

Buckeyes Linebackers Coach James Laurinaitis Says His Experience As A Player At Ohio State Makes Him A Better Recruiter



It's always a battle in recruiting when it comes to not only getting a commitment, but holding on to that, and getting the recruit to sign when that time comes around.

Having played at Ohio State from 2005-08 while Jim Tressel was head coach and moving on to an eight-year NFL career, James Laurinaitis knows what it's like to be a Buckeye and what they can do for players while they are in Columbus to prepare them for the next level. Even though he hasn't been recruiting long, he said that makes it a lot easier to make the pitch.

"I try to be an ambassador of Ohio State," he said. "I love this school. It's changed my life. It's done wonders for me and my family. To play here, recruit your position at the school you went to at the place that you love, it's so natural.

"I'm sure there are some coaches who have to come off as car salesmen. There isn't any of that because I've lived it. That's a huge benefit when you're talking to young people and trying to convince them to come to your school."

He's able to take the experience he had and show them how Ohio State got him to the NFL as proof that what he's telling them isn't just a pre-planned sales pitch, it's the reality of his experience at the school, and he liked his time enough to come back to be a coach after he spent eight years in the NFL.

It also helps him being from out of state. Originally from Minnesota, he's able to make the pitch to high school players who might be nervous about moving away from home, but he's able to put their mind at ease with the experience he had.

Laurinaitis went on a recruiting trip this offseason with head coach Ryan Day before he was promoted to a full-time position. He had talked to recruits before, but actually going on the trip with Day, he treated it like a job interview.

He must have done well, because on Feb. 15 he was promoted to be the new linebackers coach for Ohio

State. It took just one year of being a graduate assistant for him with the team to get to that point.

“A year ago when I came back, I voiced that it was my dream to be the linebackers coach here,” Laurinaitis said. “I felt pretty confident that I had done the best job I could have to prepare myself for the opportunity and I’m grateful that Coach Day believed in me.”

He said being in a full-time position is going to be a huge help as well. Of course it allows him to go on the road to recruit, but it’s also something that can convince a player to come to Columbus if they want to have him as a coach because now that he has the position, he isn’t going anywhere.

He said there were other coaches who tried to use the fact that he was a graduate assistant against him, saying he would have to leave Ohio State if he wanted to be a full-time coach, which might have turned some recruits away.

But his experience at Ohio State will likely be very important when it comes to landing recruits because he had such a great time when he was in Columbus.

“I joke all the time, I was a three-star from Minnesota,” Laurinaitis said. “But really my singular focus was just I’m going to keep playing football until they don’t let me anymore. When you come to a place like Ohio State - whether you’re blessed to play four, five years here and that’s it, or whether you’re blessed to play 10 years in the league - this town and this fan base, if you treat it right will take care of you for life and it becomes your family.”