

John Baxter

Special Teams Coordinator and Associate Head Coach @ Fresno State University

football • Fresno State University • Fresno

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Biography

John Baxter (born June 28, 1963, in Chicago, Illinois) is a seasoned American football coach renowned for his expertise in developing elite special teams units and mentoring offensive position groups, particularly tight ends. With over four decades of collegiate coaching experience, Baxter returned to the Fresno State Bulldogs ahead of the 2022 season as Associate Head Coach, Special Teams Coordinator, and Tight Ends Coach — roles he continues to serve with distinction. Over his long career, he has held key coaching positions across multiple Power 5 programs, including USC and Michigan, and has worked with a range of units such as special teams, tight ends, wide receivers, running backs, linebackers, and the defensive line. Known for producing highly productive special teams units, Baxter's leadership has helped Fresno State's return game and kicking units achieve significant success, including top-5 Mountain West rankings in kickoff and punt returns. 

Off the field, Baxter's contributions extend beyond X's and O's. He earned his bachelor's degree in physical education from Loras College and a master's in higher education from Iowa State University, and he is deeply committed to academic success and player development. He is married to his wife, Jill, and they have two daughters, Kelly and McKenzie. Throughout his career, Baxter has garnered respect as both a coach and mentor, shaping not just competitive units on the field but also helping student-athletes grow in the classroom and beyond.

Statement

A well-rounded individual, family man, and unique coach with nearly three decades of coaching experience between seven different programs; has established a proven track record as a position coach, coordinator, and associate head coach.

Education

Bachelors in Physical Education
Loras College

Masters in Higher Education
Iowa State University

Feature

Ultimate Insider: Special teams coordinator John Baxter
Ultimate Insider: Fresno State special teams coordinator John Baxter joins Angelique Martinez on KSEE24's Bulldog Insider.

The Coach's Corner Ep: 6 Fresno State Coach John Baxter

Axess Sports / Football Talk. Talking about all things NFL from draft day to the Super Bowl as well as all major sports

PRINCIPLES

- **Teaching First:** Coaching is teaching, and success comes from making complex ideas simple, repeatable, and executable under pressure.
 - **Special Teams as a Weapon:** Special teams are not supplemental—they are a strategic phase of the game that can decisively win field position, momentum, and outcomes.
 - **Every Game Is a Puzzle:** Each opponent presents a unique problem that must be solved through preparation, anticipation, and adaptive strategy
 - **Details Drive Dominance:** Consistent attention to fundamentals, precision, and repetition outperforms raw talent over time.
 - **Develop the Whole Player:** True coaching develops players academically and personally, not just athletically, preparing them for long-term success beyond football.
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PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Robert Malone

Fresno State | Football

Steve Spach

Fresno State | Football

Marlon Moore

Fresno State | Football

Jehu Chesson

Michigan | Football

Nico Remigio

Fresno State | Football

Adoree Jackson

USC | Football

COACHING CAREER

Associate Head Coach — Fresno State University

| Football | 2022

I returned to Fresno State to coach tight ends and lead special teams, helping the Bulldogs rank among the Mountain West's top-performing units. I currently serve as associate head coach and special teams coordinator, continuing to emphasize teaching, preparation, and competitive excellence.

Special Teams Coordinator — University of Southern California

| Football | 2016 - 2018

I returned to USC to coach tight ends and special teams, contributing to bowl appearances and consistent special teams production. In 2018, I focused exclusively on coordinating special teams, emphasizing execution, field position, and situational excellence.

Special Teams Coordinator — University of Michigan

| Football | 2015 - 2015

I spent the 2015 season at Michigan as special teams coordinator, helping elevate the unit's national efficiency and overall team success.

Associate Head Coach — University of Southern California

| Football | 2010 - 2013

At USC, I served as associate head coach and special teams coordinator, leading nationally recognized units and earning National Special Teams Coordinator of the Year honors.

Associate Head Coach — Fresno State University

| Football | 1997 - 2009

I joined Fresno State as associate head coach, coordinating special teams and coaching tight ends, helping build one of the nation's most productive special teams units. Over five seasons, I coached wide receivers and coordinated special teams, contributing to sustained competitive success and player development. In my final season of my first Fresno State tenure, I coached tight ends while overseeing special teams and team leadership.

Tight Ends Coach — Tulane University

| Football | 1994 - 1996

I spent three seasons at Tulane coaching tight ends and special teams, further refining my teaching approach and tactical understanding of the game.

Running Backs Coach — University of Maryland

| Football | 1992 - 1993

At Maryland, I coached running backs and directed special teams, continuing to develop my versatility as a position coach and coordinator.

Tight Ends Coach — University of Arizona

| Football | 1990 - 1991

I returned to Arizona to coach tight ends while coordinating special teams, expanding my offensive coaching experience alongside my special teams responsibilities.

Linebackers Coach — University of Maine

| Football | 1989 - 1989

This was my first full-time coaching role, where I coached outside linebackers and coordinated special teams, taking full responsibility for unit preparation and performance.

Special Teams Coordinator — Arizona State University

| Football | 1988 - 1988

At Arizona, I coached defensive backs and special teams, continuing to build my technical knowledge of the kicking game and defensive structure.

Graduate Assistant — Iowa State University

| Football | 1986 - 1987

While earning my master's degree, I worked as a graduate assistant coaching the defensive line and special teams, gaining foundational Division I experience across multiple units.

Graduate Assistant — Loras College

| Football | 1981 - 1985

Baxter began his coaching career at his alma mater, Loras College, where he served for 5 seasons (1981-85) as a student assistant (working with the running backs) during his undergraduate time.
