



Stumptown Orange
THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CLUB
OF GREATER PORTLAND, OREGON

WHERE DOES SU FOOTBALL GO FROM HERE?

APRIL 27, 2019

Ted Bunga '61 and **Ken Kane '75** had a rare opportunity on April 27. They got to meet Syracuse football coach **Dino Babers** and Athletic Director **John Wildhack**. It took a “buddy trip” to San Francisco for it to happen, but it was well worth it.



Coach Dino Babers, Athletic Director John Wildhack, and SU play-by-play man Matt Park



Ted and Coach Babers

The SU luminaries were on a weekend swing to Los Angeles and the Bay Area to meet alumni, talk about the future of SU football, and encourage giving to the university. Since central California was as close as they would come to Portland, Ted and Ken decided to go to them. The coach and AD's first stop was at Levis Stadium in Santa Clara (right) where they engaged about 40 alumni in both individual and group settings.



Wildhack and Babers were joined by SU alumnus and play-by-play voice of the Orange, Matt Park, for a roundtable discussion. Among the points they made...

On last year's 10 - 3 season: “2018 put us on the map, but we're not done,” said AD Wildhack. “We don't want to be known as a one-hit wonder. We want to be relevant in the ACC year after year.” He said last season's success has led to 6,000 new season-ticket sales for 2019.

Coach Babers noted that “Our recruiting classes are getting better. I want to build Syracuse a foundation that we can build skyscraper on – *not a shack!*” To which Wildhack added, “We want this foundation to be made of poured concrete – the strongest foundation there is!”

On pitching a winter weather school to warm weather recruits: “I tell them we go to school in the snow – but we don't play in it!” said the coach. “We have three domes for football games and practice!”

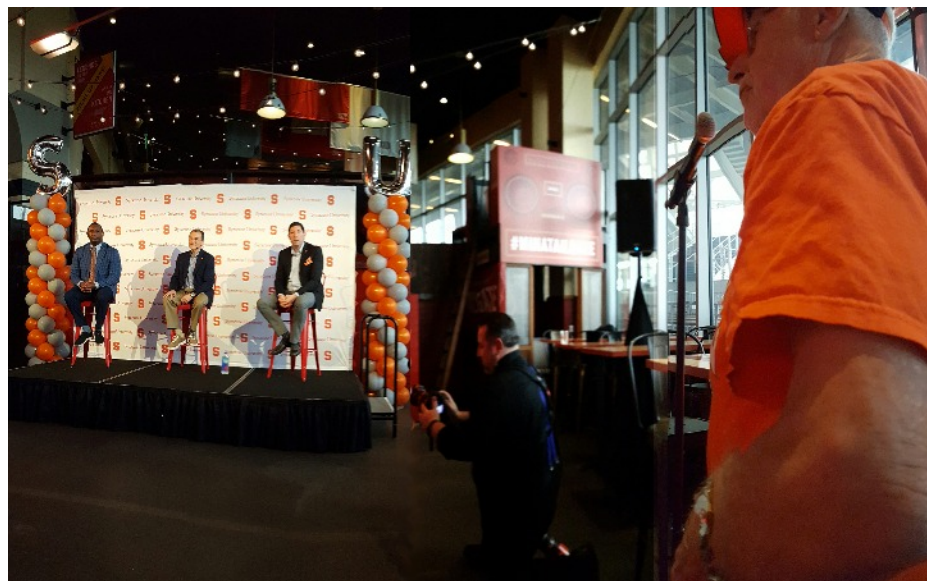
On the overall development of players: The AD said SU's student-athletes have achieved a 92 percent graduation rate, to which Coach Babers added, “From an academic and athletic standpoint, we have a great balance.”

On how athletics tie into the university's overall goals: “Sports is a big megaphone to promote the university. Our applications are up four percent this year to a record-high 35,000. Our athletic success will benefit the entire university,” said Wildhack.

On future West Coast football or basketball games: “We want to schedule West Coast games, but it has less to do with who that opponent would be than who our *next* opponent is,” explained Coach Babers. He said playing games three time zones away means more travel time and, therefore, less time the following week to prepare for the next game. In most cases, that would be against an ACC team which could have an adverse impact on SU's conference chances. Given that, games in this neck of the woods are unlikely any time soon.

On Coach Babers' coaching philosophy: “Coach's system treats players and coaches as *family*,” explained the AD. He said this isn't only important to the players, but “has an impact on the retention of our assistant coaches” in the competitive hiring atmosphere of big-time college football.

Coach Babers put it succinctly, “It's about our recruits becoming better players, better husbands and better fathers. That is the idea of *family*.”



Ted quizzes Coach Babers



AD John Wildhack and Ken

When questions from the floor were entertained, Ted didn't need any encouragement. He went up to the mike and asked Coach Babers, “What's in the water when you guys play Clemson? Why do we do so well against them?” The coach gave all the credit to his players – both their preparation and their positive attitude.

He admitted some initial surprise a few weeks ago when Wildhack asked him if the Sep. 14 game against Clemson could be designated as the Orange Central (homecoming) game.

“I not sure the last time that an undefeated, national champion was somebody's homecoming opponent the next year. But I'm willing to try new things!” Babers said with a wink and a chuckle. “It will be a different situation, but it will be a challenge that we will look forward to!”

Stay tuned: that Sep. 14 game just happens to be the Stumptown Orange's first gamewatch of the season and our annual blood drive. No pressure, coach!



On Clemson at homecoming: “I'm into new things!”