



The Nation's Premier Award for



NCAA® Senior Student-Athletes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## OHIO STATE ALL-AMERICAN LINEBACKER JAMES LAURINAITIS IS INAUGURAL WINNER OF THE LOWE'S SENIOR CLASS AWARD FOR FOOTBALL

### Nation's Premier Award for Seniors Announced During Fiesta Bowl National Telecast

(Tempe, Arizona) – Three-time All-American linebacker **James Laurinaitis**, who returned to Ohio State University for his senior season in 2008 and led the Buckeyes to a fourth consecutive Big Ten Championship while being a role model both on and off the field, has been named the inaugural winner of the **Lowe's Senior CLASS Award** for NCAA® Division I Football (Bowl Subdivision).

The award, chosen by a nationwide vote of coaches, media and fans, is presented annually to the most outstanding NCAA Division I senior student-athlete in nine sports. The announcement and trophy presentation to Laurinaitis were made today during the pre-game show of the Fiesta Bowl national telecast on FOX.

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award has grown into the nation's premier tribute to college seniors. The award identifies personal qualities that define a complete student-athlete, with criteria including excellence in the **classroom, character** and **community**, as well as **competition** on the field.

Laurinaitis, who has received many awards including the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, said the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award is special because of what it represents. "What a tremendous honor this is to be recognized with such a prestigious award," Laurinaitis said. "The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award is already well known in basketball, and to be the first-ever winner for football is something very special. I appreciate the compliment it pays to me and to Ohio State to be recognized for character, academics and community service. I am very proud to be the winner."

Laurinaitis was voted team captain for the second consecutive season by his teammates and is only the seventh Buckeye to be elected twice. He is a three-time, first-team All-Big Ten selection, and finished second in the Big Ten in 2008 with 121 tackles (10.1 per game). He recorded eight double-figure tackle games this season and ranks seventh in Ohio State history with 366 career tackles. During his tenure as a Buckeye, Ohio State has played in four BCS Bowl games, including two national championship games.

A fierce competitor, Laurinaitis' ambition is also apparent in the classroom. The Academic All-Big Ten selection will graduate this March with a degree in communications and currently maintains a 3.28 GPA.

A native of Hamel, Minnesota, Laurinaitis makes community outreach a priority. He shares his personal testimony to multiple groups per month and sees his position as a football player as a platform to motivate others.

"James Laurinaitis is the type of young man who takes to heart the ability of a college athlete to be a positive role model for others," remarked Ohio State Head Coach Jim Tressel. "Through his play on the field, through his academic success and through his service to others, he represents Ohio State and collegiate athletics in a tremendously positive manner."

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The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award also names an All-Senior All-America Team each year based on voting results of the finalists. Joining Laurinaitis on the 2008 first team are: **Louie Sakoda** (University of Utah), **Chase Daniel** (University of Missouri - Columbia), **Chase Clement** (Rice University), and **Jeff Byers** (University of Southern California). The second team includes **Maurice Crum, Jr.** (University of Notre Dame), **Darryl Richard** (Georgia Tech University), **Alex Mack** (University of California - Berkeley), **Travis Beckum** (University of Wisconsin - Madison), and **Austin Starr** (Indiana University).

"When you read about James Laurinaitis one question comes to mind, 'How does he do it?'" said **Bob Gfeller**, Lowe's senior vice president of Marketing and Advertising. "James will leave Ohio State University not only as the one of the best defensive players in school history, but also with his degree. Lowe's is honored to recognize one of the nation's top athletes not only for his dominance on the football field, but for his community, character and classroom success."

Sportscaster **Dick Enberg**, Honorary Chairman of the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award, first conceived the idea of an award for seniors in 2001 in response to the growing trend of men's basketball players leaving school early for the NBA.

Lowe's, an official Corporate Partner of the NCAA and NCAA Football, expanded the Senior CLASS Award program in 2007 to include NCAA Division I men's and women's soccer, men's ice hockey, men's lacrosse, baseball and softball. With the addition of Football (Bowl Subdivision) this year, the award program now includes nine NCAA sports.

"Recognizing the many achievements of student-athletes is a goal the NCAA proudly shares with our corporate partner Lowe's," said **Greg Shaheen**, NCAA Senior Vice President of Basketball and Business Strategies. "The Lowe's Senior CLASS Award places a spotlight on the quality attributes of our future student-athlete graduates. The NCAA is proud to honor student-athlete leaders who have demonstrated a commitment to excel on the field of competition while they earn their degrees."

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#### **ABOUT THE AWARD**

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: classroom, community, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards that a senior season can bring. For more information, visit [www.seniorclassaward.com](http://www.seniorclassaward.com).

#### **ABOUT LOWE'S**

With fiscal year 2007 sales of \$48.3 billion, Lowe's Companies, Inc. is a FORTUNE® 50 company that serves approximately 14 million customers a week at more than 1,625 home improvement stores in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1946 and based in Mooresville, N.C., Lowe's is the second-largest home improvement retailer in the world. For more information, visit [www.lowes.com](http://www.lowes.com).

#### **ABOUT THE NCAA**

The NCAA is a membership-led nonprofit association of colleges and universities committed to supporting academic and athletic opportunities for more than 400,000 student-athletes at more than 1,000 member colleges and universities. Each year, more than 54,000 student-athletes compete in NCAA championships in Divisions I, II and III sports. Visit [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org) and [www.ncaa.com](http://www.ncaa.com) for more details about the Association.

#### **ABOUT NCAA FOOTBALL**

NCAA Football USA, Inc. is a coalition of the American Football Coaches Association, the Conference Commissioners Association, the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and the National Collegiate Athletics Association and serves to improve, promote and protect college football for those who play, coach, support and dream of playing the game. IMG has served as NCAA Football's managing partner since its inception.

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## All-Senior All-America Teams

*As selected in balloting for the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award by cumulative results of NCAA® Division I Coaches, National Media and Fan Balloting*

### NCAA Division I Football (Bowl Subdivision Only)

#### *First Team*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>University</b>
James Laurinaitis	Linebacker	The Ohio State University
Louie Sakoda	Punter/Kicker	University of Utah
Chase Daniel	Quarterback	University of Missouri (Columbia)
Chase Clement	Quarterback	Rice University
Jeff Byers	Offensive Guard/Center	University of Southern California

#### *Second Team*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>University</b>
Maurice Crum, Jr.	Linebacker	University of Notre Dame
Darryl Richard	Defensive Tackle	Georgia Tech University
Alex Mack	Center	University of California (Berkeley)
Travis Beckum	Tight End	University of Wisconsin (Madison)
Austin Starr	Kicker	Indiana University