

Gabe Vincent: From Gaucho to Laker, And Everywhere In Between

By Ryan Greenberg — November 1, 2023

On October 24, 2023, the Los Angeles Lakers began their 2023-24 season on the road against the Denver Nuggets. This game also represented Gabe Vincent's, a 27-year-old point guard, Lakers debut after signing with the team in free agency this summer. After four seasons and two NBA Finals appearances with the Miami Heat, Vincent signed a 3-year, \$33 million contract with the Lakers.

But before playing in the NBA Finals and alongside LeBron James, Vincent played for four years at UC Santa Barbara.

Vincent played 113 games in his four years as a Gaucho, being named to the All-Big West Second team his senior year in 2018. After going undrafted in 2018, Vincent played in the G-League for two seasons before signing with the Heat in January 2020.

Vincent began his Heat career as a role player, but flourished in representing the Nigeria national team, including leading D'Tigers to a victory over the United States in 2021. By the end of his Heat career, Vincent was elevated to the team's starting point guard and recorded several career-high scoring performances during their playoff run to another NBA Finals.

UCSB TV got the chance to speak with Gabe Vincent about his journey from UCSB to the Lakers, and all his stops in between.

How do you think coming from a mid-major school, rather than a power five school, geared you for success?

I think it helped gear me towards success because I had to play multiple roles. There's a little more I had to do to hone my skills to help us win games or be competitive. Just continue to put a chip on my shoulder while I'm at this stage.

What did you have to improve upon the most during your time in the G-League to become an NBA-caliber player?

I think I just really exhibited my defense, as well as my shooting. I shot the ball at a high clip in the G-League and I think that got me a lot of attention. From there I was able to show that I could compete defensively at a high level as well.

What about “Heat Culture” enables players like yourself to shine? What elements of Heat Culture do you plan on bringing into the Lakers’ locker room?

Heat Culture is more just like an ideology, a mindset, an approach, something that they take into everything they do each day to try to get better. I think that aligned with someone who I was inherently already. I think we already have some of that here, in a different way. It might not look exactly the same, but I think everyone’s working towards the same common goal.

Walk me through your assist to Jimmy Butler to force overtime in game 5 in Milwaukee, from the timeout to Jimmy finishing the bucket to force OT.

We already knew the play we were going to run, or at least I had an idea of what we’d run. We ran it a couple of times throughout the year. We have the ball, two guys lifted high, had Jimmy kind of curl someone on the block, kind of throw it over the top to him. We ran it earlier in the year against Houston, I think, with a back screen and it was a lob dunk to win the game. That pass, I was comfortable making. It was a pass we had practiced. I knew where Jimmy wanted the ball, was able to deliver it to him in timely fashion and he did the rest.

In 2021, you lead the Nigeria national team to victory over the United States. Describe how, while representing your country, you were able to be the best player on the floor in a game that included Kevin Durant, Jayson Tatum, and Damian Lillard.

Talented group we played against obviously. They went on to win a gold medal, so credit to them, but I just went out there and competed. My guys played hard, we had attention to detail, focus. They freed me up when they could and I was able to take and make good shots.

What are your thoughts on UCSB Basketball’s current squad? Have you gotten the chance to check out Ajay Mitchell?

I’m excited for them. I’m excited to see Ajay’s continual development, to see how the year goes for him personally as well as the rest of the group. Just trying to watch from afar and stay in touch how I can. We always had the same goal there: to get to the tournament and have success. I know those guys are working hard each day to try to reach that ultimate goal as well.

What can the Lakers look forward to in having Gabe Vincent on the team?

I’m just a guy that’s going to go compete. I’m going to try to play basketball the right way, take open shots when I have them, try to find my guys, get them involved and compete defensively. Just try to do it night in, night out, do whatever I can to help move the needle to help this team win games.

What do you miss most about Santa Barbara and UCSB?

Wow, what do I miss most about Santa Barbara? Probably the lovely combination of some Blenders and Hana Kitchen. Can never go wrong. A little Freebirds quesarito after 2am never hurts. I'm sure those prices are crazy now. You can't go wrong. Santa Barbara is a special place. Isla Vista is a unique city, and an amazing university.

I used to work at Blenders, believe it or not. What was the go-to drink there?

Ooh, red pineapple.

Red pineapple? Alright, questionable. I got to respect it. What was the go-to at Freebirds?

Quesarito. Half chicken, half steak. Kind of light on the cheese. It's a good order, man, you got to get down there. Only after 2am, though.

Not his first rodeo.

Only after 2am, though.

At the time of writing, Gabe Vincent is averaging 28.3 minutes per game through his first four games as a Laker as he looks to be an integral part of a Lakers team that will be competing for another championship. Vincent's journey to the Lakers and beyond, from the G-League to the NBA Finals, will always have started at UCSB.