

Larry Johnson Committed To Coaching Despite Offseason Staff Overhaul



Although Ohio State head coach Ryan Day overhauled the defensive coaching staff following the 2021 season, defensive line coach Larry Johnson reaffirmed his commitment to the Buckeyes on Tuesday.

At 70 years old, Johnson is the oldest member of the Ohio State coaching staff. Despite his age and status as the lone returning member of the defensive coaching staff, Johnson said thoughts of retirement never crept up during the offseason.

“My retirement plan is a way away from here. I enjoy coaching,” Johnson said on Tuesday. “The day that I stop enjoying coaching, that passion that I have, then I’ll do that. But, I don’t get up in the morning and say, ‘Well, this is it.’ I don’t do that, that’s not the way I function. I get up every morning dying to get into this building and coach those guys.”

Johnson’s collegiate coaching career has spanned 26 years, with the last eight seasons spent with the Buckeyes. Prior to reaching the college ranks, Johnson was an accomplished high school football coach for McDonough (Md.) High School and T.C. Williams (Va.) High School between 1975-91.

With his extensive coaching experience, Johnson has experienced roster and staff turnover throughout his career. This offseason is no different for Johnson as head coach Ryan Day shuffled in former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Jim Knowles, longtime NFL defensive backs coach Tim Walton and former Cincinnati cornerbacks coach Perry Eliano to replace nearly the entire staff from the 2021 season, sans Johnson.

Since joining the Buckeyes in 2014, Johnson has seen plenty of turnover on the defensive coaching staff and has been a similar situation before. After the 2018 season, Day made wholesale changes to the defensive coaching staff ahead of his first full season as head coach— replacing then-defensive coordinator Greg Schiano with Jeff Hafley and Greg Mattison. Similarly to this past offseason, Johnson was the only member of the defensive coaching staff to remain with the Buckeyes in 2019. He said he draws from past experiences in these types of situations in order to transition to different defensive

coaching regimes without issue.

“It’s different. Different terminology and things are learned different, that’s all new. Its new language but football is football,” Johnson said. “Teaching is teaching, when it comes down to it. You have to teach a different way or do things a different way. Besides that, it’s football. It’s all ball.”

With attention to the current defensive coaching staff, Johnson said he’s enjoyed working alongside Knowles, Eliano and Walton and enjoys what the unit is building ahead of the Buckeyes’ season-opener against Notre Dame on Sept. 3.

“First of all, it’s a great defensive staff. It’s a really great staff. Great guys, great people. I think it’s a really fun staff,” Johnson said. “When you have a good unit, and guys are really close together and get a chance to bond. I think that’s what’s happening and I think our players are feeding off of that because we have bonded. We come from different backgrounds, but at the end of the day, we’re football coaches.”