounced from the playoffs by the Orlando Magic in the Conference Finals. His free agency next summer has teams maneuvering to get under the salary cap in hopes of signing King James. The Cavs can offer the biggest contract under NBA salary rules, but James might go in search of a bigger market.

7. Phil Mickelson - \$40 million

Playing second fiddle to Tiger Woods has proven very lucrative for the world's second-ranked player. His most lucrative deal is with Callaway, which signed Mickelson to a five-year extension this year. Other sponsors include Barclay's, Exxon, KPMG and Rolex. Mickelson has won \$54 million in prize money during his career, third all-time behind Woods and Vijay Singh.

8. Manny Pacquiao - \$40 million

Pac-Man hogged the boxing spotlight over the past year with victories in two blockbuster fights against Oscar De La Hoya in December and Ricky Hatton in March that combined generated more than \$100 million in pay-per-view revenue in the U.S. A member of Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People, Pacquiao plans to run for political office when his days in the ring are over.

9. Valentino Rossi - \$35 million

The Doctor won his eighth World Championship in 2008 after two straight years of falling short of the title. The biggest star in motorcycle racing earns \$16 million annually from his contract to ride for Yamaha and his earnings more than double when you count licensing income, bonuses and endorsement deals with the likes of energy drink Monster.

10. Dale Earnhardt Jr. - \$34 million

Earnhardt was chosen as Nascar's most popular driver for a sixth straight year in 2008 despite winning only one race during the past two seasons. His merchandise sales were twice the total of any other driver. Earnhardt's biggest personal sponsorship deals are with Adidas, Chevrolet, Polaris, Wrangler and

Nationwide Insurance, which he added this year.

11. Roger Federer - \$33 million

Federer cemented his position as the greatest tennis player ever when he won his 14th Grand Slam title and completed a career Grand Slam by winning the French Open this month. Federer also passed Pete Sampras in October to become the all-time leader in career prize money and has earned \$48 million since turning pro in 1998.

12. Shaquille O'Neal - \$33 million

Shaq experienced a renaissance on the court this year returning to the All-Star game where he shared the MVP Award with former teammate and nemesis Kobe Bryant. Off-the-court Shaq continues to pile up sales of his low-cost Shaq and Dunkman brands of shoes, which now top 75 million pairs since he launched the first line in 1996. Shaq has reached a new audience through Twitter where he has 1.2 million followers.

13. Oscar De La Hoya - \$32 million

Boxing's Golden Boy hung up his gloves after one last mega-fight in December against Manny Pacquiao that earned De La Hoya \$30 million. He retires with the record for all-time pay-per-view buys of 14.1 million and PPV revenue of \$696 million.

14. Lewis Hamilton - \$32 million

Hamilton is often compared to Tiger Woods for his breakout performance at an early age as a black athlete in a predominantly white sport. Hamilton won the 2008 Formula One World Championship by a single point and became the youngest driver to win the title at 23. Last summer, Reebok inked Hamilton to a multimillion-dollar deal to be a "global brand ambassador."

15. Alex Rodriguez - \$32 million

A-Rod earns little off the field these days but makes the cut thanks to his historic 10-year, \$275 million contract he signed with the Yankees after the 2007 season. The deal paid A-Rod \$27 million last year and is worth \$32 million this season. He also got \$1 million in January as part of the \$10 million signing bonus in the deal.

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