

Head Coach Ryan Day Weighing Options With 10th And Final Assistant Coaching Hire



Ohio State head coach Ryan Day is keeping his options open regarding how he will fill the 10th and final open assistant role on his staff for the 2024 season, leaving the door open for a new special teams coordinator or another defensive coach to fill the vacancy.

“We have some flexibility there,” Day said at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center on Wednesday. “We’ve had multiple conversations. I think we can go in a couple different directions. But we’re still not ready to make a decision there yet. We’ve certainly talked to people, and we’re probably about a week away there.”

Since Ohio State’s Cotton Bowl loss to Missouri — where the Buckeyes coach said after the game that he will “look at everything” — Day has shaken up his coaching staff, relieving safeties coach Perry Eliano and special teams coordinator Parker Fleming on Jan. 8 and Jan. 10 and hiring veteran play-caller Bill O’Brien as Ohio State’s offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach on Jan. 19, a move that also compelled former quarterbacks coach Corey Dennis to leave the program and accept an analyst role with Utah.

Day has since replaced Eliano with former Indiana defensive coordinator Matt Guerrieri, but the program still has yet to hire a new special teams coordinator. While the Buckeyes’ may very well fill that final assistant coaching vacancy on a special teams coordinator, Day said that he would also like to be more involved with special teams this season as he transitions to more of a ‘CEO’-type role.

“It allows you opportunities as someone who is managing the game to have an idea of when it’s time to block a punt or return, those types of things,” Day said. “Ideally, that’s what I would like to do. We’ll just keep putting one foot in front of the other and go from there.”

If Day — who also alluded to Guerrieri as someone who can take on some special teams’ responsibilities — were to use his final hiring on a defensive coach, it would balance the staff, giving Ohio State five assistants each on both sides of the ball.

That defensive assistant hiring could come with the Buckeyes elevating graduate assistant James Laurinaitis to a full-time defensive role, a move that has been viewed as a legitimate option for Ohio

State this offseason. Day said that Laurinaitis, a former three-time All-American linebacker with the Buckeyes, has grown as a teacher and learner since joining the team in January of 2023.

“I’ve been very impressed,” Day said. “And I think he has a really bright future in coaching. He’s only been doing it a couple years, but playing has allowed him an opportunity to give him perspective. But he also has credibility with the guys...That was good to get him out there (and recruit). He’s done a really nice job. He’s a big asset, and we will figure out what (Laurinaitis’ role) looks like moving forward.”

Regardless of where Day and his staff stand regarding the final vacancy, the coach said that he has full confidence that both he and the program will make the right decision, putting them in better position to compete for a national championship in 2024.

“Both of those options are on the table,” Day said. “I feel comfortable going (in) either direction. But finding the right guy is going to be what is important.”