

James Laurinaitis, Chris Ward Included On 2024 Ballot For College Football Hall Of Fame



The National Football Foundation released the names on the 2024 ballot for induction into the College Football Hall of Fame earlier this week, and a pair of Buckeyes – linebacker James Laurinaitis and offensive tackle Chris Ward – are up for consideration.

Laurinaitis played four seasons at Ohio State from 2005-08, totaling 365 tackles (24 for loss), 13 sacks, nine pass breakups and nine interceptions in 51 games. He was a two-time Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, a three-time consensus All-American and three-time first-team All-Big Ten honoree. He also won the Lott Trophy in 2008, the Butkus Award in 2007 and the Bronco Nagurski Trophy in 2006.

After an eight-year run in the NFL with the St. Louis Rams and New Orleans Saints, Laurinaitis broke into coaching, joining Marcus Freeman at Notre Dame as a graduate assistant last season. He returned to Ohio State this offseason working with the linebackers, and has already made a strong impression since he returned to Columbus.

“It’s good to have someone come in, who can work with them individually, technique-wise, and maybe do some different things than I’ve done,” defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said. “Whereas I may have coached something one way, he can say, ‘Well, you know, this is how I did it,’ or ‘This is how we did it in the NFL. This is what helped me make plays.’ He can say, ‘I made a lot of plays using this technique.’ So the system’s going to be the system, but he can bring a lot of new things to our players, and that’ll be good for them.”

Ward is a two-time first-team All-American and three-time first-team All-Big Ten selection, playing at Ohio State from 1974-77. He helped Ohio State to a share of four Big Ten titles during his time with the Buckeyes, and also blocked for two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin. This is the fifth time on the ballot for Laurinaitis, while Ward is appearing for the sixth time.

Laurinaitis and Ward are among the list of nominees that includes 78 players and nine coaches, a star-studded grouping that features Pittsburgh wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald, Syracuse wide receiver Marvin Harrison Sr., Washington State quarterback Ryan Leaf, California running back Marshawn Lynch, North Carolina defensive end Julius Peppers, Indiana quarterback Antwan Randle El, Arizona State defensive end Terrell Suggs and Virginia Tech quarterback Michael Vick, among others.

The class will be announced early next year and will be induced on Dec. 10, 2024, at the 66th NFF Annual Awards Dinner in Atlanta.