

# Marcus Freeman Announces Starting Left Tackle Anthonie Knapp Will Miss National Championship Game



*Image via Rick Kimball/Irish Sports Daily*

Notre Dame will be working with a patchwork offensive line in the national title game.

Marcus Freeman announced on Sunday that starting left tackle Anthonie Knapp will miss the team's title game bout against Ohio State with a high ankle sprain he suffered in the Irish's CFP semifinal win over Penn State.

Knapp served as Fighting Irish quarterback Riley Leonard's blindside blocker for the entire 2024 season, starting each of the program's first 15 games at left tackle for an Irish offensive line that has allowed just 23 sacks this season, ranking 43rd in the nation. Knapp also helped pave the way for Notre Dame to rush for an impressive 210.8 yards per game, ranking 14th in the nation.

Knapp's absence in the national championship game will likely be a significant blow for the Irish, especially because Ohio State has flipped the switch with its pass rush in the College Football Playoff, especially off the edge. In the Buckeyes' first three playoff games, senior defensive ends Jack Sawyer and JT Tuimoloau have combined for 10 sacks.

Tasked with stopping both Sawyer and Tuimoloau off the edge will likely be graduate Tosh Baker, who replaced Knapp when he went down against Penn State, playing the final 61 offensive snaps and earning the second-lowest Pro Football Focus grade of his career (41.5).

Baker has been with the team since 2020 and has started just three games leading up to the title game.

Notre Dame also may be without graduate starting right guard Rocco Spindler against the Buckeyes after he suffered a sprained right ankle and exited the Penn State game after playing just 22 snaps. Spindler has started for the Irish for the last two seasons. Sophomore offensive lineman Charles Jagusah replaced Spindler at right guard for the rest of the game.

"We'll see how (Spindler) progresses the week of practice," Freeman said. "I know he'll give everything he has to make sure he's prepared. As far as the starting lineup, we'll do what's best for our program. We've got to figure that out. We have a week of preparation to make sure we get the right guys to start

this game, and we'll see what that is here in the next couple of days."