

Ohio State Parting Ways With Special Teams Coordinator Parker Fleming



Ohio State on Wednesday announced that the program will not retain special teams coordinator Parker Fleming after three seasons leading the Buckeyes' special teams.

Fleming was in his third season as Ohio State's special teams coordinator and his sixth season overall with the Buckeyes, previously working as a special teams quality control coach from 2018-20 under Urban Meyer and then under Ryan Day. He was also a graduate assistant at Ohio State from 2012-13.

Ohio State's special teams have struggled throughout Fleming's run as coordinator, including notable gaffes this season such as an accidental fake punt against Maryland, a turnover after Lorenzo Styles Jr. made contact with the ball on a punt return against Penn State, and an unsuccessful fake punt against Rutgers in which Jesse Mirco took off with the ball, something Day later said was a miscommunication.

"The one-off plays, we got to be better. We got to eliminate those," Fleming said earlier this season. "Our job is to change field position, create explosives when we have opportunities to, and we've done some of that. We have. When you look at the net field position in a bunch of games, we've won it. And people don't care about that, because the big things can't happen. And they're right. You can't put your team in some situations that we have, and I totally understand that."

Day said earlier this season that Ohio State has a better expectation for special teams across the board, and was looking to evaluate and fix those mistakes that have plagued the unit over the last few seasons.

"I can just tell you that (Fleming) works as hard as anybody in the building," Day said. "But we're all being evaluated every single time we're out there. And it's everybody that's involved in special teams. It's not just the coordinator, although he's ultimately in charge and I'm ultimately in charge, so you can put it back on me."

"But clearly, everybody who's in charge of special teams - because there's a lot of coaches that are involved with that in the meetings - can all do a better job. And so, we'll just keep pushing to make it better. But we know what the expectation is."

But by the end of the regular season, Ohio State's special teams were average nationally in several

categories, including kickoff return defense (17.6 yards, 32nd); net punting (39.02 yards, 62nd); kickoff returns (19.9 yards, 68th); punt returns (5.6 yards, 107th); and punt return defense (13.5 yards, 116th).