

Will Howard Thankful For Chance To Be A Buckeye, Ready To Finish The Job



After the 2023 season, Will Howard had many options. He entered the transfer portal early on, but wasn't sure if he would end up at another school or if he would take his chances in the NFL draft.

"I had a Senior Bowl invite," Howard said at the media day for the national championship. "Everything was teed up for me to kind of go into the draft process. Obviously the NIL money, it was nice to get it as an almost insurance kind of thing, but that really didn't - if I would have been in it for the money, I probably would have been somewhere else, to be honest with you.

"I came to Coach (Ryan) Day, and I said I want to go somewhere that I can develop myself into a better player and win a national championship. That was really what the ultimate motivation was for me."

He said that his decision came down to either coming to Ohio State or going to the draft, but he wanted to try to improve his draft stock under a coach like Day, who has sent quarterbacks like C.J. Stroud and Justin Fields to the NFL already.

Looking to become a better prospect, Howard came to Ohio State and was introduced to the Buckeyes program, and was excited to take all of it in, letting others take the lead in the spring since he was the new guy in the Woody.

"I wanted to get to know everyone first and come in and not be trying to lead everyone and bark orders right from the get go," Howard said. "Just coming in there and saying, 'Hey, I want to be a part of this. I want to be a Buckeye. I want to understand what it's about.' I didn't want to come in too strong, come on too strong.

I tried to really just show them and earn their respect and show them that I wanted to be here and I wanted to be a part of this thing. Going from there, man, like we just had so many good guys that took me in and appreciated me. I feel like I gained their respect."

On a team that is defined by career Buckeyes, with so many players returning for their senior seasons, Howard was able to work his way into the starting quarterback spot and assert himself as a leader. He has been recognized time and time again as the guy who stepped up when the team needed it most, after center Seth McLaughlin went down in practice with a torn Achilles tendon.

Throughout this long season, he has thrown for 3,779 yards on 292-of-402 passing (72.6 completion percentage) for 33 touchdowns and 10 interceptions, also rushing for 169 yards and seven scores on the ground, and now he is looking for one more win to finish his final season on top of college football. But he knows it's not going to be easy.

"This team is a hard-fighting, hard-working team, so it's going to take everything. We can't leave any stone unturned. We've got to put our everything into this fight," Howard said. "It's going to be a bout. It's going to be a fight. It's going to be a war, and it's not going to be given to us. We're going to have to go earn it out there."

And even though he is focused on winning one last game at this point, he's still able to look back and reflect about what this opportunity he found himself means to him.

"If you were to ask a 19-year-old or an 18-year-old Will Howard if he'd be at Ohio State playing in the National Championship, I think he'd probably say you're crazy, man," Howard said. "You've got to continue to believe in yourself no matter what and adapt and change."

"That was one of the biggest stories of my career was just dealing with the change and dealing with adversity and dealing with success and being able to balance that and just continue to work hard and keep that chip on your shoulder through all of that."

And through it all, Howard has absolutely raised his draft stock and now has the chance to immortalize himself as another Ohio State quarterback to lead his team to a national championship win.