

Ohio State Hires Former New England Patriots Defensive Coordinator, Detroit Lions Head Coach Matt Patricia As Defensive Coordinator



Image courtesy of Maddie Meyer/Getty Images

Ohio State has found its replacement for Jim Knowles.

According to ESPN's Pete Thamel, the Buckeyes reportedly hiring former New England Patriots defensive coordinator and Detroit Lions head coach Matt Patricia to serve as defensive coordinator, giving Day and Ohio State another veteran voice to call defensive plays.

Sources: Ohio State is finalizing a deal to hire Matt Patricia as the school's new defensive coordinator. Patricia was an NFL head coach with the Lions and longtime DC with the New England Patriots. pic.twitter.com/NdCTsCMBz

— Pete Thamel (@PeteThamel) February 12, 2025

Patricia, 50, joins Ohio State's staff just two days after interviewing for the position. His last coaching stint came in 2023 as a senior defensive analyst with the Philadelphia Eagles, but he is most known for the nine years he spent calling defensive plays for the Bill Belichick-led New England Patriots.

Patricia played an integral role in keeping the Patriots' dynasty going in the 2010s, helping the franchise win two Super Bowls in 2014 and 2016 by leading eight top-10 scoring defenses in that span, including a No. 1 finish in 2016 when New England allowed 15.6 points per game.

Patricia's nearly two-decade-long stint in the NFL also included a head coaching position with the Detroit Lions from 2018-20, a tenure that did not pan out well for the former Belichick disciple, with the Lions going just 13-29-1 across those three seasons before the franchise fired him 11 games into the 2020 campaign.

His teams ranked 15th, 26th and 32nd out of 32 NFL teams in scoring defense in his three years leading

the franchise.

Patricia also has a complicated history off the field. In March of 1996, he was arrested and indicted on one count of sexual assault of a 21-year-old woman while on a college spring break trip to South Padre Island, Texas.

Although Patricia, who was then a football player at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, was arrested, charged and indicted by a grand jury, he never stood trial and was not convicted after the case was dismissed because the victim was unable to “face the pressures or stress of a trial.”

News of the indictment recirculated after Patricia was hired by the Lions in 2018 — Detroit said they were not aware of the incident during a background check that occurred before they hired him — and the coach strongly proclaimed his innocence when asked about the manner. The Lions also publicly offered its support of Patricia.

“The truth is on my side. I lived with the mental torture of the situation where facts can be completely ignored or misrepresented with disregard to the consequence and pain that it would create for another person,” Patricia said during press conference in May of 2018. “I find it unfair and upsetting that someone would bring this claim up over two decades later for the sole purpose of hurting my family, my friends and this organization with the intention of trying to damage my character and credibility.

“I was innocent then, and I am innocent now. Let me be clear. My priorities remain the same, to move forward and strive to be the best coach, teacher and man that I can possibly be.”

Patricia will look to begin the next chapter of his coaching career at the collegiate level with the Buckeyes, who are coming off a historic national championship season in which it finished No. 1 in the nation in total defense and scoring defense under Knowles, who left for the same position at Penn State last month.

Patricia, who last coached in college as an offensive graduate assistant at Syracuse from 2001-03, will lead an Ohio State defense in 2025 that will likely include several first-time starters. Only unanimous All-American safety Caleb Downs, linebacker Sonny Styles and cornerback Davison Igbinosun are set to reclaim their roles from 2024.

Patricia was the last major hiring Day and Co. needed to make to fill out for their 2025 coaching staff. He will join a defensive staff that includes recently promoted co-defensive coordinator/secondary coach Tim Walton and passing game coordinator/safeties coach Matt Guerrieri — who were both considered in-house options to fill the defensive coordinator vacancy — and longtime defensive line coach/associate head coach Larry Johnson.

Patricia is the second fresh face the Buckeyes have hired this offseason, with the program also hiring former Virginia Tech offensive coordinator Tyler Bowen to serve as the team’s offensive line coach, replacing Justin Frye after he left for the same role with the Arizona Cardinals.

The Buckeyes’ 2025 offensive coaching staff includes offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, co-offensive coordinator/tight ends coach Kennan Bailey and quarterbacks coach Billy Fessler — who all received promotions to compensate for former offensive coordinator Chip Kelly leaving for the Oakland Raiders — along with running backs coach Carlos Locklyn.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin will have more on this breaking news story as news unfolds.