

Marcus Freeman Pulls Inspiration From Jim Tressel In Head Coaching Role



As Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman prepares to set sail on his inaugural campaign as the skipper for the Fighting Irish, he has dug into his experience at Ohio State for inspiration in his current role.

Freeman — who played linebacker for Ohio State from 2004-08 — pointed to several lessons that he picked up from his head coach, Jim Tressel, from his time with the Buckeyes. As Freeman is set to make his return to Columbus, for the first time as a head coach, he said he has built his program in similar way to Tressel's.

"The best thing I observed from him is the ability to make everybody in your organization feel important but also make it so that they are important. That's what I want to make sure we reflect here," Freeman said on Monday. "Everybody in our program has to understand that their role is just as valuable as mine as the head coach. I don't care who you are. You can play on scout team, you can work in the cafeteria, you be on the support staff, you can be the defensive or offensive coordinator, you can be a starter — everybody's role is important and they have to believe that.

"Our scout team guys have to believe that their role is as important as mine for us to accomplish our goals. It's a message that has to be preached every day," he continued.

Having played in a tradition-rich program like Ohio State, the importance of embracing the lore of a program is not lost on Freeman. Similarly to Ohio State, Notre Dame's history is long and storied and Freeman is hoping to tap into those traditions to get the most out of his players.

With attention to creating a culture rooted in tradition, Freeman said he learned the significance of observing the program's customs from Tressel.

"That was something that Coach Tressel did when we were at Ohio State. We definitely spent time understanding the history and the tradition of the place that we were playing at and the many different things that go along with being at Ohio State," Freeman said. "To me, it's an appreciation for what you have and an appreciation of where you get to do it. Does it correlate with winning? I think, deep down, maybe it does.

“When you love what you’re doing and where you’re doing it at and you own it, I say all the time ‘We have to own it, this is our program, this is our university,’ I think you sacrifice a little bit more for it when things get hard,” he continued.

While Freeman desires to emulate Tressel’s obsession with program traditions, he also wants his team to play a physical brand of football — much like Tressel-coached teams.

As Freeman prepares his team for his return to Ohio Stadium, he has put his full attention on beating the Buckeyes rather than relishing in the homecoming nature of the game.

“I’m pretty emotionless about going back to Ohio State right now,” Freeman said. “It’s more about the emotions I have about how we get to go play a great team. We get to go play in a great, hostile environment. That’s, to me, where the emotion comes in. Like any competitor, you get those butterflies, you that excitement about going into a place like that and going to compete against a great program like Ohio State.”