

Ohio State Linebackers Coach James Laurinaitis To Be Significant Factor In Recruiting



Ohio State's coaching staff was completed on Thursday with the promotion of graduate assistant James Laurinaitis to linebackers coach, but beyond completing head coach Ryan Day's staff for 2024, this also has a significant impact on the team's recruiting efforts.

Laurinaitis' usage on the recruiting trail over the past year has mostly been limited to in-house, taking care of usual graduate assistant responsibilities like keeping in touch over the phone and helping with in-person visits. But following the firing of special teams coordinator Parker Fleming in January, Laurinaitis was allowed to hit the road as the Buckeyes did not have 10 full-time assistant coaches, and he made the most of it.

"(We) had an opportunity to see him on the road (recruiting) the last couple of weeks," Day said on Friday. "(He) did an unbelievable job. There's a lot of momentum, so we felt like it was the right move (to promote him)."

Laurinaitis — even limited to mostly phone calls — has been able to develop a strong relationship with Ohio State's recruits since he returned to campus. Though he was more than a year away from becoming a full-time assistant, Laurinaitis said last February that recruiting would be key for him at Ohio State.

"Recruiting is relationship-building," he said. "You're trying to figure out what's important to not only the kid, but what's important to the family. You just have to be willing to be consistent and build those relationships."

And what better person to build those relationships than someone of Laurinaitis' stature within the program? The three-time All-American linebacker and two-time Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year — not to mention his eight years of NFL experience — make him a strong advocate for Ohio State, a significant factor in his promotion.

"He knows Ohio State, he loves Ohio State," Day said. "He has credibility with the players, he has credibility with recruits because he's done it. And not only did he do it, he did it at an unbelievable

level, he did it in the NFL.

"I've been impressed with the way he's transitioned from being a player to a coach. I think when you look at James, when you look at Brian (Hartline), those guys were guys who maximized themselves on the field. As they transition from being in the NFL to college, they use a lot of the things they've learned, especially in the latter years of their NFL careers, to help guys on the field. I've seen so many great things from (Laurinaitis)."

Now that he can go out on the road as a full-time assistant, Laurinaitis figures to be even more involved in that area for Ohio State, not to mention his increased responsibilities as a coach now leading the linebackers. But both those aspects of his job — getting to recruit student-athletes to Ohio State and later develop them — are why he got into coaching.

"I love the game of football, and I love working with young people," Laurinaitis said last February. "That's why I got into coaching. You want to impact the kids on the field. But more importantly, you want them to leave, after building relationships with them, as better men and hopefully give them an example of what being a good husband and father can be — the same thing Luke Fickell did for me and Jim Tressel did for me."