

Donnie Webb: Post-banquet notes

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By Donnie Webb

New York City -- Former Syracuse University quarterback Don McPherson spoke for the entire College Football Hall of Fame Class of 2008. He got a standing ovation if that tells you anything. Prepared. Smart. Powerful. It made you proud to be from Syracuse. He talked about family, team, institution and the life lessons learned on the practice field. One of the moderators of the banquet followed up McPherson's speech talking about the great education he received from Syracuse.

Just an unreal collection of coaches and football figures for the annual National Football Foundation dinner at the Waldorf Astoria. Among the coaches there - Jim Tressel, Skip Holtz, Mike Leach, Bobby Bowden, Mack Brown, Steve Spurrier, Nick Saban, Butch Davis, Al Golden, Bob Stoops, Paul Johnson, Greg Schiano, Rick Neuheisel, Dick Biddle, Jim Harbaugh, Phil Fulmer and Tommy Tuberville.

So, at least two of the coaches Syracuse has interviewed for its vacancy - Holtz and Golden - are here. There was no sign of Turner Gill, though a second-source said he believes Gill did have a second interview with the Orange, possibly on Tuesday.

I did speak briefly with Syracuse University director of athletics Daryl Gross, who wore an orange tie and pocket square with his tux. Gross said the search for a new coach is going well and that he hopes to have an announcement in the near future. Sighe. I know. He's just not ready to divulge any information during crunch time in his hiring process. Any hope for a timetable or some sense that he's ready to pick his guy just isn't there. I understand Gross may return to Syracuse tomorrow or Thursday. Me, I'll be back tomorrow, too.

In the meantime, here are a few remarks from McPherson tonight:

"A year ago, I was in this room, sitting way up toward those high chandeliers, and I heard Joe Paterno ask to have the lights turned up so that anyone that has played this game could stand up. And anyone who played the game could stand up and represent the great tradition and the great lessons and the great history. And I was one of those players. I was just one of thousands of high school, Pop Warner, college, pro players who stood up that day representing all the facets of that society. And I was proud. I was proud to be a member of this family.

"So you can imagine, a year later, to represent these guys (the 20 inductees into the Hall of Fame Class of 2008), here, at the podium, to make comments and remarks about their careers and this great game. I am more than proud. I am humbled. And I am deeply, deeply honored."

