

Ohio State Promotes Graduate Assistant James Laurinaitis To Full-Time Linebackers Coach



Ohio State is promoting graduate assistant James Laurinaitis to linebackers coach, making him one of the Buckeyes' 10 full-time assistant coaches.

Laurinaitis joined head coach Ryan Day's staff ahead of last season, and worked with the linebackers during this past season while assisting with recruiting. Now as a full-time assistant coach, Laurinaitis – who has drawn rave reviews from prospects – will be allowed to go on the road and recruit.

A spot opened up for Laurinaitis on the coaching staff following the firing of special teams coordinator Parker Fleming. Day had indicated the Buckeyes were looking at several options regarding the final assistant coach spot, including hiring another special teams coordinator, but have elected to use that spot to promote Laurinaitis. Without a decided special teams coordinator, it is expected that one of Ohio State's current assistants will take over coaching that unit, with Day also having more input.

Laurinaitis is a former linebacker at Ohio State, where he played from 2005-08 and was a three-time All-American and two-time Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, among other national awards. Following his time with the Buckeyes, Laurinaitis played eight seasons in the NFL with the St. Louis Rams and New Orleans Saints, finishing with 869 career tackles.

He first broke into coaching in 2022, joining Notre Dame as a graduate assistant under head coach Marcus Freeman, and since returning to Ohio State, Laurinaitis has made a significant impression on those in and around the program.

"He's really important," defensive coordinator Jim Knowles said in December. "You've got a guy who's a three-time all American, a true Buckeye, a Silver Bullet. He handles a lot of the linebacker things that allow me to free up and do work in other areas. He's really been critical to our success."

Knowles had previously coached linebackers for Ohio State and will retain his defensive coordinating responsibilities. Laurinaitis is now one of three new assistant coaches for Ohio State, joining safeties coach Matt Guerrieri and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach Chip Kelly.