



## MATT ENTZ

HEAD COACH | 1ST SEASON | WARTBURG COLLEGE (1995)

Matt Entz was named the head coach of Fresno State football on Wednesday, December 4, 2024.

Entz comes to the Valley from USC, where he served as the assistant head coach for defense and linebackers coach. Prior to his time at USC, he was a two-time FCS National Championship winning head coach at North Dakota State.

Entz posted a 60-11 overall record in his 5 years (2019-23) as the head coach at North Dakota State for an impressive .857 winning percentage. He led his team to two NCAA Division I FCS National Championships, including in his first season as the head coach.

Throughout his time at NDSU, his Bison were 32-7 (.821) in league play and won two Missouri Valley Football Conference championships.

Entz was named the FCS National Coach of the Year in 2019 and 2021 by the American Football Coaches Association. He is a two-time finalist for the Stats Perform Eddie Robinson Award, presented to the FCS National Coach of the Year as selected by a national media panel, and he is a two-time recipient of the Bruce Craddock MVFC Coach of the Year award. Additionally, he was also named the 2019, 2020 and 2021 AFCA FCS Region 4 Coach of the Year.

Entz became the first Division I head football coach to go 16-0 in his first full season at the helm, defeating James Madison 28-20 to win the 2019 Division I FCS National Championship. The 2019 Bison became the first modern-era college football team in any division to finish a season 16-0, joining the 1894 Yale Bulldogs as the only 16-0 teams in college football history.

North Dakota State completed the 2019 season with an FCS-record 37-game winning streak (beginning in the 2017 season). The streak extended to 39 games in the spring of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is the third longest winning streak in Division I football history.

The 2020 Bison posted a 7-3 overall record and a 5-2 MVFC record, falling in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs.

Entz led the 2021 squad to NDSU's ninth FCS national championship in program history by defeating Montana State 38-10 and recording a 14-1 overall season record.

In 2022, the Bison once again reached the FCS Division I national championship game, but fell to South Dakota State. They recorded a 12-3 overall record and a 7-1 MVFC record.

In 2023, Entz led the Bison to an 11-4 overall record (5-3 in MVFC play) where they reached the Division I FCS semifinal.

As head coach of NDSU, Entz tutored eight NFL draft picks, including the 2021 No. 3 overall pick, QB Trey Lance. He also had 20 players earn All-American honors between 2019-22.

Prior to being named head coach, Entz was NDSU's defensive coordinator for five seasons (2014-18). He was named the 2018 FCS Coordinator of the Year and was a finalist for the award three times. He led a Bison defense that allowed less than 14 points per game over his five seasons as the defensive coordinator and consistently ranked in the top 5 of FCS in scoring defense and total defense. NDSU had eight FCS All-American honorees on defense during his five seasons as defensive coordinator, including linebackers MJ Stumpf, Nick DeLuca and Jabril Cox.

Prior to arriving at NDSU, Entz served as the associate head coach, co-defensive coordinator and defensive line coach at Western Illinois in 2013. Under his tutelage, LB Kevin Kintzel still holds the program's all-time defensive scoring record with 18 INTs and three defensive TDs. The Leathernecks led the MVFC in passing defense (149.0) and opponent first downs (16.2).

Entz spent the previous three years (2010-12) at Northern Iowa. He was named defensive line coach in 2010 and assumed defensive coordinator duties in 2012. UNI placed first in the MVFC in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, DL Ben Boothby earned AP and AFCA FCS All-American First Team honors and was also a two-time All-MVFC First Team honoree (2010 and 2011).

Entz was the defensive coordinator from 2002 to 2009 at Winona State, where he was promoted to associate head coach in 2003 and was with the defensive line for three years before becoming linebackers coach in 2005. He was named the AFCA Division II Assistant Coach of the Year in 2008.

Prior to that, Entz was the assistant head football coach and linebackers coach at Wayne (Neb.) State from 1999 to 2001 and the defensive coordinator at Illinois College in 1998. He holds certification from the National Strength and Conditioning Association and served as an assistant strength and conditioning coach during his time at Wayne State.

Entz earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Wartburg College in 1995 and a master's degree in education and exercise science from Wayne (Neb.) State College in 1998.

He and his wife, Brenda, have two sons, Kellen and Konner.



#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Waterloo, Iowa

**Family:**

- Wife: Brenda
- Children: Kellen, Konner

#### **EDUCATION**

- Wartburg College
- Bachelor's in Biology (1995)
- Wayne (Neb.) State College
- Master's in Education and exercise science (1998)

#### **COACHING HISTORY**

Career Record (D-I head coach):  
60-11

#### **COACHING HISTORY**

##### **USC**

**2024:** Assistant Head Coach for Defense/Linebackers

##### **North Dakota State**

**2019-23:** Head Coach

\*60-11 overall record\*

**2014-18:** Defensive Coordinator

##### **Western Illinois**

**2013:** Associate Head Coach/Co-Defensive Coordinator/  
Defensive Line

##### **Northern Iowa**

**2012:** Defensive Coordinator

**2010-11:** Defensive Line

##### **Winona State**

**2005-09:** Associate Head Coach/  
linebackers

**2003-05:** Associate Head Coach/  
Defensive Line

**2002:** Defensive Coordinator

##### **Wayne State**

**1999-01:** Assistant Head Coach/  
Linebackers

##### **Illinois College**

**1998:** Defensive Coordinator

# JOSH DAVIS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR / QUARTERBACKS  
1ST SEASON | SOUTH DAKOTA STATE (2006)

Josh Davis was named offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the Bulldogs in January 2025, joining the staff of first-year head coach Matt Entz.

Prior to arriving in the Valley, Davis was the offensive coordinator at the University of South Dakota for two seasons (2023-24). In his two seasons at South Dakota, Davis improved the offensive identity and efficiency as the Yotes would make quarterfinal (2023) and semifinal (2024) appearances.

The 2024 campaign was one for the record books for Davis in his second season as offensive coordinator, guiding an offense that would help take USD to the FCS Playoffs semifinal for the first time in program history. The explosive offense this season saw the first NCAA Division I FCS era 1,000-yard rusher, which became a pair of 1,000-yard rushers in the FCS Playoffs. Charles Pierre Jr. (1,244 yards) and Travis Theis (1,194 yards) spearheaded the dominant run game as both sat No. 1-2 in the Missouri Valley Football Conference (MVFC) in both rushing yards per game and rushing touchdowns. Pierre Jr. would go onto finish second in the MVFC Offensive Player of the Year voting.

He coached his third stint of his alma mater, serving as the pass game coordinator and wide receivers coach for one season at South Dakota State in 2022.

Prior to his time in Brookings, Davis was the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Northwestern College (Orange City, Iowa), for six seasons. After going 3-7 in his first season in Orange City, the Red Raiders were a combined 51-10 with five playoff appearances in the next five seasons.

Northwestern was among the NAIA's top teams in passing offense, total offense, and scoring annually under his leadership. The 2021 squad advanced to the national title game and Davis coached National Player of the Year Tyson Kooima, a quarterback who averaged 323 yards passing per game during the 2020 season.

Davis saw his second stint as the wide receivers coach at SDSU from 2009-15 and mentored five receivers who ranked among the Jackrabbits' top-10 for career receptions. He started his coaching career in Brookings as a graduate assistant (2006-08) and spent time at Iowa Western Community College (2009) before returning to Brookings to coach the receivers.

Davis hails from Omaha, Nebraska, and attended Burke High School before embarking on a fantastic career at South Dakota State. He was a three-time All Conference wide receiver and a 2005 team captain. He graduated as the program's all-time leader in receptions (225), while ranking second in both career receiving yards (3,192) and touchdowns (26).

Davis and his wife, Brittany, have three children, Isabel, Reese, and Demi.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Omaha, Nebraska

**High School:** Burke High School

### **Family**

- Wife: Brittany

- Children: Isabel, Reese, Demi

## **EDUCATION**

South Dakota State

- Bachelor's in Health Education (2006)

- Master's in Sports Business (2008)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Fresno State**

**Present:** Offensive Coordinator/  
Quarterbacks

### **University of South Dakota**

**2023-24:** Offensive Coordinator

### **South Dakota State**

**2022:** Passing Game Coordinator/  
Wide Receivers

### **Northwestern College**

**2016-21:** Offensive Coordinator/  
Quarterbacks

### **South Dakota State**

**2009-15:** Wide Receivers

### **Iowa Western Community College**

**2009:** Assistant Coach (Spring)

### **South Dakota State**

**2007-08:** Graduate Assistant

**2006:** Student Coach

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

### **South Dakota State**

Wide Receiver  
2002-05



# NICK BENEDETTO

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR/SAFETIES  
1ST SEASON | UNIVERSITY OF SIOUX FALLS (2009)

Nick Benedetto was hired as the Bulldogs' defensive coordinator on Dec. 28, 2024. Benedetto will also coach the safeties at Fresno State.

Benedetto joins the staff from Northern Illinois where he was the Huskies' defensive coordinator and safeties coach for the past three seasons. The 2024 season for NIU saw the only FBS team in the country to not allow 400 yards of offense in a game to its opponent. NIU's defense also did not allow a 100-yard rusher all season, and only allowed two players to get above 90 yards. Benedetto was twice named Defensive Coordinator of the Week by On3Sports in 2024.

Under his leadership of the defense, NIU held 21 of its last 26 opponents to 25 points or less, including 12 of its last 13 with Fresno State being one in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl.

NIU's defense finished the 2024 regular season ranked in the Top 30 in the FBS in third down conversion percentage defense, passing defense, total defense, first down defense, scoring defense, team passing efficiency defense, sacks, rushing defense and red zone conversion percentage defense.

Benedetto earned the Graphite Award for the Mid-American Conference Defensive Play Caller of the Year in 2024. Benedetto had the nation's highest play call efficiency rating at 87.52 percent while at Northern Illinois. The NIU defense ranked fourth in the FBS in total defense. The Graphite Award recognizes the most efficient offensive and defensive play callers in each Division I college football conference.

When Benedetto arrived at NIU, he inherited and turned around a defense that ranked no higher than No. 84 in the FBS in the above categories. In his first season as defensive coordinator, NIU almost doubled its turnovers forced from 2021 with 20 in 12 games in 2022. The Huskies went from a -6 turnover margin in 2021 to a +4.

NIU's defense held its opponents to an average fewer than 288 yards of total offense for the first time since 1972.

Prior to his time at NIU, Benedetto spent two seasons at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., where he served as defensive coordinator in 2020 and 2021, overseeing a defense that improved in nine of 12 statistical categories in his first season.

At Samford, Benedetto's 2020 defense saw improvement in nine of 12 defensive categories and ranked first in the league in turnovers and opponents' third down percentage, as well as third in quarterback sacks. During his tenure at Samford, five defensive players earned All-Southern Conference honors and one – safety Chris Edmonds – was named a first team All-American.

Prior to his time in Birmingham, Benedetto spent three seasons (2017-19) as the defensive coordinator at Sioux Falls, his alma mater, which went 24-11 during that time. His 2019 defense ranked fourth nationally in total defense while the Cougars' 2017 defense was second in the nation. During his three

seasons as defensive coordinator, opponents averaged just 15.6 points per game.

During his time as defensive coordinator at the University of Sioux Falls (S.D.) for three seasons, the Cougars ranked in the Top 15 in eight NCAA Division II defensive statistical categories and twice advanced to the playoffs.

He recruited and coached Arizona Cardinals linebacker Dennis Gardeck and saw two players earn All-America honors while 25 were named to the all-conference team.

A native of Crystal Lake, Illinois, Benedetto spent the 2013-16 seasons as defensive coordinator, defensive backs coach and recruiting coordinator at NCAA Division II West Virginia State University. The defense made improvements across the board throughout his tenure and the team finished the 2015 season with its best record in seven years. In 2015, Benedetto was named one of the "Top 30 Under 30" coaches in the country by the American Football Coaches Association and the NCAA. He was one of two Division II coaches named to the list.

He began his coaching career at the University of South Dakota during the 2010 and 2011 seasons, where he worked with the safeties as a graduate assistant and spent the 2012 season as defensive backs coach and special teams coordinator at Grand View University prior to going to WVSU.

A standout defensive back who went to Sioux Falls after graduating from Crystal Lake South High School, Benedetto captained the 2008 National Champion team and was an all-conference in 2008 and 2007, when the Cougars were 13-1, losing only in the title game. The Cougars won 52-of-55 games during his playing career. Benedetto was coached by former Fresno State head coach Kalen DeBoer while at Sioux Falls.

He graduated from Sioux Falls in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in mathematics and earned a master's degree in sports management from South Dakota in 2011. Benedetto and his wife, Kelsey, have two sons, Rocco and Ace, and a daughter, Amara.



## PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Hometown:** Crystal Lake, Ill.

**High School:** Crystal Lake South High School

## Family

- Wife: Kelsey

- Children: Rocco, Ace, Amara

## EDUCATION

### University of Sioux Falls

- Bachelor's in Mathematics (2009)

### South Dakota

- Master's in Sports Management (2011)

## COACHING HISTORY

### Fresno State

**Present:** Defensive Coordinator/Safeties

### Northern Illinois

**2022-24:** Defensive Coordinator/Safeties

### Samford University

**2020-22:** Defensive Coordinator

### University of Sioux Falls

**2017-19:** Defensive Coordinator

### West Virginia State

**2013-16:** Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Backs/ Recruiting Coordinator

### Grand View University

**2012:** Special Teams Coordinator/Defensive Backs

### University of South Dakota

**2010-11:** Graduate Assistant

## PLAYING EXPERIENCE

### University of Sioux Falls

Defensive Back  
2005-08

2008 NAIA National Champions  
Team Captain

# JOHN BAXTER

ASSOCIATE HEAD COACH, SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR, GAME MANAGEMENT  
4TH SEASON | LORAS COLLEGE (1985)

John Baxter, known for producing extremely productive special teams units and also for working with tight ends for nearly half of his coaching career, joined the Bulldogs ahead of the 2022 season as the special teams coordinator. Baxter was named the Bulldogs associate head coach, special teams coordinator and tight ends coach by then-head coach Jeff Tedford on Dec. 23, 2021.

Baxter, with 40 years of coaching on his resume, has experience coaching special teams, tight ends, wide receivers, running backs, linebackers and the defensive line.

In his Fresno State coaching career, Baxter has been the special teams coach for eight of the program's 11 kickoffs returned for touchdowns with the most recent coming in 2023 with a 95-yard return against Boise State by Malik Sherrod. It was Fresno State's first kickoff return for a touchdown since 2008.

In the program's history, Baxter has coached the 'Dogs in 18 of 42 punt returns for touchdowns, seven of 14 blocked punts returned for touchdowns, four of six blocked field goals returned for touchdowns and one of two PAT returns for two points.

Baxter coached new kick returner Jalen Moss, who, entering 2024, had not returned any sort of kick in his collegiate career. Moss finished the 2024 season with 18 punt returns for 231 yards and one touchdown, and 15 kickoff returns for 228 yards. He led the Mountain West in combined kick returns, and ranked No. 23 in the FBS. Moss was a second team All-MW punt returner. Moss became the first punt return selection for the Bulldogs since Nikko Remigio in 2022, Baxter's first season back on staff. Moss is just the second returner all-conference selection since the Bulldogs entered the Mountain West in 2012.

In 2023, his tight ends were important pieces to the offense and on special teams with four tight ends appearing in all 13 games on the year. Tre Watson earned honorable mention All-Mountain West honors as he led the group with 38 receptions for 378 yards and four touchdowns.

The special teams units ranked in the Top 5 in the Mountain West in kickoff returns and punt returns. Kicker Dylan Lynch was named a Lou Groza award semifinalist. Lynch tied the program record with five made field goals at Arizona State (Sept. 16). He set a new program record that night with seven field goal attempts. Lynch became the first Bulldog kicker to has two 50-yard field goals in a season since 2010.

The 2022 season at Fresno State was a memorable one as the Bulldogs became the first program in FBS history to start the season 1-4, and finish with 10 wins. Fresno State ended the year on a nine-game winning streak, and won the 2022 Mountain West Championship and the Jimmy Kimmel LA Bowl.

In his first season back with the Bulldogs, Baxter did just what was expected with the special teams units. Fresno State's special teams ranked No. 15 overall in the FBS, according to Football Outsiders and its efficiency index ratings.

Fresno State led the FBS, averaging 19.92 yards per punt return in 2022. Behind the legs of senior returner Nikko Remigio, Fresno State totaled 13 punt returns for 259 yards. Remigio returned two punt returns for touchdowns in 2022, marking the first time Fresno State had a punt return taken back for a touchdown since 2013. Fresno State was one of 14 schools across the FBS to have multiple punt return touchdowns.

The senior Bulldog also was Fresno State's primary kickoff returner

with 21 returns for 480 yards. Remigio was third in the FBS in combined kick returns, totaling 739 return yards. He is Fresno State's top returner since 2013. Under Baxter's coaching, Remigio loaded up the postseason honors as a returner as he was selected as a second team All-MW punt returner, a first team All-MW punt returner (Phil Steele), fourth team All-MW kickoff returner (Phil Steele) and an honorable mention All-American punt returner (Phil Steele).

The Bulldogs led the Mountain West in kickoff returns, totaling 82 kickoffs for 3,409 yards. Fresno State averaged 41.57 kickoff return yards per game in 2022. Remigio led the team, but Malik Sherrod had the longest return of the year at 50 yards. It was Fresno State's longest kickoff return since 2018. Fresno State ranked No. 26 in the FBS in kickoff returns.

Fresno State blocked two punts and one PAT to rank inside the Top 20 nationally in blocked kicks. Both of the Bulldogs' blocked punts this season were in the same game. The blocked punts that game marked the first time since 2018 that Fresno State had a blocked punt in a game.

Special teams played a critical role in the Bulldogs' dramatic win over San Diego State as the game came down to the final possession that would require a successfully recovered onside kick attempt by the Bulldogs, and the Bulldogs' kickoff team got it done. Zane Pope recovered the onside kick attempt, marking the first time a Bulldogs had a successful onside kick attempt since 2015.

Kicker Abraham Montano tied the program record with six field goals attempted against Oregon State. Montano made four of six attempts in the matchup, just one made field goal shy of the program record.

Fresno State's tight ends totaled 34 receptions for 288 yards and two touchdowns in 2022. Senior Raymond Pauwels Jr. was selected as an All-Mountain West honorable mention tight end.

Prior to his arrival at Fresno State, Baxter coached the special teams and tight ends at USC from 2016-19.

In 2018, USC blocked two field goals and two punts (one returned for a TD) to rank ninth nationally in blocked kicks and Troy also returned another punt for a touchdown.

In 2017, USC blocked three field goals and a punt, had two scoring punt returns and ranked 11th nationally in blocked kicks and 18th in punt returns. Wide receiver Michael Pittman Jr. made All-Pac-12 first team as a special teams player. Blind long snapper Jake Olson had historic snaps on the final PATs in the Western Michigan and Oregon State games. USC's tight ends had 37 receptions with five TDs. USC played in the 2017 Cotton Bowl.

In 2016, USC ranked fourth among all schools in FootballOutsiders.com's Special Teams Efficiency rating. USC was sixth nationally in punt returns and 23rd in blocked kicks, blocked punts and kickoff returns. USC blocked 2 field goals and a punt and allowed only 8 of its 50 punts to be returned (for just 50 yards). Placekicker Matt Boermeester's 18 field goals were one shy of the school record, he kicked a Rose Bowl record-tying 3 field goals (including the game-winner at the gun) and he had 43 touchbacks (USC had just 11 in 2015). Returner Adoree' Jackson, who had two punt return TDs and two kickoff return TDs, was named an All-American first teamer by some selectors as a punt returner, won the Jet Award as the nation's top punt returner and was an NFL Draft first rounder. USC tight ends caught 39 passes.

Baxter was Michigan's special teams coordinator in 2015. The Wolverines finished 12th nationally in ESPN's special teams efficiency



## COACHING HISTORY

### Fresno State

Present: Special teams coordinator  
2024: Assoc H.C./Special Teams Coordinator/Game Management  
2022-23: Assoc. H.C./Special Teams Coordinator/TE

### USC

2018: Special Teams Coordinator  
2016-17: Special Teams Coordinator, TE

### Michigan

2015: Special Teams Coordinator

### USC

2013: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator/TE  
2010-12: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams Coordinator

### Fresno State

2009: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams/TE  
2004-08: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams/WR  
2003: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams/TE  
2002: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams/WR  
1997-01: Associate Head Coach/Special Teams/TE

### Tulane

1994-96: Tight Ends/Special Teams

### Maryland

1992-93: Running Backs/Special Teams

### Arizona

1990-91: Tight Ends/Special Teams

### Maine

1989: Outside Linebackers/Special Teams

### Arizona

1988: Graduate Assistant/DB/Special Teams

### Iowa State

1986-87: Graduate Assistant/DL/Special Teams

### Loras College

1981-85: Student Assistant/RB



## COACHES AND STAFF

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ranking (they were No. 1 two-thirds of the way into the season) after being 96th the previous year. Michigan was third nationally in kickoff returns, Jabrill Peppers was 19th in punt returns, Jehu Chesson returned a kickoff for a TD, UM allowed only 3 kickoff returns longer than 30 yards, Blake O'Neill had a Michigan Stadium record 80-yard punt and 43% of his punts were downed inside the 20-yard line and Kenny Allen hit 18-of-22 field goals and 44% of his kickoffs were touchbacks (O'Neill and Allen entered the season as non-scholarship players). Michigan won the 2016 Citrus Bowl.

Baxter spent four years (2010-13) at USC as the associate head coach and special teams coordinator. He added the tight ends to his coaching duties in 2013.

In 2013, fullback Soma Vainuku made the All-Pac-12 first team as a special teams player and Nelson Agholor was an All-American second team pick as a punt returner. USC blocked 6 kicks, returned three punts for TDs in a game to tie an NCAA record and allowed no punt return yards in eight games. The Trojans won the 2013 Las Vegas Bowl.

In 2012, USC ranked ninth nationally on ESPN's special teams efficiency chart. Punter Kyle Negrete was a finalist for the Allstate AFCA Good Works Team. USC played in the 2012 Sun Bowl.

Baxter was named the 2011 FootballScoop.com Special Teams Coordinator of the Year. For the second consecutive year, USC blocked seven kicks in 2011. The Trojans also had a scoring kickoff return, made a 2-point conversion and converted a fake punt for a first down while ranking No. 8 nationally in special teams efficiency by ESPN. In 2011, placekicker Andre Heidari made Freshman All-American first team and All-Pac-12 first team, and his 88.2% field goal percentage was third in the nation among kickers with at least 10 made field goals (and the best among freshmen kickers). Tight end-fullback Rhett Ellison made the All-Pac-12 first team as a special teams performer.

In 2010, USC's special teams blocked seven kicks and punts, returned a punt and kickoff for a touchdown, scored five times on 2-point conversions, had a defensive PAT and made first downs on a fake punt and fake field goal. Troy was seventh nationally in ESPN's special teams efficiency ranking. USC ranked high nationally in punt returns (seventh at 14.6) and kickoff returns (17th at 24.5) with wide receiver Ronald Johnson placing 12th nationally in punt returns (14.2). Wide receiver Robert Woods made the All-Pac-10 first team as a kick returner. Johnson was a sixth round pick in the 2011 NFL draft.

In 13 years (1997-2009) at Fresno State, Baxter was the associate head coach and special teams coach in addition to handling either the tight ends (1997-2001, 2003, 2009) or wide receivers (2002, 2004-2008).

Baxter turned the Bulldogs' special teams into one of the top units in the nation annually. During his time, Fresno State blocked 84 kicks and punts (including a national-best 49 from 2002 through 2009) and scored 39 special teams touchdowns (with 3 safeties). The Bulldogs topped the nation in fewest punt return yards allowed in 2004 and 2005. A.J. Jefferson led the nation in kickoff returns in 2007. Clifton Smith's 189 punt return yards with 2 touchdowns against Weber State in 2005 were Fresno State game records, while his 5 career scoring punt returns also was a school mark. Six of Baxter's Bulldog kickers and punters earned All-Western Athletic Conference first team honors.

During his time at Fresno State, the Bulldogs posted a 100-66 record, played in 10 bowls (1999 Las Vegas, 2000-01-02-03 Silicon Valley, 2004 MPC Computers, 2005 AutoZone Liberty, 2007 Roady's Humanitarian and 2008-09 New Mexico) and won the WAC title in 1999.

Along with his coaching duties at Fresno State, Baxter developed the highly-successful and nationally-regarded program, "Academic Gameplan." His innovative and comprehensive study-skills program teaches students the rules, fundamentals, techniques and life skills needed to succeed in the classroom. "Academic Gameplan," which is now being used at schools throughout the country, was a key reason for the academic success of the Fresno State football program, which during Baxter's tenure produced 141 Academic All-WAC players and an NCAA APR score nearly 20 percentage points higher than the national average.

He was selected as the Clovis Co-Citizen of the Year in 2006, along with Fresno State head coach Pat Hill.

Baxter began his coaching career at his alma mater, Loras College, where he served for

five seasons (1981-85) as a student assistant (working with the running backs) during his undergraduate time.

He then moved on to Iowa State for two seasons (1986-87) as a graduate assistant working with the defensive line and special teams before the first of 2 stints at Arizona. He was with the Wildcats in 1988 (as a graduate assistant working with the defensive backs and special teams), went to Maine in 1989 for his first full-time job coaching the outside linebackers and special teams when the Black Bears made it to the NCAA Division I-AA playoffs and returned to Arizona in 1990 and 1991 as the tight ends and special teams coach (the Wildcats played in the 1990 Aloha Bowl). He then was at Maryland for two seasons (1992-93) handling the running backs and special teams and Tulane for three years (1994-96) in charge of the tight ends and special teams before going to Fresno State.

He earned his bachelor's degree in physical education from Loras in 1985 and then his master's in higher education from Iowa State in 1987.

He prepped at Loyola Academy in Chicago (Ill.).

He was born on June 28, 1963. He and his wife, Jill, have two daughters, Kelly and McKenzie. His father-in-law is former Utah and Weber State head coach Ron McBride.



# JORDAN GIGLI

DEFENSIVE LINE

1ST SEASON | TRINE UNIVERSITY (2003)

Jordan Gigli joined the Fresno State coaching staff as the defensive line coach in January 2025. He came to the Valley from Northern Illinois where he spent the 2019-24 seasons as the defensive line coach and recruiting coordinator.

Gigli (pronounced GEE-lee) saw four of his pupils earn All-MAC honors in his first five seasons in DeKalb. Jack Heflin and Weston Kramer earned All-MAC accolades in 2019 and 2020, respectively, and defensive tackle James Ester was a third team All-MAC selection in 2021 and 2022. Ester was a second team All-MAC honoree in 2023 after leading the Huskies with four sacks and adding 6.5 tackles for loss. Devonte O'Malley was a second-team All-MAC honoree in 2022. Heflin and Ester were honored as the Huskies' defensive most valuable players in 2019 and 2021, respectively. Heflin was signed to a free agent contract by the Green Bay Packers in 2021, while Kramer began his professional career as a member of the Ottawa Redblacks of the Canadian Football League in 2022.

The defensive line coach at the University of North Dakota from 2014-18, Gigli coached 10 players to all-conference honors, including Mason Bennett, UND's all-time sack leader and a first-round draft choice of the CFL's Hamilton Tigercats in 2020. He also coached 2019 Minnesota Vikings pick-up Tank Harris at UND. The Fighting Hawks ranked in the Top 25 in the country (Football Championship Subdivision) in scoring defense and rushing defense in 2018 and were one of the top three teams in the FCS in quarterback sacks and tackles for loss.

During his time at North Dakota, Gigli's line helped the Fighting Hawks rank as one of the top rushing defenses in the country, and UND was ranked as one of the top two defenses (total defense and rushing defense) in the Big Sky Conference in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 while also leading, or ranking second in the league in tackles for loss and sacks.

Prior to his time at North Dakota, Gigli spent three seasons as defensive line coach at Sacramento State, where he helped tutor first team All-American, and eventual Arizona Cardinals defensive end Zach Nash, At Sacramento State, he also coached Todd Davis (New Orleans Saints, 2014), Darnel Sankey (Denver Broncos, 2016) and Ben Sorenson (Edmonton Eskimos, 2019), who all went on to play professionally.

From 2007-2011, Gigli was the defensive quality control coach at Minnesota. He worked with the defensive line and linebackers and coached the special teams at the same time NIU Head Coach Thomas Hammock was on staff as the running backs coach.

Gigli, who was a two-time all-conference player and team captain at Trine University in Indiana, began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Western Illinois in 2004-2005, and spent the next year at Division III Playoff team Wittenberg University as defensive line coach before moving on to Minnesota.

He earned his bachelor's degree in business administration - marketing from Trine in 2003 and a master's degree from WIU in kinesiology/sport management in 2006. He and his wife, Samantha, have two children, Jack and June.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Fort Wayne, Ind.

**High School:** Bishop Luers High School

### **Family**

- Wife: Samantha

- Children: Jack and June

## **EDUCATION**

### **Trine University**

-Bachelor's in Business Administration, Marketing (2003)

### **Western Illinois**

-Master's in Kinesiology, Sport Management (2006)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Northern Illinois**

**2019-24:** Defensive Line

### **North Dakota**

**2014-18:** Defensive Line

### **Sacramento State**

**2011-13:** Defensive Line

### **Minnesota**

**2007-10:** Defensive Quality Control

### **Wittenberg**

**2006:** Defensive Line

### **Western Illinois**

**2004-05:** Graduate Assistant

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

### **Trine University**

Defensive Line  
1999-2002



# BRIAN FERENTZ

TIGHT ENDS  
1ST SEASON | IOWA (2006)

Brian Ferentz was named Fresno State's tight ends coach on Jan. 15, 2025. He comes to the Valley from Maryland, where he spent the 2024 season as a senior offensive assistant. His coaching resume is flooded with experience in the Big Ten and the NFL. He was on staff at Iowa from 2012-23, coaching the offensive line, running backs, and tight ends in his tenure. He spent the 2022 and 2023 seasons as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. Overall, he spent seven seasons as the offensive coordinator (2017-23) for the Hawkeyes.

Ferentz, a three-year letterman as an offensive lineman at the University of Iowa, was named offensive coordinator following the 2016 season. He also coached Iowa's quarterbacks. Ferentz coached Hawkeye running backs in 2017 and Iowa's tight ends and fullbacks from 2018-21. Ferentz served as Iowa's offensive line coach for five seasons (2012-16) and served as run game coordinator in 2015 and 2016.

Ferentz joined the Hawkeye staff after spending the previous four years with the NFL's New England Patriots.

Iowa posted an 8-5 record in 2022, concluding the season with a 21-0 win over Kentucky in the Music City Bowl and wins in five of its final six games. Iowa's streak of 10 straight bowl invitations is the longest in school history and the Hawkeyes have been in the Top 25 final rankings in four of the last five seasons. Iowa's streak of 10 straight winning seasons ranks 10th best in the nation.

The Hawkeyes won 10 games in 2021, winning the Big Ten's West Division title and advancing to the conference championship game. Iowa concluded the season with an appearance in the Vrbo Citrus Bowl and was ranked 23rd in the final national rankings.

Iowa closed the 2021 regular season with four straight victories to earn the West Division title for the second time since 2015. Iowa earned 24 conference wins from 2018-21, matching Iowa's highest four-year conference win total since 2002-05.

Following back-to-back narrow losses to open the 2020 season, Iowa won six straight games, all in Big Ten play, to complete the regular season. The Hawkeyes scored at least 26 points in each of the six wins. The winning streak included road wins at Minnesota, Penn State and Illinois, and trophy game victories over Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. The Hawkeyes were ranked 15th in the final CFP rankings and coaches poll, and 16th by the Associated Press. The Hawkeyes were selected to compete in the 2020 Music City Bowl, but that event was canceled.

Iowa won 47 games from 2015-19, the highest total in school history over any five-year period, and a total that ranked ninth nationally. Iowa won its final four games in 2019 and ranked 15th in the nation in the final Associated Press and coaches polls.

Tight end Sam LaPorta led Iowa receivers and was named one of three finalists for the John Mackey Award after leading Iowa in receiving for the third straight season. He was named the Kwalick-Clark Big Ten Tight End of the Year while earning first-team All-Big Ten honors. Among Iowa's all-time tight ends LaPorta ranks first in receptions and second in yards. LaPorta was selected in the second round of the 2023 NFL Draft by Detroit. True freshman running back Kaleb Johnson led the team

in rushing and earned Freshman All-America recognition.

Junior center Tyler Linderbaum anchored the Iowa offense in 2021, earning unanimous consensus All-America honors and the Rimington Trophy. Running back Tyler Goodson rushed for over 1,100 yards and moved into the top 10 in career rushing, while LaPorta led the team in receiving.

Linderbaum was selected in the first round of the 2022 NFL Draft, taken as the 25th selection by Baltimore. In addition, offensive lineman Tyler Schott (Tampa Bay) and Goodson (Green Bay) each signed free agent contracts immediately following the draft. Linderbaum is the fourth Hawkeye lineman or tight end selected in the first round since 2014.

Iowa's offense in 2020, with first year starting quarterback Spencer Petras, led the Big Ten in red zone offense (0.917), ranked second in scoring (31.8) and third in fewest tackles for loss allowed (5.1). The Hawkeyes scored at least 25 points in all six wins in 2020. Goodson, Linderbaum and senior tackle Alaric Jackson earned first-team All-Big Ten honors. Jackson and tight end Shaun Beyer signed NFL free agent contracts immediately following the 2021 NFL Draft, with Jackson playing his rookie season for the Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams.

The Hawkeyes concluded the 2019 campaign with a 10-3 record following a 49-24 win over No. 22 Southern California in the Holiday Bowl. The three losses were all to ranked opponents by a combined 14 points. The Hawkeyes were 4-1 in trophy games for the third straight season.

Iowa completed the 2018 season with a 9-4 mark and a final ranking of 25th in the Associated Press. The Hawkeyes earned a 27-22 Outback Bowl win over No. 18 Mississippi State to close the season with three straight wins. The four losses came by a total of 23 points and all were decided in the final minutes of play. Iowa tied for second in the Big Ten West Division.

Iowa won eight games in both 2016 and 2017, including a Pinstripe Bowl victory to conclude the 2017 campaign. The Hawkeyes posted a perfect 12-0 regular season record in 2015, winning the West Division of the Big Ten Conference. Iowa participated in the 2016 Rose Bowl Game and the 2015 Big Ten Championship and ended the season in the top 10 in the final national rankings.

Iowa's most recent bowl game invitations include the 2022 Music City Bowl, 2022 Citrus Bowl, 2020 Music City Bowl, 2019 Holiday Bowl, 2019 Outback Bowl, 2017 Outback Bowl, 2016 Rose Bowl Game, 2015 TaxSlayer Bowl and 2014 Outback Bowl. The Hawkeyes have ranked in the final top 10 of both major polls five times in the past 21 seasons.

Iowa has appeared in 12 January bowl games since 2001 and has recorded January bowl wins over Florida (2004 Outback), Louisiana State (2005 Capital One), South Carolina (2009 Outback), Georgia Tech (2010 Orange), and Mississippi State (2019 Outback).

Iowa has won 175 games over the past 21 seasons, including 108 Big Ten games. Along with the 2021 and 2015 division titles, the Hawkeyes earned a share of the Big Ten title in both 2002 and 2004 and tied for second in 2009. Iowa has finished in the Big



## PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Hometown:** Iowa City, Iowa

### Family

- Wife: Nikki
- Children: Presley, Connolly, Jolie, John

## EDUCATION

**Iowa**

- Bachelor's in History (2006)

## COACHING HISTORY

**Maryland**

**2024:** Senior Offensive Assistant

**Iowa**

**2022-23:** Offensive Coordinator/  
Quarterbacks

**2018-21:** Offensive Coordinator/  
Tight Ends

**2017:** Offensive Coordinator/  
Running Backs

**2015-16:** Offensive Line, Run  
Game Coordinator

**2012-14:** Offensive Line

**New England Patriots (NFL)**

**2011:** Tight Ends

**2010:** Offensive Assistant/Tight  
Ends

**2009:** Coaching Assistant

**2008:** Scouting Assistant

## PLAYING EXPERIENCE

**Iowa**

Offensive Line  
2002-05

**NFL**

**2006:** Atlanta Falcons

**2007:** New Orleans Saints

Ten's first division in 20 of the past 22 years.

Iowa's efficient offense in 2019 featured senior quarterback Nate Stanley and tackle Tristan Wirfs, the Big Ten's Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year. Wirfs earned first-team All-America honors from as many as three national outlets. Wirfs declared for the 2020 NFL Draft following his junior season and was a first-round selection (13th pick overall) of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He started every game at right tackle for the Super Bowl champions in his rookie season and earned All-Pro honors in his second season.

Stanley completed his three-year career with a 27-12 record as the starting quarterback, passing for more than 8,000 career yards. He was selected by Minnesota in the seventh round of the 2020 NFL Draft. The Iowa offense in 2018 set a school record for most points scored in road games. The Hawkeyes averaged 31.2 in all games, the ninth highest single-season total in school history. Stanley led the Iowa offense, passing for 2,852 yards. Stanley threw 26 touchdown passes in both 2017 and 2018, setting a school record for scoring passes over a two-year period. He ranks among Iowa's career leaders in passing yards (8,302), total offense (8,198) and passing touchdowns (68).

Tight end T.J. Hockenson earned the John Mackey Award as the top tight end in the nation and was named the Kwalick-Clark Tight End of the Year in the Big Ten in 2018. Iowa's tight ends combined for 90 receptions for 1,330 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Hockenson was the eighth player selected in the 2019 NFL Draft (Detroit) and earned Pro Bowl honors in 2020 and 2022. Noah Fant was the 20th player selected in the first round (Denver). It marks the only time in the history of the NFL Draft that two tight ends from the same program have been selected in the first round. Senior tight end Nate Wieting was signed to a free agent contract by the Cleveland Browns immediately following the 2020 NFL Draft.

The 2017 Iowa offense featured 1,000-yard rusher in senior Akrum Wadley, and a first year starting quarterback in Stanley, who passed for over 2,400 yards. Senior offensive lineman Sean Welsh earned first team All-Big Ten honors, while redshirt freshman lineman Alaric Jackson earned freshman All-America recognition.

The Iowa offensive line earned the 2016 Joe Moore Award, which is presented to the best offensive line in college football. Iowa boasted two players who rushed for over 1,000 yards in the same season for the first time in school history, as Wadley and senior LeShun Daniels, Jr., each surpassed 1,000 yards. Iowa was a finalist for the award in 2015.

Four members of Iowa's 2016 offensive line earned All-Big Ten recognition, including Ike Boettger, Cole Croston, Daniels, and Welsh. Croston signed a free agent contract with the New England Patriots following the 2017 NFL Draft and was on the active roster the entire 2017 season. In 2015, guard Jordan Walsh earned first team all-Big Ten honors, while center Austin Blythe was one of three finalists for the Rimington Award and a second team selection.

Iowa's offense in 2015 averaged 30.9 points and 386.1 yards total offense, including 181.7 rushing and 204.4 passing yards per game. Iowa ranked in the top 25 nationally in fourth down conversions, fewest penalties and fewest turnovers.

Left tackle Brandon Scherff won the 2014 Outland Trophy, was the Rimington-Pace Offensive Lineman of the Year in the Big Ten and earned unanimous consensus All-America honors. Scherff was the fifth player selected in the 2015 NFL Draft (Washington Redskins), while right tackle Andrew Donnal was selected by the St. Louis Rams in the fourth round. Scherff was named to the NFL Pro Bowl in 2017, 2020 and 2021.

Iowa's offensive line in 2013 led the way for an offense that averaged 377 yards total offense, including 180 rushing yards and 197 passing yards. The Hawkeye offensive line allowed just 15 sacks in 13 games, a total that led the Big Ten and tied for 12th best in the nation. Iowa won eight games while participating in the 2014 Outback Bowl.

Iowa's offensive line featured the same five starters in all 13 games in 2013, with four of those Hawkeyes earning Big Ten honors. Scherff was a first team selection, while right tackle Brett Van Sloten was second team and Blythe and left guard Conor Boffeli each were named honorable mention. Iowa led the Big Ten and ranked eighth in the nation in fewest penalties per game. Boffeli and Van Sloten signed NFL free agent contracts immediately following the 2014 NFL Draft.

Senior center James Ferentz and senior tackle/guard Matt Tobin led Iowa's offensive line in 2012, as both players earned All-Big Ten recognition. In addition, Blythe earned FWAA Freshman All-America honors. Iowa's offensive line put together a string of four consecutive games without allowing a quarterback sack and allowed less than two sacks in six of 12 games overall.

Ferentz served as New England's tight ends coach in 2011, helping the Patriots win the AFC championship and a spot in the 2012 Super Bowl. Ferentz was an offensive assistant coach in 2010, working exclusively with the tight ends. He spent 2009 as a coaching assistant after serving as a scouting assistant for the Patriots during the 2008 season.

Under his direction, two Patriot rookie tight ends made a big impact in 2010. The New England duo ranked first and second, among all rookie tight ends with 10 and six touchdown catches, respectively. They became the first pair of rookie tight ends with at least five touchdowns in the same season in NFL history. Rob Gronkowski's 10 touchdown receptions rank second in NFL history for a rookie tight end, as only Mike Ditka (12) had more touchdowns as a rookie.

Gronkowski set additional records in 2011, including individual records for receiving touchdowns by a tight end (17), total touchdowns by a tight end (18) and receiving yards by a tight end (1,327). As a tandem, the Patriot tight ends also set three NFL single season records: total touchdowns by a tight end tandem (24), receptions by a tight end tandem (169) and total yards by a tight end tandem (2,237).

Ferentz played both offensive guard and center during his Iowa career. He earned honorable mention All-Big Ten honors as a senior in 2005 and was Academic All-Big Ten in 2003. He was a team captain as a senior and played on Iowa teams that were among the most successful in school history. Ferentz was part of two Big Ten championship teams (2002 and 2004).

Ferentz started at center in every game as a senior in 2005. He started eight games at right guard in 2004 as the Hawkeyes earned a share of the Big Ten title and a bid to the Capital One Bowl. Iowa won each of the eight games he started after he missed the first four games of the year due to injury. Ferentz earned the starting center position as a sophomore and started five games before missing the second half of the season due to injury.

During his tenure as a player, Iowa participated in the BCS FedEx Orange Bowl, two Outback Bowls, and a Capital One Bowl, compiling an overall record of 38-12. The Hawkeyes defeated Florida in the 2004 Outback Bowl and defending national champion LSU in the 2005 Capital One Bowl.

Ferentz was a member of Iowa's Leadership Council and as a senior was the recipient of the Hayden Fry "Extra Heartbeat Award". The annual award goes to the Hawkeye player who gives extraordinary effort on the field. He was recognized with the "Next Man In" award as a junior.

Ferentz was selected to participate in the 2006 Hula Bowl following his Hawkeye career. He signed a free agent contract with Atlanta and was a member of the Falcons practice squad in 2006. He was with the New Orleans Saints throughout their 2007 training camp.

He earned his bachelor's degree in history from Iowa in 2006.

Ferentz was born March 28, 1983, in Iowa City. He and his wife, Nikki, have three daughters, Presley, Connolly and Jolie, and a son, John.



# MARCUS HALL-OLIVER

EDGE

1ST SEASON | MINNESOTA STATE (2014)

Marcus Hall-Oliver was added to Fresno State's coaching staff in January 2025 as the Edge coach. He comes to the Valley from Stony Brook. Stony Brook football added Hall-Oliver to first year head coach Billy Cosh's coaching staff as the safeties coach ahead of the 2024 season.

In the summer of 2025, Hall-Oliver was selected for the Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship with the Cleveland Browns.

Hall-Oliver joined the Seawolves during a successful run as a part of James Madison's coaching staff from 2020-2023, where the Dukes appeared in two FCS playoff semifinals before an impressive transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision as a part of the Sun Belt Conference. JMU totaled a record of 38-8 across those four seasons.

Hall-Oliver coached the defensive tackles for the 2020-21 season at JMU before switching to safeties for his final three seasons in Harrisonburg, also serving as the program's recruiting coordinator in his final two. He coached First Team All-American and Buck Buchanan Award finalist Mike Greene on the defensive line along with a pair of All-SBC selections at the safety position.

He also served as JMU's defensive coordinator in the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl, the program's first FBS bowl appearance, coaching the defensive line in that game.

Prior to his time in Harrisonburg, Hall-Oliver coached the defensive line at the University of Sioux Falls, with the Cougars finishing 16-7 across the 2017 and 2018 seasons and reaching the NCAA Division II playoffs in 2017.

In student assistant and graduate assistant stops, Hall-Oliver coached at his alma mater from 2013-15, working with the linebackers and cornerbacks before coaching at Eastern Michigan in 2016 as a graduate assistant.

Hall-Oliver played at Nebraska-Omaha for two seasons before finishing his collegiate career at Minnesota State, making 25 consecutive starts to finish his career. He was a two-time All-NSIC performer with the Mavericks. The Omaha, Neb. native graduated with a degree in sport management from MSU in 2014.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Omaha, Nebraska

**High School:** Central High School

## **EDUCATION**

**Minnesota State**

Bachelor's in Sport Management  
(2014)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

**Stony Brook**

**2024:** Safeties

**JMU**

**2022-23:** Safeties

**2020-21:** Defensive Tackles

**University of Sioux Falls**

**2017-18:** Defensive Line

**Eastern Michigan**

**2016:** Graduate Assistant

**Minnesota State**

**2013-15:** Graduate Assistant

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

**Linebacker**

**2009-10:** Nebraska-Omaha

**2011-12:** Minnesota State

# AARON PRIER

RUNNING BACKS

3RD SEASON | IDAHO STATE (2015)

Aaron Prier joined the Fresno State coaching staff in February 2023 as the Bulldogs' running backs coach.

The 2024 season saw senior Malik Sherrod out with injury for a majority of the year, but a fresh body entered the room in freshman and local talent Bryson Donelson. The true freshman finished the 2024 season second on the team with 77 carries for 462 yards and three touchdowns. He was the most productive freshman running back for Fresno State since the duo of Jordan Mims and Ronnie Rivers in 2017. Both Mims and Rivers are currently in the NFL.

Sherrod was a large part of the Bulldogs' offense in 2023. Sherrod was an All-Mountain West honorable mention selection in his first season as the Bulldogs' starter. Sherrod finished fourth in the Mountain West in total rushing yards with 966. In addition to Sherrod, Prier had Elijah Gilliam ready for significant snaps totaling 95 carries for 397 yards.

The Bulldogs' running back room did not have a fumble in 2023.

Prior to his hiring at Fresno State, Prier was the running backs coach and community relations coordinator at Eastern Washington. He spent the 2021 and 2022 seasons at EWU.

In his first season with EWU's running backs, Dennis Merritt ranked sixth in the nation with 15 rushing touchdowns which also led the conference, and averaged 71.8 yards per game with 933 on the year. Merritt would go on to earn second-team All-Big Sky honors. As a team, the Eagles rushed for an average of 155.2 yards per game.

Eastern closed the 2021 regular season with the best offense in FCS for the second time in three seasons, finishing the season first at 554.5 total yards of offense per game. The Eagles were also third nationally in passing (399.4) and second in scoring offense (44.0). The Eagles started the season 7-0 for the best start in program history.

Prier spent the 2020-21 season coaching the inside receivers, tight ends and serving as recruiting coordinator at Idaho State. Before that, he was tight ends coach from 2017-19, and in 2016 was an ISU graduate assistant. In 2018, ISU junior tight end Austin Campbell earned honorable mention All-Big Sky Conference honors after catching five touchdown passes during the season.

Prier played for the Bengals from 2011-14, and received his degree from ISU in 2015 in business administration/business management. He earned his master's degree in physical education/athletic administration in the summer of 2017.

He saw time at cornerback in the 2011 season then later that year moved to running back where he stayed much of the rest of his career. He also was a kick returner, earning a spot on the 2014 CFP Kickoff Returner Award Watch List.

Prier is from Richmond, Calif., and graduated from Salesian High School in 2011.

He and his wife, Christal, were married in 2019 and they have one son, A.J., born in 2022.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Richmond, Calif.

**High School:** Salesian High School (2011)

### **Family**

- Wife: Christal

- Son: A.J.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Idaho State**

- Bachelor's in Business Administration/  
Business Management (2015)

### **Idaho State**

- Master's in Physical Education/  
Athletic Administration (2017)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Fresno State**

**2023-Present:** Running Backs

### **Eastern Washington**

**2021-22:** Running Backs/  
Community Relations

### **Idaho State**

**2020-21:** Inside Receivers/Tight  
Ends/Recruiting

**2017-19:** Tight Ends

**2016:** Graduate Assistant

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

### **Idaho State**

Running Back

Cornerback

Kickoff Returner

2011-14



# ZACH CRABTREE

OFFENSIVE LINE

1ST SEASON | OKLAHOMA STATE (2017)

Zach Crabtree joined the Fresno State coaching staff as the offensive line coach in December 2024.

Crabtree came to the Valley from USC. Prior to the 2024 season, he was named Assistant Offensive Line Coach. He spent the 2023 and 2022 seasons as a graduate assistant.

He spent the 2021 season at Oklahoma State working with the offensive line as an analyst.

He was a graduate assistant at Baylor from 2019-20 working with the offensive line.

Crabtree played for the Los Angeles Chargers from 2017-18, but retired due to a knee injury.

He was an offensive lineman at Oklahoma State for five seasons (2013-17). He played for Joe Wickline and current USC offensive coordinator and offensive line coach, Josh Henson. He started 46 games at right tackle as a Cowboy. As a senior in 2017, he earned First Team All-Big 12 (Football Coaches Poll) and Second Team All-Big 12 (Media Poll) honors. He was honored by the Oklahoma State coaching staff with the Vernon Grant Award for outstanding leadership, spirit and enthusiasm. As a junior in 2016, he made the All-Big 12 Second Team (Football Coaches Poll). In 2015, he earned the Vernon Grant Award from the coaching staff. He was awarded Big 12 All-Academic Second Team in 2014.

He received his bachelor's degree in sports management from Oklahoma State in 2017.

He prepped at Mansfield HS in Mansfield, Texas.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Mansfield, Texas

**High School:** Mansfield High School

### **Family**

- Wife: Megan

## **EDUCATION**

### **Oklahoma State**

- Bachelor's in Sports Management (2017)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **USC**

**2024:** Assistant Offensive Line

**2022-23:** Graduate Assistant

### **Oklahoma State**

**2021:** Offensive Analyst

### **Baylor**

**2019-20:** Graduate Assistant

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

### **Oklahoma State**

Offensive lineman  
2013-17

### **Los Angeles Chargers (NFL)**

Offensive lineman  
2017-18

# BIJAN HOSSEINI

ASSISTANT OFFENSIVE LINE  
1ST SEASON | UTEP (2019)

Bijan Hosseini joined the Fresno State coaching staff as an offensive graduate assistant in January 2024. He was promoted to assistant offensive line coach in February 2025 under head coach Matt Entz. Hosseini will work alongside offensive line coach Zach Crabtree.

Prior to arriving in the Central Valley, he spent three seasons as the offensive line coach at Missouri Southern. Hosseini coached six All-MIAA offensive linemen. In 2023, his unit was ranked sixth in the nation for sacks allowed with eight, and second in the nation for tackles for loss allowed with 26.0.

Prior to Missouri Southern, Hosseini spent one season at Independence Community College in Kansas where he served as the tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator.

Hosseini began his college football career at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, California. He participated in two seasons at the JuCo, and went on to play football for the University of Texas at El Paso. After graduating in 2019, he took his first coaching job as an assistant coach for Independence Community College.

Hosseini graduated from Upland High School in Upland, CA where he also grew up.

Hosseini earned his bachelor's degree from UTEP in multidisciplinary studies. He is married to Kira Hosseini.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Upland, Calif.

**High School:** Upland High School

### **Family**

- Wife: Kira

## **EDUCATION**

### **UTEP**

- Bachelor's in Multidisciplinary Studies (2019)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Fresno State**

Present: Assistant OL

2024: Offensive Graduate Assistant

### **Missouri Southern**

2021-23: Offensive Line

### **Independence Community College**

2019-20: Tight Ends/Recruiting Coordinator

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

### **UTEP**

Offensive Line

2017-19

### **Chaffey College**

Offensive Line

2015-16

# ADAM BRESKE

CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR/LINEBACKERS  
1ST SEASON | NORTHERN COLORADO (2004)

Adam Breske has joined the Fresno State football coaching staff as linebackers coach, head coach Matt Entz announced on January 3, 2025. Breske is a 21-year coaching veteran, including 20 years at the collegiate level.

Breske comes to Fresno from Northern Illinois, where he was the linebackers coach and special teams coordinator. He follows the Bulldogs' new defensive coordinator Nick Benedetto who also joined the staff from NIU. The Husky defense was ranked fourth in the FBS in 2024 with Breske and Benedetto on staff. Their top two tacklers in 2024 were both linebackers in Christian Fuhrman and Jaden Dolphin.

Benedetto and Breske have had prior stops together at two additional programs, as coaches. In 2017, the two were together at the University of Sioux Falls and from 2010-11 they were together on staff at South Dakota. Fresno State marks their fourth program together on staff.

Breske was the linebackers coach and special teams coach at Sioux Falls from 2005-06 when Benedetto was a student-athlete for the Cougars.

Breske spent the 2023 and 2024 seasons at NIU. In his first season at NIU, Breske's starting linebacker group of Jaden Dolphin, Tyler Jackson and DaRon Gilbert were second, third and fourth respectively on the NIU defense in tackles. The NIU defense ranked sixth in the nation in passing defense at 171.2 yards allowed per game and was in the top-25 in total defense (319.5 yards/game), marking NIU's lowest total defense average since 2008. NIU also had three Special Teams Players of the Week that season in kicker Kanon Woodill, punter Tom Foley, and punt returner Dane Partridge.

He spent the 2022 season as a defensive quality control assistant at Washington State.

From 2018-21, Breske coached at Idaho. He worked with the inside linebackers all four seasons and took over as special teams coordinator in 2019. Vandal defenders earned 11 All Big Sky Conference honors during his four seasons, while Idaho special teamers were named all-conference six times, with punter Cade Coffey picking up second team All-America honors in 2021.

Prior to his time at Idaho, Breske spent one season as linebackers and special teams coach at Sioux Falls (2017) and was the defensive line coach at Missouri Valley College in 2016.

From 2007-15, Breske was at South Dakota, and coached linebackers and added defensive coordinator duties in 2011. In his first game as defensive coordinator, the Coyotes upset defending national champion and No. 1 ranked Eastern Washington; that win was one year after USD's Big Ten victory at Minnesota. Breske's linebackers earned 13 all-conference honors during his time at South Dakota, including Adam Broders, Shea Williams and Ryan Routh who were each honored in multiple seasons.

He was on staff for his first stint at Sioux Falls for the 2005 and 2006 seasons. The 2006 season saw Breske coach the linebackers and special teams during the Cougars' NAIA National Championship run and perfect 14-0 season.

He began his coaching career at Central High School in his hometown of Greeley, Colo., where he earned his bachelor's degree in communication from Northern Colorado (2004). He earned his master's degree in 2009 from South Dakota.

Breske and his wife, Danielle, have three children - Dylan, Layla and Landon. He comes from a coaching family as his father Mike Breske is a veteran defensive coach with his most recent stop being at Idaho as the defensive coordinator and safeties coach.



## PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Hometown:** Greeley, Colorado

### Family

- **Wife:** Danielle

- **Children:** Dylan, Layla, Landon

## EDUCATION

### Northern Colorado

- Bachelor's in Communication (2004)

### South Dakota

- Master's in Communications (2009)

## COACHING HISTORY

### Fresno State

**Present:** Co-DC/Linebackers

### Northern Illinois

**2023-24:** Linebackers/Special teams coordinator

### Washington State

**2022:** Defensive quality control

### Idaho

**2019-21:** Linebackers/special teams coordinator

**2018:** Linebackers

### University of Sioux Falls

**2017:** Linebackers/special teams coordinator

### Missouri Valley College

**2016:** Defensive line

### South Dakota

**2011-15:** Linebackers/defensive coordinator

**2007-11:** Linebackers

### University of Sioux Falls

**2005-06:** Linebackers/special teams coordinator

### Central High School

**2004:** Assistant coach

# J.D. WILLIAMS

## CORNERBACKS

### 9TH SEASON | FRESNO STATE (1997)

J.D. Williams returned to his alma mater in 2017 for his third coaching stint at Fresno State. He once served as an assistant coach (2000-01) and graduate assistant (1997) under Pat Hill. Williams, who enters the ninth season of his most recent stretch, will coach the cornerbacks in 2025.

In 2024, Williams coached a secondary group that led the Mountain West in pass defense efficiency (113.31). The Bulldogs ranked third in the MW with 15 interceptions by eight different players. Senior corner Cam Lockridge led the team with five total interceptions in just nine games. Lockridge had 11 total in his three seasons at Fresno State, and 14 in his collegiate career. Lockridge was a first team All-Mountain West selection, despite missing games on the year.

Williams' corners had their biggest performance in a rivalry win over San Jose State, picking off four passes as Lockridge had two, and Al'zillion Hamilton and Julian Neal added one each. Hamilton went on to be an All-MW honorable mention selection as he was second in the conference in passes defended with 15 in 13 games.

Fresno State's pass defense ranked among the top in the MW and in the FBS in 2023. The Bulldogs secondary had talent at both positions with second team All-Mountain West selection Carlton Johnson leading the way with four interceptions and seven broken up passes. Three of Johnson's interceptions were in the Bulldogs' record-breaking defensive performance at Arizona State. Johnson had three of the Bulldogs' five total interceptions in the shutout win on Sept. 16. The team's five interceptions were part of Fresno State defense's eight total turnovers, a single game program record.

Johnson earned two national Defensive Player of the Week honors by the Jim Thorpe Award and the Bronko Nagurski Trophy, and was crowned the MW Defensive Player of the Week for leading the efforts against the Sun Devils.

Fresno State's defense led the Mountain West and was No. 4 in the FBS in total interceptions. The 'Dogs also led the conference in passing efficiency defense, ranking 16th in the FBS.

The 2022 season, the first since the return of head coach Jeff Tedford, was a memorable one as Fresno State became the first program in FBS history to start the season 1-4, and finish with 10 wins. Fresno State ended the year on a nine-game winning streak, and won the 2022 Mountain West Championship and the Jimmy Kimmel LA Bowl.

Fresno State had one of the top passing defensive groups in the conference, being third in overall pass defense and second in pass defense efficiency. Among all FB programs, Fresno State ranked No. 9 in team pass defense efficiency.

The Bulldogs' pass defense was successful in large part thanks to the contributions of first-year transfer cornerback Cam Lockridge. A transfer from Hawai'i, Lockridge led the team with five interceptions returned for 100 yards. He had the

most interceptions by a Bulldog since 2013. Lockridge had one interception returned for a touchdown this season, the first for the program since 2019. Opposite Lockridge was another first-year Bulldog in Carlton Johnson. Johnson played in only seven games, making his return from injury mid-season, but finished the year with 28 tackles, 6.0 tackles for loss, 1.0 sack, one interception and six broken up passes.

The former cornerback, who is one of five first round NFL draft picks in Fresno State program history, oversaw both the cornerbacks and safeties his first three seasons upon his return with former head coach Jeff Tedford, but shifted focus entirely to the cornerbacks when head coach Kalen DeBoer took over prior to the 2020 season.

With the return of Tedford as Fresno State head coach for the 2022 season, Williams was shifted back to coaching both the cornerbacks and safeties, along with defensive pass game coordinator duties.

In 2021, the Bulldog cornerbacks had depth in the position group. Senior DaRon Bland led the group with 45 tackles, two interceptions, five broken up passes, one quarterback hurry and one forced fumble. Notably, Williams coached up true freshman cornerback Cale Sanders Jr. as one of the top-graded CBs in the conference. Sanders played in all 13 games this season, and earned the start in the final four games of the year.

Bland was drafted in the 2022 NFL Draft, in the fifth round as the 167th overall pick to the Dallas Cowboys. Bland was the first cornerback to earn a draft selection since 2007. He was just the 11th Bulldog cornerback to be drafted in program history. In his first two seasons in the NFL, Bland has quickly made a name for himself as one of the top talents at cornerback. In 2023, he set a new NFL record for most Pick-6's in a season with five. Bland totaled nine interceptions in 2023 to bring his professional career total to 14 – the most by any player in the NFL in that span. Bland was a 2023 Defensive Player of the Year finalist. He also earned a Pro Bowl nod with a starting spot and an All-Pro selection by both the AP and NFLPA.

The starting cornerback duo of junior Wylan Free and redshirt freshman Bralyn Lux was an unlikely but steady presence for the Bulldogs' defense in 2020. Lux, a walk-on, was a Burlsworth Trophy nominee that started all six games. He led the team with 30 tackles and secured his first career interception on Dec. 5 facing Nevada's Carson Strong. Strong entered that game with just two interceptions in 2020. Free, who had history at cornerback, but was transitioning back to it from safety, was the other constant that also started all six games. He had 18 tackles, one interception, and a team-high four broken up passes. Those two combined to have the same amount of plays made on the ball as first downs allowed (10).

The 2019 DB group produced seven of the Bulldogs' 11 interceptions and totaled 27 pass break ups. The group was a young one that suffered several injuries that resulted in three



#### **COACHING HISTORY**

##### **Fresno State**

Present: Cornerbacks/Def. Pass Game Coordinator  
2022-24: Defensive Backs/Def. Pass Game Coordinator  
2020-21: Cornerbacks/Def. Pass Game Coordinator  
2019: Defensive Backs/Def. Pass Game Coordinator  
2017-18: Defensive Backs

##### **UNLV**

2015-16: Defensive Backs

##### **Georgia State**

2013-14: Defensive Backs/Special Teams Coordinator

##### **UNLV**

2012: Defensive Coordinator/Asst. Head Coach/DBs  
2010-11: Defensive Backs/Asst. Head Coach/Pass Defense Coordinator

##### **Utah**

2009: Defensive Backs

##### **Washington**

2006-08: Defensive Backs

##### **California**

2002-05: Defensive Backs

##### **Fresno State**

2000-01: Defensive Backs

##### **San Jose State**

1999: Defensive Backs

##### **Cal Poly**

1998: Defensive Backs

##### **Fresno State**

1997: Graduate Assistant

#### **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

Position: Defensive Back

San Francisco 49ers (1996)

Arizona Cardinals (1994)

Buffalo Bills (1990-93)

Fresno State (1986-89)



true freshmen earning starts while Chris Coleman converted to cornerback from wide receiver to aid the group's depth. Senior Juju Hughes remained the backbone of the group, accounting for 80 tackles, two interceptions and eight pass breakups. Hughes was named a 2019 Mountain West honorable mention selection.

Williams' secondary ranked as one of the best in the nation in 2018. His group totaled 13 of the Bulldogs' 19 interceptions, which was fifth best for a FBS team, and as a defensive unit Fresno State was tied for the third-most passes defended in the nation with 79, the most by a Bulldog defense since 1999. The team also held opposing quarterbacks to the fifth-lowest pass efficiency in the FBS at 104.09.

Under his guidance, Tank Kelly was named to the All-Mountain West first team. The senior finished third in the nation with 22 passes defended and was tied for a MW-best four interceptions. He was tied with teammate Juju Hughes who, along with fellow Bulldog safety Mike Bell, was selected to the All-MW second team.

During his first year back in Fresno, the Bulldogs ranked as one of the top defensive units in 2017, finishing 10th in the FBS in scoring defense at 17.9 points per game and 15th in total defense with 320.6 yards allowed per game. Williams guided one of the Bulldogs' youngest groups on the field with his secondary accounting for 11 of the team's 19 forced turnovers.

Williams finished his second season of his second stop at UNLV in 2016. He returned to Las Vegas after serving as the defensive backs coach and special teams coordinator at Georgia State for two seasons (2013-14).

In 2013, the GSU special teams featured all-conference return specialist Albert Wilson, who ranked in the top five in the Sun Belt Conference in both punt returns and kickoff returns and is now a member of the Miami Dolphins.

During his first go-around at UNLV, Williams served two seasons (2010-11) as the Rebels' assistant head coach, secondary coach and pass defense coordinator before he was elevated to defensive coordinator in 2012, when he continued to coach the defensive backs.

Williams went to UNLV after spending the 2009 season as the cornerbacks coach at Utah. The Utes posted a 10-3 record, including a victory over Washington in the Poinsettia Bowl, and ranked 16th in the nation in passing yards allowed and ninth in pass efficiency defense.

He joined Utah after seven years working in the Pac-10. Williams was the defensive backs coach at Washington from 2006-08. He went to Washington after four seasons coaching the secondary at California.

Under then-head coach Jeff Tedford, the Bears amassed a 33-17 record and played in three bowl games during Williams' stay from 2002-05. In 2005, Cal led the Pac-10 in pass efficiency defense (24th in the nation) and finished second in the league in

total defense. In 2004, Cal ranked eighth in the nation in scoring defense and 24th in total defense.

Prior to going to Berkeley, Williams served two seasons as secondary coach at his alma mater, Fresno State, from 2000-01. Fresno State posted an 18-7 record and made back-to-back Silicon Valley Bowl appearances.

Williams also coached the secondary at Cal Poly in 1998 and San Jose State in 1999. He began his coaching career in 1997 as a Fresno State graduate assistant. Williams was a G.A. under Pat Hill (1997) – Jeff Tedford was on that staff as the offensive coordinator – and returned as an assistant coach under Pat Hill from 2000-01.

A wide receiver turned cornerback at Fresno State from 1986-89, was selected in the first round of the NFL Draft (16th overall by the Buffalo Bills, 1990). Williams was an AP honorable mention All-American in 1988, a second-team Sporting News All-American, and a third-team AP All-American in 1989. In addition to being named an All-American, he was a two-time all-Big West first-team selection and the Defensive MVP of the East-West Shrine game. He was also a standout triple jumper and sprinter, winning the 1986 Big West triple jump crown and competing on the conference championship 4x100-meter relay team that set a school record of 40.18.

During his seven-year professional career, he was a member of all four Bills' teams that advanced to the Super Bowl from 1991-94. In 2002, he was inducted into the Fresno Athletic Hall of Fame.

# DELVON HARDAWAY

WIDE RECEIVERS

1ST SEASON | FRESNO STATE (2019)

DelVon Hardaway joined the Fresno State football coaching staff as an offensive graduate assistant in January 2024. He was promoted to wide receivers coach in February 2025 under first-year head coach Matt Entz. Hardaway worked with the receivers as a graduate assistant in 2024.

The 2024 season saw the Bulldogs' first 1,000 yard receiver since 2022 and 13th in program history as senior Mac Dalena hit the milestone. Dalena was a first team All-Mountain West selection in 2024, and was joined by fellow receiver Raylen Sharpe as an all-conference selection.

Prior to his return with the Fresno State football program, Hardaway served as the wide receivers coach at Fresno City College in 2023, coaching three receivers who earned full scholarships to play after their junior college careers.

No stranger to the Bulldog football program, Hardaway was a wide receiver in the Fresno State program from 2013-18. Hardaway was a part of the Bulldogs' 2018 Mountain West championship and Las Vegas Bowl title wins under head coach Jeff Tedford.

Following his playing career as a Bulldog, he went on to play two seasons in the USFL with the Pittsburgh Maulers.

A native of Los Angeles, Hardaway earned his bachelor's degree in africana studies from Fresno State in 2019. He and his girlfriend Angela have a daughter, Bliss.



## **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, Calif.

### **Family**

- **Girlfriend:** Angela

- **Daughter:** Bliss

## **EDUCATION**

### **Fresno State**

- Bachelor's in Africana Studies (2019)

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Fresno State**

**Present:** Wide Receivers

**2024:** Graduate Assistant

### **Fresno City College**

**2023:** Wide Receivers

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

Position: Wide Receiver

Fresno State: 2013-19

Pittsburgh Maulers (USFL): 2021-23

# TUCKER MEYER

NICKELBACKS

1ST SEASON | ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE (2017)

Tucker Meyer joined the Fresno State coaching staff as a defensive analyst and nickels coach in February 2025 with first year head coach Matt Entz.

Prior to joining the Bulldogs, he spent the 2024 season at UCLA as a special teams analyst. He was North Dakota State's defensive quality control coach and assisted with the outside linebackers during the 2023 football season.

Meyer joined the Bison football staff after one year at Charlotte in 2022 and two years as a defensive graduate assistant at Mississippi State from in 2020 and 2021, where he worked alongside NDSU defensive tackles coach Jeff Phelps.

Meyer has also worked at the FCS level at Montana, where he was a defensive graduate assistant in 2019.

A 2017 graduate of Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Mont., Meyer began his coaching career at Dickinson State as linebackers coach and special teams coordinator in 2017 before working on former NDSU defensive coordinator Jason Petrino's staff in 2018 at Rocky Mountain as the secondary coach and special teams coordinator.



## **EDUCATION**

### **Rocky Mountain College**

- Bachelor's in Exercise Science

### **Mississippi State**

- Master's in Workforce Leadership

## **COACHING HISTORY**

### **Fresno State**

**Present:** Nickelbacks

### **UCLA**

**2024:** Special Teams Analyst

### **North Dakota State**

**2023:** Defensive Quality Control

### **Charlotte**

**2022:** Defensive Assistant

### **Mississippi State**

**2020-21:** Graduate Assistant

Montana

**2019:** Graduate Assistant

### **Rocky Mountain College**

**2018:** Special Teams Coordinator/  
Defensive Backs

### **Dickinson State**

**2017:** Special Teams Coordinator/  
Linebackers

## **PLAYING EXPERIENCE**

Position: Defensive Back

Rocky Mountain College: 2013-16



## JARED TAYLOR

OFFENSIVE ANALYST

1ST SEASON | NORTHERN STATE (2021)

Jared Taylor was brought on to the Fresno State football staff as an offensive analyst under first year head coach Matt Entz in February 2025. Taylor will be working with the quarterbacks.

Prior to his arrival in the Valley, he was a defensive quality control coach for the North Dakota State University football program during the 2024 season. The Bison won the Missouri Valley Football Conference championship that season with a 7-1 record and went 14-2 overall en route to the NCAA Division I FCS national title.

He began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Washburn in 2023.

Taylor played collegiately for five years at Northern State University (South Dakota) from 2017-21. He transferred to Washburn for his final year of eligibility in 2022.

He earned his bachelor's degree in business and psychology from Northern State in 2021 and his master's degree in educational psychology from Washburn in 2023.



## JUSTIN BAILEY

DEFENSIVE ANALYST

2ND SEASON | KANSAS WESLEYAN (2021)

Justin Bailey joined the Bulldog coaching staff as a defensive graduate assistant in May 2024 and transitioned to defensive analyst in 2025.

In his first season on staff, Bailey worked with the Bulldogs' defensive backs. Entering his second season, he will work with the linebackers.

Bailey comes to Fresno State from Winona State University, where he was the tight ends coach, fullbacks coach, and the assistant special teams coordinator. He spent the 2022 and 2023 seasons at Winona State, helping grow student-athletes on the field and off the field. Bailey also had a hand in recruiting as the main recruiter for tight ends and fullbacks.

Prior to his full-time assistant position, he served as a defensive line quality control assistant at Northern Illinois from 2021-22.

He got his collegiate coaching experience started as a student, serving as a student assistant with the tight ends and fullbacks at Kansas Wesleyan from 2019-21. Bailey helped with practice, game days, recruiting and more while a student assistant.

Bailey also served as the Yorba Linda High School junior varsity offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach from 2017-18.

A native of Yorba Linda, Calif., Bailey began his collegiate career playing baseball at Fullerton Community College (2017-18) before transferring to Kansas Wesleyan (2019-21). He earned his bachelor's degree in Sports Management with a minor in Coaching in the spring of 2021.



## TYRONE TERRELL

DEFENSIVE ANALYST

1ST SEASON | FRESNO STATE (2025)

Tyrone Terrell joins his first year on Matt Entz's staff as a defensive analyst, assisting with the defensive line.

Although his first season in a coaching-type role, Terrell has a long history with the Bulldog football program in several departments including scouting, recruiting, and equipment. He has been with the Bulldogs in various roles since the 2021 season, being a part of three bowl game wins and a Mountain West championship season.

As a student assistant, Terrell was the point person in distributing scout, practice and game film through various platforms. He also served as an offensive signal caller and assisted in player-to-coach communication for the offense. In his recruiting roles, he planned photo shoots, campus tours, and transportation. He would also assist in coaches' travel itineraries for recruiting on the road. While working with equipment, he managed an efficient equipment operation for every day operations, practices and game day as the second lead to the assistant athletics director for equipment.

Terrell is a native of Los Angeles, and graduated from Fresno State in the Spring of 2025 with a degree in interdisciplinary studies.



## JOHNATHAN WHITFIELD

OFFENSIVE ANALYST

1ST SEASON | GRAND VIEW (2017)

Johnathan Whitfield joined the Fresno State staff as an offensive analyst in 2025. He will assist with the running backs.

Prior to arriving at Fresno State, Whitfield was the defensive backs coach for a year at Grossmont College. He was the running backs coach there from February-June of 2024. He also has experience at the high school level, serving in various roles over the years as the defensive backs coach, defensive coordinator, and running backs coach from 2021-24 at Eastlake High School (Chula Vista, Calif.). He also had a brief coaching stint at Castle Park High School in 2019-20.

His coaching career began as a student assistant coach at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa.

In the summer of 2022, Whitfield was a team member with the Kansas City Chiefs equipment department in part of its training camp internship.

Whitfield played collegiately at Grand View from 2013-16, and was a member of the NAIA National Championship team in 2013.

He earned his undergraduate degree in History with a minor in Political Science from Grand View in 2017. He earned his master's of Coaching and Athletic Administration from the University of Concordia, Irvine in 2023.



## ANDY WARD

ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR FOR  
SPORTS PERFORMANCE  
4TH SEASON | CAL STATE STANISLAUS (2009)

Andy Ward was named Fresno State's Assistant Athletics Director for Sports Performance in January of 2022. Ward leads the athletic department's strength and conditioning staff, and serves as the head football strength and conditioning coach.

Ward returned to the Fresno State Athletics staff for his second stint. Ward, who previously worked for the Bulldogs from 2017-21, returns to Fresno after a brief stop at Colorado where he served as the Buffaloes' Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach in 2021.

Under Ward's training, the Fresno State football team has gone on to win three Mountain West championships (2017, 2018 and 2022), and four bowl games (2017, 2018, 2022, 2023). While at Fresno State, Ward has trained NFL Draft picks in wide receiver KeeSean Johnson, offensive lineman Netane Muti, linebacker Mykal Walker and quarterback Jake Haener.

In his training, Ward puts an emphasis on science and technology to track the training that the Bulldogs are receiving. In 2022, Ward developed young players to be able to fill in on different spots on the field as veteran players went down with injuries. That season, the Bulldogs became the first program in FBS history to open a season with a 1-4 record and finish with 10 wins.

While at Fresno State during his first tenure and inheriting a 1-11 football program, Ward was an integral part of strengthening the Bulldogs to become one of the top turnaround stories in college football history. Ward's training and coaching in his first season as the Bulldogs' strength and conditioning coach lifted Fresno State to a 10-win season in 2017, its 10th 10-win season in program history.

The success continued under Ward as the 'Dogs won the 2018 Mountain West Championship and Las Vegas Bowl, finishing that season with a 12-2 record. The 2018 season remains as the winningest season in Fresno State program history.

Before his time with Fresno State, Ward worked full-time with the Stanford football program for three seasons and with the department for six total seasons. Before going full-time with football, he also oversaw developing strength training aspects for the Cardinal track and field program.

Prior to arriving at Stanford, Ward split the 2010-11 academic year with internships at UC San Diego and Sacramento State. At UC San Diego, Ward assisted with the design and implementation of 13 sport-specific programs. His time at Sacramento State was spent implementing programs for the men's soccer, women's soccer and men's golf teams while assisting with 11 other programs.

Ward earned an undergraduate degree in physical education from Cal State Stanislaus in 2009, where he was a student assistant in the strength program while serving as a performance trainer at nearby Custom Built Personal Training.

The Sutter, California native earned his master's degree in exercise science at California University (Pa.). He is married to Erin Blech-Ward.



## KELLY CSERNICA

DIRECTOR OF SPORTS NUTRITION  
1ST SEASON | ITHACA COLLEGE (2020)

Fresno State Athletics hired Kelly Csernica as Director of Sports Nutrition in January 2025.

Csernica comes to Fresno State from Intermountain Health in Park City, Utah where she spent the last four months as a sports dietician on staff. There, she worked with a variety of ages from adolescent, high school and professional level athletes. In her most recent role, she collaborated with the sports medicine team of physicians, physical therapists, exercise physiologists and athletic trainers to address patient needs related to injury recovery, strength development, disordered eating, adolescent nutrition and the aging athlete.

She owns and operates her own business, Feed Yourself Strong. Csernica performs medical nutrition therapy with athletes, analyzing individual needs, allergies, intolerances, lab values and accessibility to improve strength, speed and recovery.

She has collegiate athletics experience in working with the University of Washington and North Dakota State.

In her brief stint at Washington, Csernica helped develop football athletes that were fueled through the national championship game in a historic 2023 season in Seattle. Csernica's role included onboarding first-year athletes, and assessing nutritional knowledge to then develop a 4-week educational series specific to physiological demands of each athlete.

She was at North Dakota State from 2020-23, in several roles with the nutrition department. Working with the entire athletic department, she delivered sport-specific nutrition education to 450 student-athletes via group and individual presentations, grocery store tours, cooking classes and social media.

Csernica earned her bachelor's degree in health science with a minor in exercise science from Ithaca College in New York. She was also a member of the rowing team. She later earned her master's degree in health, nutrition and exercise science from North Dakota State. She also completed a dietetic internship at the University of Houston.



## BEN HYNDS

ASST. ATHLETICS DIRECTOR FOR  
FOOTBALL  
1ST SEASON | ABILENE CHRISTIAN (2014)

Ben Hynds was hired in January 2025 by first-year head football coach Matt Entz to serve as Assistant Athletics Director for Football. In his role with the Bulldogs, Hynds will oversee all team operational items and assist in managing the day-to-day functions of the Fresno State football program.

Hynds came to the Valley from USC where he served as the Associate Director of Football Operations from 2021-24.

Prior to arriving at Troy, Hynds worked in football operations at Western Kentucky from 2018 to 2021.

He worked at Louisiana Tech from 2016-18 where he worked as a football operations assistant and as an assistant director of ticket operations.

Before beginning his career in college sports, he worked at Walt Disney World from 2015-16 as a merchandise coordinator where he managed a team of Disney employees.

Hynds was a punter at Abilene Christian from 2010-14.

He earned his bachelor's degree in Business Management – Organizational Leadership from Abilene Christian in 2014, and his MBA from Louisiana Tech in 2018.



**ALYSSA DE LA VEGA**  
ASST. DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS  
1ST SEASON

Alyssa De La Vega, a Valley native from Dinuba, California, enters her 14th season assisting the Bulldog football program. She began her Bulldog career doing administrative duties for the football program.

In 2025, she was promoted to Assistant Director of Football Operations. In this role, she will work alongside Ben Hynds to ensure all operational aspects of the Bulldog football program run smoothly.



**JAKE RASMUSSEN**  
DIRECTOR OF SCOUTING  
2ND SEASON | EASTERN WASHINGTON (2021)

Jake Rasmussen joined the Fresno State recruiting staff as the Assistant Director of Recruiting Operations in January 2024, and was promoted to Director of Scouting under first-year head coach Matt Entz in January of 2025.

Prior to arriving in Fresno, Rasmussen spent three seasons as the Director of Football Operations at Eastern Washington. He also served as the EWU Video Coordinator. In that role, Rasmussen managed all daily operations of the program including team meetings, meals, facility scheduling, and community service outreach by student-athletes. He also managed the recruiting and operations student assistants and interns.

Rasmussen began his experience in collegiate football as a student assistant with the EWU program, assisting with recruiting and operations efforts from 2019 through 2021. He moved into the full-time role in March 2021.

Rasmussen graduated Magna Cum Laude from EWU, earning his Business Marketing degree in March 2021. Rasmussen spent two years receiving his associate degree in business from Skagit Valley College. He was a 2017 graduate of Lake Stevens (Wash.) High School.

Football operations run in the family, as his father Rich spent 12 seasons working for the Eastern Washington football program in various operations roles before moving on to Washington State, Boise State and Washington.



## KODY HENSLEY

DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERSONNEL  
2ND SEASON | IDAHO STATE (2018)

Kody Hensley joined the Fresno State football staff as Director of Player Personnel in March 2024. Hensley oversees all aspects of player personnel and recruiting in his role with the Bulldogs.

Hensley was most recently at Idaho State. He served in several roles with the Bengals, including Chief of Staff, outside linebackers coach, and graduate assistant.

As Chief of Staff, Hensley had oversight of recruiting efforts, summer camps and player personnel duties. He spent one year (2023) as the Chief of Staff for Idaho State.

He spent the 2022 season as the team's outside linebackers coach. That season, he also had responsibilities as a liaison for social media, team communications, and the transfer portal. For the three seasons prior, he remained the outside linebackers coach but had additional responsibilities as the NFL liaison. In his time as a position coach, Hensley coached up several All-Big Sky athletes.

Hensley began his graduate assistantship in January 2018, working alongside defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Roger Cooper.

He earned his bachelor's degree in Physical Education with an emphasis in sports management in December 2018 from Idaho State. He also graduated with a minor in Coaching. Hensley earned his master's degree in Athletic Administration in May 2019.



## JADEN DIAMOND

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERSONNEL  
2ND SEASON | SACRAMENTO STATE (2022)

Jaden Diamond joined the Fresno State football staff as Assistant Director of Player Personnel in January 2024.

Diamond came to Fresno State from up the 99, spending his undergraduate and early career at Sacramento State. He was the On-Campus Recruiting Coordinator for the 2023 season. In this role, Diamond was responsible for evaluating high school athletes in California, Oregon, Arizona, Washington, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, and all California junior colleges.

In 2023, Sacramento State had the No. 2 freshman class in the FCS and the No. 3 FCS transfer class with Diamond on the recruiting staff.

He had success in his role with the Hornets, signing five players that had multiple Power 5 offers and several eventual All-Big Sky talents. The day-to-day recruiting efforts increased behind Diamond's assistance as he had a hand in evaluating film, communicating with potential student-athletes and preparing official visits. He served as a recruiting assistant from January 2020 until his promotion in May 2023.

In his time at Sacramento State, the football program advanced to the playoffs four years in a row, for the first time in program history. Sacramento State was the Big Sky champion in 2021 and 2022. The Hornets would win the first two playoff games in program history during Diamond's tenure.

He learned scouting and evaluating techniques through the Scouting Academy in 2021. The Scouting Academy is led by former NFL executives and coaches who taught the process and procedures of scouting.

Diamond earned his undergraduate degree in Liberal Studies from Sacramento State in 2022, then went on to earn his teaching credential from Cal State Teach in 2023.



## L.J. EARLY

DIRECTOR OF RECRUITING OPERATIONS  
3RD SEASON | FRESNO STATE (2021)

L.J. Early was hired as Fresno State's Director of Recruiting Operations in October 2023.

Early is no stranger to the Valley, playing in a Bulldog uniform from 2019-22. During his Fresno State playing career, Early played in 29 games over three seasons after redshirting in 2019. He joined the program as a junior college transfer out of Bakersfield College.

Early was recruited to play for Fresno State in part of Coach Tedford's first stint as head coach of the program. Early, a defensive back, truly is Bulldog Born and Bulldog Bred as he grew up in the Central Valley in nearby Tulare.

The former Bulldog earned his undergraduate degree from Fresno State in Africana Studies, then earned his master's in education with a concentration in instruction and curriculum.

Early and his wife Kayla were Fresno State student-athletes together with Kayla playing soccer for the Bulldogs from 2018-21. They have two sons, Koa and Tylan.



## NATALIE SMITH

DIRECTOR OF ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING  
1ST SEASON | WESTERN MICHIGAN (2022)

Natalie Smith was hired as Fresno State's Director of On-Campus Recruiting in July 2025, joining first year head coach Matt Entz in the role.

Smith joins the Bulldog family from Michigan, where she was a recruiting and operations graduate student intern for the Wolverine football program from 2023-25. In her recruiting efforts with Michigan, she was responsible for planning and executing official and unofficial visits for more than 100 recruits and their families. Operationally, she assisted with organizing family events for families of coaches and players to ensure a welcoming environment within the program. Smith worked directly with the Michigan football head coach, Director of Operations and Director of Player Personnel to ensure all pieces were running smoothly.

She also has experience working operations with Kalamazoo Growlers Baseball, a collegiate summer league in Michigan.

Smith graduated from Western Michigan with her bachelor's degree in Sport Management (December 2022), and earned her master's in Sport Management from Michigan (May 2025).

## ADDITIONAL FOOTBALL SUPPORT STAFF

### SPORTS MEDICINE



**Martin Caine**  
Head Football Athletic Trainer & Associate A.D. of Sports Medicine



**Taylor Anderson**  
Assistant Director of Sports Medicine



**Joshua Anderson**  
Assistant Director of Sports Medicine



**Miranda Gutierrez**  
Athletic Trainer



**Amber Tonkin**  
Athletic Trainer

### SPORTS PERFORMANCE



**Ryan Reyes**  
Assistant Director of Sports Performance



**Sean McDuffie**  
Assistant Sports Performance Coach



**Kayvan Aminzadeh**  
Assistant Sports Performance Coach



**Brad Guell**  
Assistant Sports Performance Coach



**Ryan Bellflower**  
Sports Performance Assistant

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT



**Travis Hewitt**  
Associate A.D. for Equipment



**Ashley Macias**  
Director of Student-Athlete Services



**Taylor Wright**  
Assistant A.D. for Student-Athlete Development



**Sook Sanghera**  
Football Video Coordinator



**Sergio Zenteno**  
Graphic Designer, Football Recruiting