

Basketball writers have found a friend in Tom Izzo

We're early in the 2003-04 season, but I have already identified the front-runner for the USBWA Coach of the Year award:

Tom Izzo of Michigan State.

The guy who had lost four games by the second weekend in December?

That's him. And Tom Izzo has my vote because he showed that understands the value of the jobs college basketball writers do and that he treats us like professionals not nuisances that have to be tolerated.

On the morning of the Basket Bowl game that Izzo's Michigan State team played against Kentucky at Ford Field on Dec. 13, Izzo took the time to ensure that the seats of about 40 media members were relocated from wayyyyyyyyyyyyyyy up on the seventh level press box to courtside, one row behind the benches.

Wow. I'm impressed. And appreciative. Not only because Izzo did it. I'm more impressed that Izzo gets it. He understands that we're working, not just hanging around trying to squeeze some fat-cat out of his prime-time seat.

The folks who cover this sport have a long tradition of covering games, stories, people and trends with an energy and commitment that TV can't match. We were there long before CBS and ESPN began handing out checks.



Tom Izzo

President's Column

By RICK BOZICH

Louisville Courier Journal



Check some scrapbooks from the '60s, '50s and '40s and you'll be amazed at the copy folks were churning out on college hoops in a time the game was considered a bit of step-child to college football. In the beginning, writers, not TV, fueled the growth of this great game.

We're still at it, covering recruiting, exhibition games, coaching changes, pre-season tournaments, post-season tournaments and all other kinds of dribbling. And, just like everybody else who has occupied this chair before me, I'm convinced that courtside is the best place for us to do our work, the place where we can deliver the best stories to our readers, the game's fans. It's the best spot to take the emotional and competitive temperature of the game.

And that's what we're doing - working. Unfortunately, I fear there is a growing resentment toward placing writers at courtside. Too many folks who don't understand our jobs, our commitment and our tradition, who view us as an annoyance, something to tolerate, an obstacle to squeezing just a little more cash flow out of those seats.

I'm not sure who the Basketball Scrooge was that made the plans to stick the media in the seventh level for the Basket Bowl, a perch that made it impossible to tell tiny Cliff Hawkins from taller Erik Daniels.

When I covered the Indiana-Michigan State football game in October, I heard the rumors that the writers were going to be stuck with the worst seats in the house. I figured surely the folks at Michigan State and Kentucky wouldn't be that stupid. I know that several writers were making plans to watch the game on the press box TV.

And now I also know this: Izzo heard the news and decided it was a truly stupid idea. And by doing that, Tom Izzo showed that he gets it. He really does get it.

No wonder Tom Izzo is my early front-runner for Coach of the Year.

June 12 deadline set for contest entries

It's never too early to start thinking of the USBWA Best Writing Contest for stories and columns written and published during the 2002-03 college basketball season.

Entries can be submitted by the June 5 deadline in five categories: columns, moderate-length features, magazine-length features, spot news/game coverage and enterprise/investigative stories. Dues-paying members of the USBWA are eligible. Members may submit one entry per category.

Plaques and cash prizes will be awarded, with \$200 given for first place, \$175 for second, \$150 for third, \$125 for fourth and \$100 for fifth. Winners will be named in the fall issue of The Tipoff and posted on the USBWA website.

Send all entries to: Joe Mitch; USBWA Writing Contest; 1818 Chouteau Ave.; St. Louis, Mo. 63103; (314) 421-0339; or e-mail entries to mitch@mvc.org

For entries submitted by the mail, print the name of the category, the author of the story, the publication in which the article appeared and the date of the publication on a 3 x 5 card and staple it to the article.

Sons of Reynolds, McCabe win scholarships

The USBWA has awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to children of USBWA members.

Receiving the scholarships this year are Michael Byron Reynolds, son of Peoria Journal Star sports writer Dave Reynolds, and Kevin McCabe, son of Detroit Free Press sports writer Mick McCabe.

The USBWA annually awards \$1,000 to the son or daughter of USBWA members and will provide these scholarships each year the student remains in college, up to a maximum of four years, provided they reapply each year and take a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester in college.

McCabe was awarded a scholarship as a freshman at Notre Dame last year and had the scholarship renewed

this year. McCabe finished his first year at Notre Dame with a 4.0 gpa and qualified for the Dean's Honor List both semesters. He is majoring in liberal arts.

"Receiving the USBWA scholarship last year was an invaluable resource towards funding my education," wrote McCabe. "I know that I am fortunate to have the opportunity to apply my hard work toward an education at Notre Dame, and this opportunity would not be possible without the generous support of scholarships such as this one."

Reynolds is a sophomore at the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. He made the Dean's List as a freshman with a 3.24 gpa. Only 36 percent of first-year students achieved that honor. He is pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and plans to become a licensed pharmacist.

USBWA needs members' help in search of sponsors

The U. S. Basketball Writers Association is on the hunt for a sponsor to help fund the organization and underwrite the cost of providing services for members of the association.

The need to find a sponsor came about recently when the USBWA learned that CBS, which had paid the organization a rights fee to televise a USBWA Player of the Year Awards Show during the NCAA Final Four weekend, has opted not to renew its contract.

CBS, which had televised the USBWA awards for the past seven years, said it was unable to renew due to declining advertising sales.

The loss of the CBS revenue is significant, as it represented the organization's single largest source of funding, including membership dues.

The USBWA has counted heavily on the CBS moneys in the past to fund various member services and projects, including a scholarship program for aspiring journalists, a sports writing seminar at the men's Final Four, a USBWA webpage and an expanded membership directory.

Having an outside source of funding is key to the

Executive Director

BY JOE MITCH
MVC



USBWA providing the kind of services that the membership has come to expect.

Membership dues alone aren't enough to offset the costs associated with running the association. The USBWA has kept dues at a modest level, \$35 annually, which is lower than most of the major writers' associations.

To offset the loss of the CBS dollars, the USBWA would almost have to triple membership dues.

That's not feasible.

Reserves built up through the years will enable the USBWA to maintain services this year and probably next, but for the long term the USBWA will need financial help.

One answer is finding another network like CBS that is interested in televising the USBWA awards and willing to pay for exclusive rights to the show.

So far, no one has stepped forward, although ESPN has expressed interest to include the USBWA awards in the cable network's Final Four preview show on Friday the day before the men's semifinals.

Corporate sponsorships provide the best solution to the USBWA's financial concerns for the future. In the past, some members of the organization have spoken up against the USBWA accepting corporate support. They claim it could be perceived as the USBWA endorsing a company's particular product or brand.

But several years ago the USBWA board, recognizing the association's need for financial assistance, approved a plan to pursue corporate sponsors if needed.

Early in the organization's history, the USBWA had some limited corporate funding.

The association's first sponsor was Pizza Hut, whose

name was attached to the USBWA All-America team in the 1970s and '80s. Pizza Hut provided some funding for the organization's scholarships.

The Coors Brewing Company sponsored the most courageous award for a couple years and, at one time, Kodak and later the Basketball Hall of Fame provided cash awards for the USBWA writing contest. ESPN has remained a long-time sponsor of the USBWA directory with an ad on the back cover.

In the '90s, the USBWA brought in RCA and then Frontier Communications to sponsor the player of the year award. When CBS took over sole production of the USBWA awards show, the player of the year award went without a company's name attached to it. But the rights fees from CBS continued and were sufficient to help pay the bills.

Now, without a television contract, the time has come for the USBWA to again seek sponsors for its various awards. The Oscar Robertson Player of the Year Trophy, the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award and the All-America teams have the most visibility and would attract the most interest for sponsors.

But there are others. The Most Courageous Award has an emotional appeal and the special feature CBS did each year on the recipient indicated the kind of interest that exists for the award.

The message is clear: the USBWA needs to look beyond association dues to maintain services.

Members are welcome to e-mail me (mitch@mvc.org) their ideas, suggestions and, best of all, contacts at corporations who would be interested in becoming a USBWA sponsor.

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USBWA Application Form

If you have not yet renewed your membership to the U.S. Basketball Writers Association now is the time to act. For your \$35 membership fee you will receive the most complete directory in college basketball and you will also get all 12 issues of *Basketball Times* and, as well, you will be eligible to enter our Best Writing Contest.

Send a check for \$35 and let the USBWA make your job of covering college basketball easier.

Title _____

Newspaper/Publication/ College _____

Address _____

City _____ STATE _____ Zip _____

Home Address _____

City _____ STATE _____ Zip _____

Office Telephone _____ Home Telephone _____

Fax _____ Email Address _____

**c/o Missouri Valley Conference
1818 Chouteau Avenue
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Let's be grateful that our votes don't count for much

First of all, let's be thankful we have absolutely, positively nothing to do with determining the NCAA basketball champion.

The inexact science of ranking teams remains inexact, no matter how many computers assist the so-called human polls in the formula that determines which teams play for the BCS football title.

As for basketball, well ... it was a struggle at the outset of the season.

(We're going to skip over the difficulty of voting in the women's poll, because all you have to do is type in Connecticut at No. 1 week after week.)

Connecticut might have the best men's team as well, and voters returned the Huskies to No. 1 in a fit of exasperation after Kansas and Florida promptly lost after being elevated to the top spot.

By the conventional protocol of rankings, the next No. 1 should have been one of the remaining unbeaten teams at the time – such as Kentucky, which actually got more No. 1 votes than Connecticut in the Dec. 15 Associated Press poll but trailed in points because apparently some voters actually saw the Wildcats play.

That's the point: The conventional model might be wrong, chiefly because it assumes the voters got the Top 25 right in the first place.

"Everybody starts with a number, deserved or not, and if you win, you keep it, and if you lose, somebody else takes it," Stanford coach Mike Montgomery said after his team

knocked Kansas off its short-lived perch at the top. "It all sorts itself out for a couple of months."

Here's a look at a few voting strategies, none perfect:

You Lose, You Move Method: This is the most traditional approach. Rank the teams before the season based on previous performance, players returning and hottest high-school phenoms arriving on campus. Then simply rearrange according to results, moving teams up if they don't lose, no matter how unimpressively they win. Move teams down if they lose no matter how close the game or how good the opponent.

Rewarding Performance Method: By this method, Georgia Tech might have been an early No. 1 after beating top-ranked Connecticut and Texas Tech in the preseason NIT and looking good doing it. That would be a bold move, considering the Yellow Jackets weren't even in the first

poll after losing Chris Bosh to the NBA after one season.

Judgment Call Method: And then there's this approach, which is basically to rank the teams according to how the voter thinks they would do if they all played each other. It is the most subjective, and leads to the most e-mails from fans who don't understand how Michigan State could still be ranked or why Missouri could be docked just for not beating such teams as Oakland and Coppin State impressively enough.

So next time a BCS furor erupts –and there will be a next time –be thankful that the RPI exists in basketball, but is not the sole judge, and that imperfect as the NCAA selection committee sometimes is, teams at least have a chance to play their way out of mistakes.

And best off all, remember that it's easiest to critique the process when we don't have any official input.

Vice President

By **ROBYN NORWOOD**
LOS ANGELES TIMES



Presidential involvement: Be careful what you wish for

When Myles Brand took over as President of the NCAA, he called for greater ethical behavior by all who are involved in the world of intercollegiate athletics. The best way for this to happen sooner rather than later, said Dr. Brand, is for university presidents to become more hands-on when it comes to the administration of their respective athletics departments. Because after all, college presidents are *above* the unethical and sometimes sleazy behavior that has become all too common in college athletics.

Good Morning, America. Welcome to the wonderful world of presidential involvement:

- When the University of Georgia went looking for a new basketball coach several years ago, athletics director Vince Dooley narrowed it down to a pair of very qualified candidates: Buzz Peterson of Appalachian State and Mike Brey of Delaware. But in the final stages of the search, UGA President Michael Adams insisted that Jim Harrick be added to the list of viable candidates. The two had previously worked together at Pepperdine.

Harrick got the job and the rest is history. Tony Cole, whose personal rap sheet was thicker than an Atlanta phone book, brought the entire program down last March. Harrick and his son, Jim Harrick, Jr., were forced out and a team quite capable of making the Final Four, stayed home in a self-imposed exile from the post-season.

The NCAA continues to investigate and the Georgia program, now under new coach Dennis Felton, may be the worst in the SEC this season.

- St. Bonaventure's once proud basketball program paid the ultimate price last season when it was learned that player Jamil Terrell had transferred and been accepted at the school with nothing more than a welding degree from a Georgia community college.

As it turned out, President Robert Wickenheiser had approved Terrell's transfer to St. Bonaventure. But Dr. Wickenheiser's judgment may have been clouded by the fact that his son, Kort, was an assistant coach on Jan van Breda Kolff's staff.

Wickenheiser was fired and athletics director Gothard Lane and van Breda Kolff were eventually forced out.

If the president had just acted like a president, each of the three men would still be employed today.

- University of Missouri President Elson Floyd says he does not plan to resign over racially charged comments made by his wife during conversations with former Mizzou player Ricky Clemons.

Clemons, who was in jail for violating the terms of a court order concerning a domestic assault charge, had several conversations with Carmento Floyd, the wife of the Missouri president. The Floyds are black, as is Clemons. During those conversations, which were legally recorded under Missouri law, Mrs. Floyd told Clemons that he should try to find his girlfriends from a black sorority instead of a white one.

Floyd and his wife had befriended the troubled Clemons at the request of head coach Quin Snyder. But Floyd broke ties with Clemons after Clemons went to jail. Floyd asked his wife to do the same. She didn't.

Now, in those same jailhouse recordings, Clemons says two Missouri assistants gave him cash when he was a player.

This episode is not going to end well at Missouri because again, a president didn't act like a president.

I believe strongly in presidential involvement because ultimately they are in charge of every aspect of the university. If athletics are supposed to be just a complimentary part of the university's academic mission, then the president has to demand that it happen.

The president can't be one of the boys. He can't be a counselor to troubled athletes—not if it jeopardizes the academic integrity of the institution, which is paramount. If he can help, fine. But there is an ethical line that must never be crossed. The three men above crossed that line and their universities are paying a very dear price. That has to change.

Vice President

By **TONY BARNHART**
Atlanta Journal-Constitution



A writer's guide to Final Four credentials

On Jan. 5, the NCAA will mail Final Four credentials to agencies that covered the 2003 tournament in New Orleans. For credentials to preliminary-round games, media should contact the media coordinators at the 13 sites.

A "press agency" for purposes of these criteria shall mean a daily or weekly publication requiring immediate news coverage. "Immediate news coverage" for purposes of these criteria shall mean that the editorial, audio and/or visual deadline for the tournament action being documented occurs no later than 48 hours after the competition at the site has been completed.

Media agencies that have not been certified for the Final Four, but represent the geographic area and/or locale of a participating institution, shall staff the participant's first- and second-round action in order to receive credentials to the regional competition. (An entity must staff the first-round session to receive a credential for the second-round session; an entity must staff the regional-semifinal session to receive a credential to the regional final.) Only those media agencies that have staffed all of the participant's tournament competition may qualify for credentials if that institution advances to the Final Four.

A press agency or television or radio station in the immediate geographic area and/or locale of a participating or host institution that has staffed its games on a regular basis throughout the season and does not otherwise meet the criteria may be designated by the participating or host institution as a "minority media enterprise." A "minority media enterprise" shall mean a business enterprise involved in the dissemination of sports news to individuals socially or economically disadvantaged from cultural, racial or chronic economic circumstances or other similar cause. Such persons include, but are not limited to, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish-speaking Americans and American Indians.

Except for television photographers, a credential may be issued only to an authorized full-time, salaried representative of, or a representative who regularly and customarily performs services for, such an entity. Credentials are not transferable.

Membership in a writer's or broadcaster's association (e.g., United States Basketball Writers Association) does not automatically qualify an agency for credentials.

Subject to limitations of space, credentials at all sites shall be assigned in accordance with the following priorities:

Writers

Separate publications sharing common ownership may not be combined for purposes of meeting circulation or other criteria.

1. An agency, regardless of circulation, in the geographic area of a participating institution qualifies for credentials if it has staffed at least 90 percent of the institution's home games throughout the season and each of its games in the NCAA championship. This includes newspapers or other periodicals specifically designed to cover the activities and events of a single institution.

2. An agency, regardless of circulation, qualifies for credentials if it has staffed at least 90 percent of the home games of the host institution throughout the season.

3. Any agency with circulation greater than of 60,000 will be identified as "national media" and will qualify for credentials even if it does not meet the provisions in No. 1 or No. 2 above. Press agencies may receive credentials according to the following circulation requirements:

Circulation	Credentials
60,000 - 99,000	one seat
100,000 - 249,999	one seat, one limited access

250,000 - 349,999	two seats, one limited access
350,000 - 449,999	three seats, one limited access
450,000 - 649,999	four seats, one limited access
650,000 - 999,999	five seats, two limited access
1 million and above	six seats, two limited access

(Note: A limited-access credential only permits access to the media workroom, locker rooms and interview room. A hotel room will be available for an individual who receives a limited access credential only if space is available.)

4. Any press agency that has been certified for a Final Four credential shall receive a first-/second-round and/or regional credential upon request.

5. The Associated Press and the primary newspaper(s) that provide daily coverage for the host institution each may receive a maximum of eight seats and two limited-access credentials at the Final Four.

6. A national weekly publication that has a circulation

may receive a maximum of two credentials.

3. A print, radio or television agency will not receive more credentials than the number provided for elsewhere in this document. An agency may allot one (or more) of its credentials to its online entity.

4. An online entity not associated with another media agency (e.g., a "traditional" print, radio or television agency) may qualify for one credential unless otherwise noted in these policies.

5. Only a full-time, salaried employee of an online news agency intending to provide actual game coverage (as opposed to producing feature stories) may receive a credential.

6. To qualify for a credential, online entities not associated with one of the competing teams must have registered at least one million unique users per month in each of the past 12 months.

7. An online entity may receive a credential only if its own full-time staff writes an overwhelming percentage of that site's material.

8. Only online agencies that staff college basketball games regularly (weekly at a minimum) and publish material regarding college basketball will receive credentials.

9. Online entities will not receive photography credentials.

10. Each participating institution may receive one credential for its official online site, in addition to the two credentials noted under Print, No. 11. Other online entities that operate only fan-based Web sites will not receive credentials.

11. Representatives of online agencies will receive seats in the courtside media-seating area on a space-available basis only. If courtside seats are not available, these representatives will be assigned seats in the upper press box (if space is available) or the backstage media work area during the games.

12. Any online service that is recognized as an outlet intended primarily for the purpose of delivering news related to the recruitment of student-athletes will not qualify for credentials.

Agencies Not Eligible

1. Representatives staffing Web sites, specialty publications (including books and magazines), score-reporting services, other college newspapers or magazines, professional basketball teams and telephone reporting services shall not be issued credentials.

2. A media credential will not be issued to a media representative or an individual normally identified as a media representative for the primary purpose of authoring a book about a coach, athlete or participating institution.

3. The following will not be issued credentials: television shows produced by a syndicator or independent producer for or by a head basketball coach of a participating or host institution, syndicated television or cable programmers.

International Media Agencies (Final Four Only)

When space is available, credentials (writer and/or photographer) will be issued to a full-time, salaried employee of, or a representative who regularly and customarily performs services for:

- A newspaper that has a minimum circulation of five percent of the total population of the country;
- A specialty publication that has a minimum circulation of one percent of the total population of the country;
- The official publication of the country's basketball federation;
- A television station that has a signal reaching 25 percent of the homes in the country; and,
- Each of the country's two largest sports networks.

Media teleconference schedule:

Wednesday, Feb. 25, 3 p.m. ET, selection committee chairman Bob Bowsby, pass code 706234, replay box 1.

Wednesday, March 10, 3 p.m. ET, Bowsby, pass code 656903, replay box 2.

Sunday, March 14, 6:30 p.m. ET, Bowsby, pass code 682709, replay box 3.

Wednesday, March 31, 1 p.m. ET, Final Four coaches, pass code 744832, replay box 4.

The call-in number for all of the teleconferences is 913/981-5507; the number to hear a replay is 402-280-9026, plus the box number above. The first two are the chair's traditional pre-selection calls; the third is Selection Sunday.

As a service to writes, the NCAA posts transcripts of tournament news conferences at www.asapsports.com. Go to "by event," then "basketball," then "2003."

between 500,000 and three million and a national monthly publication with a circulation between 750,000 and three million each may receive two seats and two limited-access credentials. Publications that have a minimum circulation of three million may receive a maximum of four seats and two limited-access credentials. A weekly that does not meet this criteria or the criteria that govern media agencies of the host and participating teams does not qualify for credentials.

7. The media coordinator may authorize a media agency to receive a credential for a "special need."

a. A specialty publication that is distributed nationally on a regular basis during the basketball season is a media agency that may have a "special need" and may receive one seat in the overflow press section if space is available.

b. A "special need" entity that normally provides specific services for a media agency (e.g., scores) shall not receive credentials if many of its clients have been accredited to staff the event.

c. A "special need" entity shall be limited to one credential.

8. At the media coordinator's discretion, one credential may be issued to a reporter representing the "news side" of the major newspaper of the participating and/or host institution.

9. A newspaper included on a team's local media list may receive additional credentials at a regional site not to exceed the total number of credentials it received covering first-/second-round competition at all sites.

10. Credentials may be issued to two individuals, certified by the director of athletics or designated representative of each participating and host institution, who will be the sole representatives of all media organizations affiliated with any such institution.

Online

- The official NCAA Web site will receive credentials.
- The official Web site of a competing institution, as approved by that school's sports information department,