

Bond With Greg Mattison Continues At Ohio State For Yanni Karlaftis

Yanni Karlaftis was several months removed from his freshman football season at West Lafayette, Ind., when he broke through April 2, 2018, with a Michigan offer.

The first scholarship for Karlaftis came from Greg Mattison — then the Wolverines' fourth-year defensive line coach, on U-M's staff since 2011 with those initial four seasons spent as defensive coordinator — who built the foundation for the 6-3, 203-pounder's recruitment.

Nine months later, Mattison joined first-year head coach Ryan Day at Ohio State, which almost immediately resulted in a bid from the Buckeyes to the 2021 outside linebacker.

"I'm in really close contact with Coach Mattison, so I saw on Twitter that he switched schools (Jan. 7)," Karlaftis told BSB. "I called him, we talked about it and then we talked and he offered me a bit later on. I really like Coach Mattison."

OSU's Jan. 14 offer marked the fifth for Karlaftis, whose relationship with Mattison has carried over from Ann Arbor to Columbus.

Offers from Michigan State, Indiana and Purdue followed Michigan during a two-day stretch last April, but Ohio State finds itself firmly in the mix with Mattison's bond already built.

After he impressed with his performance as an underclassman March 31 during The Opening Regional Canton inside Massillon (Ohio) Washington's Paul L. David Athletic Training Center, Karlaftis looked forward to visiting the Buckeyes for the first time.

Fairfield (Ohio) High 2020 three-star all-purpose back Jutahn McClain (5-10, 180) and West Lafayette (Ind.) High 2021 outside linebacker Yanni Karlaftis (6-3, 203). Strong competition between the two Ohio State targets with Karlaftis keeping the shifty McClain in check.
pic.twitter.com/zny6B5rwIz

— Garrett Stepien (@GarrettStepien) March 31, 2019

"I'm planning on meeting some more coaches because, right now, I'm currently just in contact with Coach Mattison," Karlaftis said. "I really haven't been down there and seen much. I heard they have a really amazing stadium. So I really want to take a look and see."

Karlaftis came to Columbus for an initial visit April 13 when the Buckeyes' spring game took place at Ohio Stadium, where he rekindled his relationship with Mattison.

After the annual scrimmage finished, Karlaftis met Day, who succeeded former head coach Urban Meyer (2012-18) Jan. 2.

While he initiated his communication with Mattison up north, Karlaftis and first-year linebackers coach Al Washington — who followed Jan. 8 from the Wolverines to Ohio State — had yet to get in touch, an aspect the rising junior was interested in changing.

“I haven’t had contact with (Coach Washington),” Karlaftis said. “(But) I’m planning on visiting soon and getting in contact with him.”

Great day at the spring game! □ @OhioStateFB @ryandaytime @CoachGMattison
pic.twitter.com/qF8ONBSt6

— Yanni Karlaftis (@therealYK_14) April 13, 2019

With nine offers to his name, Karlaftis — the No. 67 overall prospect, No. 4 outside linebacker and No. 1 player in Indiana for 2021 on 247Sports — has quickly risen up the boards of Power Five programs in the Midwest. After the Buckeyes got involved, he added Cincinnati (Jan. 15), Notre Dame (Jan. 18), Nebraska (Jan. 24) and Wisconsin (Jan. 27).

The younger brother of Purdue freshman defensive end George Karlaftis (6-4, 265) — who signed with the Boilermakers over U-M among a national offer list while considered to be the 247Sports composite’s No. 59 overall prospect, No. 4 strongside defensive end and No. 1 player in Indiana for 2019 — Yanni Karlaftis is following those footsteps as West Lafayette’s next big thing.

However, he approaches the process unique to his brother’s.

“I basically live on campus,” Karlaftis said. “It’s a small town. Pretty much, George really liked Purdue because of (head coach Jeff) Brohm and just the home spirit. He’s close with my family.

“I’m close with my family, too. It’s just I’m not going to make a decision based off of what George says or based off family. I’m just going to do what I can do to get myself in the best position possible.”

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