

Increased membership, wireless access top the agenda

When I look at the list of the people who have served as president of the USBWA, it is a little intimidating: Gordon S. White, Smith Barrier (one of my mentors), Dave Dorr, Bill Brill, Bob Hammel, Bill Millsaps, the greatly missed Larry Donald, Bob Ryan. The list goes on and on with heavy hitters who have sat in this chair.

So please know that it is a privilege for a little country boy from Union Point, Ga., to be included in such esteemed company. I thank you for the opportunity.

Now let's go to work.

Your USBWA board had some very productive meetings in St. Louis. Based on those meetings, we are setting three major goals for the coming year:

- The ongoing goal of increasing our membership. I'm asking each USBWA member who reads this to identify at least one person on his or her staff who is currently not a member. Go to the web site, print out the membership application and go put it in that person's hands.

Thanks to the tireless work of Joe Mitch, our executive director, our membership pitch is stronger than it has ever been. Specifically, we have three things to offer a non-member to make his job easier: 1) The USBWA Handbook, which indispensable. Take your copy and show it to the person as you put the application in their hand; 2) The USBWA web site, which I will talk more about in a minute; 3) The Marriott Athletic VIP Card, which can be used to save hundreds of dollars on business and personal travel. Remind the candidate that he can cover his or her dues by using the card just once!

Of course, as we continue to increase our membership, we must make this organization more diverse. We need more women. We need more people of color. We cannot go another 49 years before we have another female president

June 15 contest deadline

The deadline for submitting stories and columns published during the 2004-05 basketball season for the USBWA Best Writing Contest is June 15.

Entries can be submitted in five categories: column writing, moderate-length features, magazine-length features, spot news/game coverage and enterprise/investigative stories.


Only dues-paying members of the USBWA are eligible to enter the writing contest. Members may enter more than one category but may submit only one entry per category. Plaques and cash prizes will be awarded in each category, and winners will be announced in the fall Tipoff.

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 3x5 card and staple it to the article.

President

By **TONY BARNHART**
 Atlanta Journal-Constitution



because Robyn Norwood was one of our best.

- Make our web site more relevant and useful to our membership. We have had some issues with our web site, but Joe is in the process of hammering out a new deal with our service provider. I have asked Dick Jerardi of the Philadelphia Daily News, in his position as third vice-president, to take a hard look at the content on the site and come up with a plan to update the site on a regular basis.

- To work with the NCAA Men's Basketball Committee toward the goal of universal access to wireless Internet at all tournament sites. This season, as you all know, was really a mixed bag. At some places, it was free. Others tried to charge as much as \$300.

We believe that wireless Internet at courtside could be the biggest advance in technology since the laptop computer. Not only would it allow you to send copy quickly, but you could receive post-game stats and quotes immediately on your laptop screen without waiting for them to be copied and passed out by hand. I can see a day where a reporter on a tight deadline can sit on his seat at press row and monitor the post-game news conference on his computer. That's

how big this could be.

The Men's Basketball Committee was very receptive to the idea and agreed that this was a worthwhile goal. Free Internet in the short term is unlikely because the contracts between the NCAA and the host buildings already have been signed for many years to come. Down the road, our hope is that the NCAA will simply write the requirement into the bid package for a perspective site.

In the short term, we, as an organization, will have to decide if we would be willing make a trade off: Fewer costly telephone lines in the work room in exchange for wireless internet that is either free or reasonably priced.

To that end, I have asked Rob Daniels of the Greensboro News & Record to put together a quick survey of the membership on this issue. Very simply, would your newspaper be willing to accept a reduction of phones in the workroom in exchange for Internet access? And if you were willing to pay for Internet access, what would be a reasonable fee?

That should be enough to get us started. Have a great summer. Like Roy Williams, I'll see you on the first tee.

Barnhart named president

Tony Barnhart of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* assumed the gavel from Robyn Norwood of the *Los Angeles Times* at the USBWA's annual Monday morning breakfast, becoming the organization's 50th President.

Tom Shatel of the *Omaha World-Herald* moved into the chair of the First Vice-President. Andy Katz of ESPN.com was appointed Second-Vice President and Dick Jerardi of the *Philadelphia Daily News* was named to the newly created position of Third Vice-President.

New USBWA Board members include Brian Koonz of the *Danbury News-Times*, Joe Gergen of *Newsday* and Ted Lewis of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. An at-large position has yet to be determined. Returning board members include: Rob Daniels of the *Greensboro News & Record*, Mike Strange of the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, Jeff Shelman of the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, Steve Carp of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and Ed Graney of the *San Diego Union Tribune*. Rob Carolla of the Big 12 Conference will remain the SID representative.



Tony Barnhart receives the gavel from Robyn Norwood

Inaugural Friday morning breakfast a huge success

The USBWA has established what looks like will become an annual event at the NCAA men's Final Four.

The Basketball Writers held a breakfast on Friday during this year's Final Four in St. Louis to honor the association's coach and player of the year, and the event was an overwhelming success.

A sellout crowd of nearly 500 people attended the breakfast, during which time the USBWA also honored retiring coaches Tom Brennan of Vermont, Gene Keady of Purdue and Lou Henson of New Mexico State.

Plans are already underway for next year's breakfast at the Final Four in Indianapolis. Past president Bill Benner, formerly with the *Indianapolis Star*, is scouting out possible venues to hold the breakfast in downtown Indianapolis.

The breakfast enables the USBWA to showcase in a public forum its top two college basketball awards – the Oscar Robertson Player of the Trophy and the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award.

The Oscar Robertson Trophy took on an entirely new look this year with the presentation of a sculpture of Oscar

Executive Director

BY JOE MITCH
MVC



to Player of the Year Andrew Bogut of Utah. The sculpture was made in the likeness of Oscar taken from a famous picture of him with legs spread-eagled rebounding a basketball.

The sculpture will become a permanent fixture in the USBWA's player of the year program. The breakfast, the newly redesigned trophy and anticipated increased television exposure are all expected to elevate name recognition of the award and take it to a level that hopefully will rival the Wooden Award.

The Oscar Robertson Trophy should really be the premier player of the year award in college basketball. Of all the awards out there named after greats – Wooden, Naismith and Rupp – the USBWA's Oscar is the only one named after a player, the others being coaches.

Next year's breakfast has all the makings of being just as successful – if not more so – than this year's event.

Past president Malcolm Moran of *USA Today* has suggested – and is moving forward – on an idea to possibly honor the 1981 Indiana team on the 25th anniversary of the Hoosiers' national championship.

The presence of "The Big O" himself at the breakfast should be a huge attraction. Oscar first made his mark on the basketball scene in Indianapolis, where he was a three-time all-state selection at Crispus Attucks High School.

A portion of the proceeds from this year's breakfast was donated to the National Kidney Foundation, and a

similar donation will be made at future Final Four breakfasts in honor of Oscar, who saved his daughter Tia's life several years ago by donating one of his kidneys to her.

Kudos to the seven USBWA members who participated on a panel for the sportswriting seminar held for student journalists at this year's Final Four.

USBWA Hall of Famer and past president Dave Dorr, retired from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, was masterful as moderator for the panel that included Jim O'Connell of the Associated Press, Mike DeCourcy of *The Sporting News*, Robyn Norwood of the *Los Angeles Times*, Steve Wieberg of *USA Today*, Vahe Gregorian of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and Steve Carp of the *Las Vegas Review Journal*. Carp pinch hit for Malcolm Moran at the last minute when Moran was unable to attend due to weather-related problems getting out of Chicago.

Nearly 100 students sat through the hour and one-half seminar that featured topics ranging from ethics in journalism, job opportunities and tricks of the trade on how to write columns, features and game stories.

Students were given assignments to cover various events during the Final Four weekend and submit stories in a writing contest. One student was assigned to cover the championship game. Three \$1,000 scholarships were awarded to students whose stories were judged best in the writing contest.

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USBWA Membership 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 \$40 membership fee you will receive:

- the most complete directory in college basketball
- all 12 issues of *Basketball Times*;
- Marriott Athletic VIP Card
- access to USBWA website (usbwa.com)
- voting for All-America team and player and coach of year
- eligibility for Best Writing Contest, with cash prizes

Send a check for \$40 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
St. Louis, MO 63103

Press Box Liaison could head off problems at the pass

After a terrific Final Four, I've never felt better about our organization or where it's headed. But one of the things I came away with (besides the usual five extra pounds) is that we are in one of those transition periods in our profession. The future is here and we need to stay on top of it.

Or, as Bill Hancock of the NCAA put it, "We try to be on the cutting edge, but it keeps getting further away."

We know, Bill. That's why I would like to propose USBWA create a fulltime Press Operations liaison.

I took a poll of the major and mid-major conferences and where they have press row situated. The majority of the BCS leagues (is it okay to say BCS here?) have the writers on the floor, and those that don't appear to have the writers in a spot with a workable view and distance to the work areas. The only complaint I heard was about Missouri's seating, in a corner of the new area, but coach Quin Snyder's locker room is open, so maybe that makes up for it.

Conferences such as the Missouri Valley, C-USA, A-10, Ohio Valley and Mountain West all have the majority of their schools with press row on the floor and the very few cases of press row in the stands are in good shape.

What does this tell us? It means not everyone has discovered the concept of selling floor space to donors who want to be Jack Nicholson. But they will. Trust us, they will.

And when they do, what can we do about it?

Most likely, nothing.

But I believe we can, and should, have a voice in where they put us. That's certainly our right. How do we do that? I don't know that you can make demands. I don't even know that I want to create a statement, or general suggestion, to COSIDA. I would rather not create attention and give anybody any ideas.

I think these situations will come up case by case. That's where our Press Operations guy or gal would come in.

Vice President

By TOM SHATEL
Omaha World-Herald



There was another issue that came up at our board meeting in St. Louis. I had to hire a translator to figure out what new President Tony Barnhart was talking about when he approached Hancock and the NCAA Division I Basketball Committee about going totally "wireless" in the NCAA Tournament.

Most of you may have wireless available on your lap tops. There are those of us in Petticoat Junction who do not. I assume that one day I will, and by that time, the rest of the world will be onto something else, like having ASAP do the stories and letting the writers spend the day at the pool.

I digress.

Tony's mission was accomplished: the NCAA is going to look into making all of the NCAA regional sites – first round on up – wireless compatible. And though it might be too soon to write this into the current contract, eventually the hope is to make the service free, which apparently the ACC and SEC are doing now.

There is also this thing called "Ethernet," and I also needed a translator to figure that one out. Apparently, it helps you do your job, or, at least lets you get to "sportsjournalists.com" faster.

My point is, we are going to want all of our arenas and pressrooms and press rows wireless and ether-ready.

Wouldn't it be great if it all came standard? Wouldn't it be great if we could be in on the ground floor of making that happen?

I think a Press Operations position could be our liaison toward that goal. It would also be a natural to have a position at the ready in case individual issues come up. An SID would know who to contact right away, or know who he or she would be hearing from.

The Football Writers Association of America has a Press Box Liaison position, manned fulltime by Mark "Tony Soprano" Blaudschun of the Boston Globe. Mark visits the BCS site during the summer to make sure hotel, press box, interview area, etc., are in shape. Or else.

We don't necessarily have that issue at the Final Four. Hancock and Co. have the system down pat. However, as we have witnessed time and again, the regional sites – which are run by the local schools and sports groups – are another story. From phones to expensive wireless to quote sheets that aren't handed out fast enough or aren't complete.

We need to figure out a way to head those issues and problems off at the pass beforehand. How? Good question.

Our world is changing. Press Row is changing. Let's keep up.

A Press Operations liaison would be a good start.

Utah's Bogut, Illinois' Weber pull in top USBWA awards

Utah sophomore center Andrew Bogut was named the winner of the 2005 Oscar Robertson Trophy as the national player of the year and Illinois' Bruce Weber was given the Henry Iba Trophy as the national coach of the year.

Bogut, a 7-footer from Melbourne, Australia, is among the national leaders in scoring (15th at 20.6 ppg) and rebounding (third at 11.9 rpg). He leads the nation in double-doubles with 19 in 28 games.

In his second season in Champaign, Weber guided the Illini to the NCAA championship game with an NCAA-record 3y wins against just one loss. The Illini won both the Big Ten Conference regular-season and tournament championships. Weber is now the first coach in the 100-year history of the Big Ten to win consecutive outright conference titles in each of his first two seasons.

Named to the USBWA first team are Bogut; Dee Brown, Illinois; Chris Paul, Wake Forest; J. J. Redick, Duke; and Wayne Simien, Kansas.

Selected to the second team are Ike Diogu, Arizona State; Luther Head, Illinois; Sean May, North Carolina; Salim Stoudamire, Arizona; and Hakim Warrick, Syracuse.

All-District teams included:

District 1 – Player of the Year - Ryan Gomes, F, Providence; Coach of the Year – Al Skinner, Boston College; Team - Josh Boone, F/C, Connecticut; Pat Carroll, G/F, Saint Joseph's; Mardy Collins, G, Temple; Taylor Coppenrath, F, Vermont; Jared Dudley, F, Boston College; Rashaun Freeman, F, UMass; Carl Krauser, G, Pittsburgh; Allan Ray, G, Villanova; Craig Smith, F, BC; Curtis Sumpter, F, Villanova; Chevon Troutman, F, Pittsburgh.

District 2 – Player - Hakim Warrick, Syracuse; Coach– Joe Mihalich, Niagara; Team - Turner Battle, G, Buffalo; Keydren



Bruce Weber

Clark, G, St. Peter's; Daryll Hill, G, St. John's; Jerry Johnson, G, Rider; Gerry McNamara, G, Syracuse; Juan Mendez, F, Niagara; Peter Mulligan, F, Manhattan; Loren Stokes, G/F, Hofstra; T.J. Thompson, G, George Washington.

District 3 – Player - Chris Paul, G, Wake Forest. Coach – Seth Greenberg, Virginia Tech. Team - Raymond Felton, G, North Carolina; Sharrod Ford, F, Clemson; Justin Gray, G, Wake Forest; Julius Hodge, F/G, NC State; Sean May, F/C, North Carolina; Rashad McCants, F/G, North Carolina; J.J. Redick, G, Duke; Eric Williams, C, Wake Forest; Shelden Williams, F, Duke; Brendan Winters, G/F, Davidson.

District 4 – Player - Francisco Garcia, F, Louisville; Coach – Tubby Smith, Kentucky; Team - Guillermo Diaz, G, Miami; Chuck Hayes, F, Kentucky; Jarrett Jack, G, Ga. Tech; Anthony



Andrew Bogut

Roberson, G, Florida; Lawrence Roberts, F, Mississippi St.; Earnest Shelton, G, Alabama; Darius Washington, G, Memphis; Anthony Winchester, G, W. Kentucky, Kennedy Winston, F, Alabama.

District 5 – Player - Dee Brown, G, Illinois; Coach – Bruce Weber, Illinois; Team - Alan Anderson, G/F, Michigan State; Darren Brooks, G, Southern Illinois; Terence Dials, F/C, Ohio State; Travis Diener, G, Marquette; Vincent Grier, G/F, Minnesota; Luther Head, G, Illinois; Mike Wilkinson, F, Wisconsin; Deron Williams, G, Illinois; Bracey Wright, G, Indiana.

District 6 – Player - Wayne Simien, Kansas; Coach – Bill Self, Kansas; Team - Greg Brunner, F, Iowa; Nate Funk, G, Creighton; Joey Graham, F, Oklahoma State; Taj Gray, F, Oklahoma; Ben Jacobson, G, Northern Iowa; Keith Langford, G, Kansas; John Lucas, G, Oklahoma State; Tamarr Maclin, F, Southwest Missouri State; Curtis Stinson, G, Iowa State;

District 7 – Player – Ronald Ross, G, Texas Tech; Coach – Billy Gillispie, Texas A&M; Team - Brandon Bass, F, LSU; Ronnie Brewer, G, Arkansas; Aaron Bruce, G, Baylor; Brad Buckman, F, Texas; Michael Harris, F, Rice; Bryan Hopkins, G, SMU; Paul Millsap, F, Louisiana Tech; Omar Thomas, G/F, UTEP; Antoine Wright, F, Texas A&M.

District 8 – Player - Andrew Bogut, C/F, Utah; Coach – Ray Giacoletti, Utah; Team - Lance Allred, C, Weber State; Odartey Blankson, F, UNLV; Nick Fazekas, F, Nevada; Danny Granger, F, New Mexico; Marc Jackson, G, Utah; Spencer Nelson, F, Utah State; Yemi Nicholson, C, Denver; Ronnie Price, G, Utah Valley State; Jay Straight, G, Wyoming; Nick Welch, C, Air Force.

District 9 – Player - Salim Stoudamire, G, Arizona; Coach– Bob Thomason, Pacific; Team - Ike Diogu, F/C, Arizona State; Channing Frye, C, Arizona; Daniel Kickert, F, St. Mary's; Christian Maraker, F, Pacific; Adam Morrison, F, Gonzaga; Nate Robinson, G, Washington; Tre Simmons, G, Washington; Dijon Thompson, G/F, UCLA; Ronny Turiaf, F, Gonzaga.

A photo memory of USBWA's Final Four weekend



The USBWA writing seminar played to a large crowd.



The new Oscar Robertson Trophy, and sculptor Harry Weber.



From left to right: Tom Brennan, Andrew Bogut, Bruce Weber, Lou Henson and Gene Keady



Lou Henson trades stories with Oscar Robertson, a featured guest at the Friday breakfast.



Ex-Oklahoma A&M star Bob Kurland entertained writers at the Monday morning breakfast.



Grant Dykstra won the USBWA's Most Courageous Award



Hall of Famers Malcolm Moran, Jerry Tipton and Frank Burlison, and Norwood



Gene Keady was honored Friday.



Steve Kirschner receives the Katha Quinn Award from Bill Brill



Tom Brennan was honored Friday, too.