

Ohio State's Barnes Will Continue To 'Cultivate Importance Of Special Teams'



During Urban Meyer's tenure as head football coach at Ohio State the Buckeyes often had an assistant coach with a secondary title of special teams coordinator. In reality, Meyer himself was a key figure in molding the special units.

Among five outside coaching hires made by Ryan Day, Meyer's replacement, is Matt Barnes, whose primary title is special teams coordinator in a slight shift in philosophy. Barnes will be tasked with continuing to build what has become one of the top units in the nation while also serving as an assistant secondary coach.

Barnes made it clear that he intends to carry on a lot of what Ohio State has done in the past while emphasizing the importance of special teams.

"Just trying to continue to develop and continue to cultivate the importance of special teams, which has been phenomenal here," Barnes said. "It's been done at the highest level here. So that's already in place. So just continuing to develop that is a big part of it."

Over the years, special teams has served as a way for young Buckeyes to prove their worth - players like running back Ezekiel Elliott originally cut their teeth as gunners on kick coverage units. But the Buckeyes have also consistently played top players on the special units, like Terry McLaurin, who Meyer heaped praise on for his ability as a special teamer while he also started at wide receiver.

Barnes said he'll keep up the tradition of playing the best players on special teams while also making sure that younger prospects have the opportunity to develop.

He's also going to focus on the basics while working on the kicking game at Ohio State.

"Keeping in mind we're going to play our best players on special teams, and I think the thing that I hope

to maybe shed a little bit more light on or bring to the forefront a little bit more is - it's really not just special teams," Barnes said. "When you're teaching the kicking game, obviously the things that the punters, the kickers, the holders and the snappers, the specialists do are a little bit different, but beyond that, it's really just general fundamentals of playing the game of football."

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