

# Coach confident Irish will 'step up'

Weis says starting QB will be decided well before start of season

By Matt Beardmore  
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Among the items up for bid Friday at the 49th annual Rockne athletic banquet was a 24-by-27-inch framed photo.

Simple, yet the picture of contradiction. An unidentified Notre Dame player's hand was raised high above his head, clutching a slightly scuffed golden helmet.

In block letters above, it read: "TRADITION." And below? A list of the Irish national football championships with a space intentionally left open after 1988, just begging to be filled.

But it's approaching two decades since the Irish won a national title.

Still, for the approximately 1,500 fans and Notre Dame alumni who crammed the International Ballroom at the Hilton Chicago, the past is just that. The standing ovation coach Charlie Weis received as he stepped on stage proved that the Irish faithful haven't lost faith in the program or the third-year coach.

"It's time to step up," said Weis, who has accumulated a 19-6 record. "Tradition never graduates."

With quarterback Brady Quinn graduated, the four-man

race at the most important position is still in full swing. With the 78th Blue-Gold game scheduled for next Saturday at Notre Dame Stadium, Weis said there will be a definite winner, well before the Sept. 1 season opener against Georgia Tech.

"I'm a firm believer that you can't go into a football season with there being a controversy at quarterback," Weis said, "because it's too important to the whole chemistry of the team."

When master of ceremonies Aaron Taylor, a '94 Notre Dame grad, asked Weis if one of the four had shown the confidence a starting quarterback needs, Weis said with a straight face, "Yes."

After raving about the arrival of defensive coordinator

Corwin Brown and quarterbacks coach Ron Powlus, Weis offered one final message.

"For anyone at Notre Dame not to have [winning a national championship] as their goal every year, they shouldn't be at Notre Dame," he said.

One who will be at Notre Dame in 2008 is linebacker Anthony McDonald of Sherman Oaks, Calif. The 6-foot-3-inch, 225-pounder, son of former Southern Cal linebacker Mike McDonald, committed to the Irish on Wednesday.

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