

'Larry Legend' A Draw For Zahir Mathis



There's no questioning the high regard with which 2025 defensive end Zahir Mathis holds Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson.

The 6-5, 220-pound blue-chipper out of Philadelphia Imhotep Institute has a preferred way to refer to the leader of the rushmen: "Larry Legend." And at the third of the Buckeyes' five one-day recruiting camps Wednesday, he got his first opportunity to receive hands-on coaching from Johnson.

"It was great," Mathis told BSB. "He talked with me about my work ethic. I love this coaching staff, they did me well. Helped me out with some reps, I lost some reps then I won some reps so it was pretty good for me just to come down here."

Ranked as the 38th-best prospect in the class of 2025 per the 247Sports composite, the No. 6 defensive end and No. 1 player out of Pennsylvania, Mathis already holds an Ohio State offer as well as offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Penn State and USC among many others.

Mathis' admiration for Johnson starts with a familiar name: Former Ohio State defensive end Chase Young.

Young went to high school and now plays NFL Football for the Washington Commanders just a couple hours away from where Mathis grew up and plays high school football, close enough that Mathis has seen the impact the former Heisman Trophy finalist has had on his local community.

"He had a big impact on me, because Chase Young was coming from the DMV," Mathis said. "Myself, I'm from Philadelphia, so just to be so close to home and see his big impact on the world. Then Larry Legend had both of the Bosa brothers (Joey and Nick). I've got that love and respect for him."

In working through the camp's various defensive line drills with Johnson, the veteran coach's attention to detail stood out for the prospect.

"He's patient," Mathis said. "He isn't going to rush you throughout your development. If you mess up, just get back up and get back on the field, you'll be okay. And just his focus on the basics."

Wednesday's camp was also Mathis' first trip to Ohio State's campus, and he said it "felt like home." He got to explore a decent bit outside the team's training facilities. He plans to make a return trip in the fall for a game day visit.

The Buckeyes' engineering school also appeals to him, he wants to be a scientific engineer one day.

"It's a great school, wonderful school," Mathis said. "I actually want to come to college to get my engineering degree and business degree. So it'd be good to get out (of Philadelphia) and see the world a little bit.

When it comes down to making a decision, relationships are Mathis' top priority. And it looks like he's already forming a strong bond with Johnson.

"Connections," Mathis said of what's important to him. "I don't want to go anywhere that I've got to be there and be uncomfortable. It's the next four years of my life, I want to make a great decision."