

Oregon Quarterback Dillion Gabriel Reveals He Had Conversations With Ohio State During Transfer Portal Recruitment



Ohio State fifth-year transfer quarterback Will Howard is the presumptive favorite to start at quarterback for the Scarlet and Gray this season, but had the Buckeyes acted differently in the transfer portal this offseason, they could have had a different veteran signal caller leading the race.

Speaking with the media at Big Ten Media Days at Lucas Oil Stadium on Thursday, sixth-year Oregon quarterback Dillion Gabriel — who pledged to the Ducks from Oklahoma on Dec. 9 — revealed that he engaged in positive conversations with Ohio State prior to committing to Oregon, with the Buckeyes being one of two other teams besides the Ducks to speak with him during his brief time in the transfer portal.

“It was good,” Gabriel said when asked about the conversations between him and Ohio State. “I think anything, throughout the (transfer portal) process, it’s just gaining information on one another. But I think the recruiting process is what it is, and I think everyone that was a quarterback in the portal was able to have conversations with different schools.”

Gabriel entered the transfer portal for the second time in his career on Dec. 4 — he transferred from UCF to Oklahoma before the 2022 season — after two productive seasons with the Sooners, throwing for a combined 6,828 passing yards and 55 touchdowns to just 12 interceptions from 2022-23.

The former Sooner told the media that because this was his third time being recruited in his college football career, he wanted to commit to a new school early in his transfer process to avoid the stresses that come with being in the portal, something that Oregon was willing to do, and Ohio State, on the other hand, was not.

The Buckeyes wanted to wait to see how Brown played in the Cotton Bowl against Missouri rather than pulling the trigger early on Gabriel or another quarterback in the portal, a decision that Gabriel said played a significant factor in his decision to commit to the Ducks over Ohio State.

“Going through my third recruiting process, I know it’s a stressful time for anyone who’s transferred,” he said. “Although there’s beauty in new beginnings and all that, everyone knows the stress that comes

with it, whether it's moving, the moving companies, the moving in, there's just a lot that comes with it. So the faster you can make a decision and feel good about it, be decisive, then it allows you to act accordingly."

Gabriel's decision to pull the trigger on the Ducks ultimately led head coach Ryan Day and Ohio State to choose another veteran quarterback out of the Big 12 in the former Kansas State Wildcat Howard, who committed to the program on Jan. 4, exactly one month after Gabriel pledged to Oregon.

Gabriel, who said Oregon had "everything that I was looking for," in his recruitment, told the media that he has great respect for his former Big 12 and now Big Ten rival Howard. This admiration, according to Gabriel, only increased when the two quarterbacks attended the Manning Passing Academy together in Thibodaux, La., from June 27-30, a time that he said allowed them to get to know each other better both on and off the field.

"(Howard is) extremely talented," Gabriel said. "I think he does a great job of running the football and throwing the ball. (He has) great command and did a great job at K-State."

Despite playing for rival schools in the Big 12, both Gabriel and Howard have yet to face off against each other in their respective careers, with the last matchup between Oklahoma and Kansas State occurring early in the 2022 season when Howard was the backup to Adrian Martinez.

The two veterans will have the opportunity to play each other for the first time this season, however, when Ohio State travels to Oregon on Oct. 12 in what is one of the more highly anticipated games of the college football year. For Gabriel, it is a matchup against the team that recruited him this offseason that he is circling on the calendar.

"I think it's going to be fun," Gabriel said of the Oct. 12 matchup. "I know (Ohio State and Oregon) played before in non-conference, but so many people look forward to these cool matchups. (Previously) you'd have to wait 10 years to make it happen, but now you get it more consistently. And I think fans, players, coaches, everyone involved in college football are looking forward to that stuff."