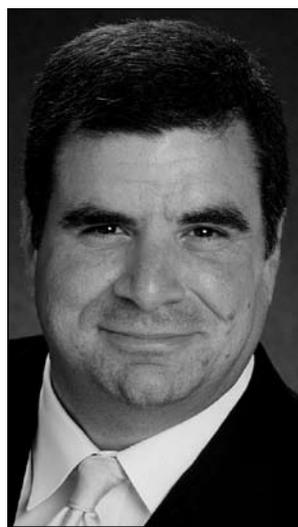


There's help out there if you need it this season



Greg Shaheen

Midnight Madness is over, practices are beginning and games are coming within weeks and yet there are still some decisions to be made within the organization.

We are still awaiting word to see how the national player of the year award will be presented at the Final Four in San Antonio.

Through my tenure so far, I have found out how difficult it is to have a permanent presence with this award. I tried with ESPN, my employer, but there wasn't enough interest. So, there are ongoing discussions with the NCAA to help streamline the award with the NABC's player of the year award so that it has a special presence at the Final Four.

Joe Mitch, the USBWA's executive director, works tirelessly for this award and many others, but he has a day job as the assistant commissioner at the Missouri Valley Conference.

The Final Four breakfasts are still evolving, and as we gather more information, we will forward it to you.

But as the season approaches, there are a few names I want to ensure that you become familiar with that should be used as tremendous resources.

Greg Shaheen, VP NCAA Vice President: Shaheen is all-knowing on the NCAA Tournament and should be used as a resource for any pertinent questions concerning the NCAA Tournament or NIT. Shaheen has proven to be extremely helpful to this organization.



David Worlock

He's about as busy a person as there is in the sport but is well worth pursuing with questions.

David Worlock, NCAA, in charge of media relations for the NCAA Tournament: There is a new reality in the NCAA and it is one of being helpful and engaging with the media. Worlock has been a huge success in taking over his role and wanting to reach out to the media with questions and answers. He is open to reviewing seating policies and assignments, and he is there for ongoing conversations on the subject. I would also like to see conference sports information directors and school media relations directors use him to help coordinate their day-to-day operations. Schools should adhere to similar policies as the NCAA Tournament as it relates to pool reporters, post-game, sight-line and post-game access that occurs during the NCAA Tournament.

Tom O'Connor, athletic director at George Mason, chair of the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee: O'Connor should be a valuable source throughout the season. He is well-schooled on the subject and should help lead to some transparency on the tournament-selection process as it evolves throughout the season. O'Connor has an engaging personality and hardly comes across as patronizing.

Reggie Minton, associate director of the NABC: If there is better gentleman in the game, then I'm still waiting to meet him. Minton is all class. He has given more credibility to the NABC in his brief tenure than anyone prior to his arrival. Minton should be even more of a fixture for media members when they

have questions regarding general coaching issues or NCAA issues that relate to coaches.

The February mock bracket session is going to be for two days this season Feb. 6-7 in Indianapolis. Worlock will be sending out invitations to print and broadcast members sometime this fall. There are a number of new names on the list, and the goal is for this session to continue in the future with as many people as possible getting a crack at seeing the process.

Finally, if there are concerns from respective schools about how you're treated at a game or practice or about your overall access, please don't hesitate to call or email us at the USBWA.

We are your advocate.

Andy Katz
President
ESPN.com



Memphis is USBWA's No. 1

Memphis returns all five starters and adds freshman point guard Derrick Rose to a team that has gone 33-4 and reached the Elite Eight in each of the past two seasons.

That's why the Tigers are the U.S. Basketball Writer's Association's choice as the nation's No. 1 team going into the 2007-08 season.

North Carolina, Kansas and UCLA were the next three top vote-getters. The deep Tar Heels return consensus All-American Tyler Hansbrough from an Elite Eight team, the Jayhawks lose just one starter from yet another Elite Eight group and the Bruins add freshman big man Kevin Love to the core group that has been to back-to-back Final Fours.

Rounding out the Top 10: Louisville, Georgetown, Tennessee, Washington State, Indiana and Michigan State

The Big East's Cardinals and Hoyas both return four starters, though Georgetown loses All-American Jeff Green from its Final Four team. The Vols bring back nearly everyone, including All-America guard Chris Lofton, and add Iowa transfer Tyler Smith. The Cougars also return four starters, including standout guards Derrick Low and Kyle Weaver. In the Big Ten, the Hoosiers add freshman Eric Gordon to a lineup that already includes D.J. White, and Drew Neitzel returns for the Spartans.

USBWA's Top 25

1. Memphis (33-4)
2. North Carolina (31-7)
3. Kansas (33-5)
4. UCLA (30-6)
5. Louisville (24-10)
6. Georgetown (30-7)
7. Tennessee (24-11)
8. Washington State (26-8)
9. Indiana (21-11)
10. Michigan State (23-12)
11. Texas A&M (27-7)
12. Duke (22-11)
13. Marquette (24-10)
14. Ohio State (35-4)
15. Texas (25-10)
16. Stanford (18-13)
17. Gonzaga (23-11)
18. Kansas State (23-13)
19. N.C. State (20-16)
20. USC (25-12)
21. Pittsburgh (29-8)
22. Missouri (18-12)
23. Oregon (29-8)
24. Clemson (25-11)
25. Arizona (20-11)

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Send us your Hall of Fame and award nominations

The U. S. Basketball Writers Association annually presents awards at the end of the season honoring individuals for their service to college basketball and sports journalism.

If you as a USBWA member have a person you wish to nominate, we encourage you to do so before the end of the year. Please send nominations either to me or President Andy Katz.

Here's a list of the USBWA awards:

HALL OF FAME. Established in 1988, the USBWA Hall of Fame honors past and present members who are recognized for their contributions to the organization and achievements in sports writing.

To be eligible for consideration, an individual must have 20 years of service in the profession.

The current number of inductees in the Hall of Fame is 49. Last year's inductee was Frank Boggs, a past president of the USBWA and former sportswriter for the Daily Oklahoman, Topeka Capital-Journal and Dallas Times-Herald and sports columnist for the Colorado Springs Sun.

MOST COURAGEOUS. Since 1978, the USBWA has honored individuals who wage courageous battles in the face of adversity and personal hardships.

Last year's recipient was the Duquesne men's program, which was rocked when five players were wounded during a shooting following a campus party in September 2006. Two eligible players who were shot missed the entire season.

Other award winners include Grant Dykstra, who overcame a farming accident that left one of his arms mangled as a child to become a standout player at Western Washington;

Joe Mitch Executive Director USBWA



Trey Schwab, a Marquette assistant who had a double-lung transplant; the Oklahoma State program following the plane crash that killed 10 members of the team; former Tulsa and Arkansas coach Nolan Richardson for dealing with racial prejudice in life and the death of his daughter from leukemia; and Tennessee Tech coach Mike Sutton, who has continued to coach while battling the paralyzing effects of Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

KATHA QUINN AWARD. This award is presented in memory of Katha Quinn, the late sports information director at St. John's University who died of cancer in 1990.

The award honors individuals for their service and contributions to the USBWA, especially those who have excelled at servicing the media and, like Katha, are an inspiration to those in the sports journalism profession.

I was fortunate enough to be given the award this past April and am indebted to the board and officers of the organization who chose to honor me.

Other past recipients include SIDs Tim Tolokan of Connecticut and Steve Kirschner and Rick Brewer of North Carolina; former NCAA media coordinators Bill Hancock and Jim Marchiony; Craig Miller of USA Basketball; and Washington Post sports writer Mark Asher.

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
- seven 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 _____

USBWA
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St. Louis, MO 63103

College basketball: There's just nothing else like it

The mystery is back.

When practice began last season, we all knew Florida was the team. So did they. And the Gators proved themselves a second time last April.

This season, there is no defending champion. Well, Florida is the defending champ, but all the starters from the team that won consecutive championships are gone.

If Florida wins a third straight title, Billy Donovan really does need to head for the NBA.

And stay there.

Beyond Florida, last season was so much fun because we saw the great freshmen in college again. That NBA rule surely seemed wise to college hoops fans when they got extended looks at Kevin Durant and Greg Oden.

We all knew they weren't hanging around, but one season was sufficient. And not just because of them.

We get more fascinating freshmen this season. We get Kevin Love (UCLA) and O.J. Mayo (USC) in the same city. We get Midwestern high school stars Eric Gordon (Indiana) and Derrick Rose (Memphis).

And we will get other freshmen who will make names for themselves.

I can't wait for Brandon Rush (Kansas) to get healthy. Seeing him on television did not really do him justice. When I caught him live in Chicago during the first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament, I was dazzled. He was so smooth, so understated and so confident, all at once.

His legs looked like they never ended. His jumper looked like it was out of a shooting video. I saw no flaws.

I really thought he was the third best NBA prospect – behind Oden and Durant. Not sure if NBA general managers shared my opinion. They didn't listen when I told

Dick Jerardi VP - Philadelphia Daily News



*Some people let us down. Some sports let us down.
Sometimes, we let ourselves down.
College basketball, as a sport, never really lets us down.
From October to April, there is simply nothing like it.*

them Washington's Brandon Roy was the best prospect in 2006.

Then, Rush tore his ACL. Goodbye NBA draft. Hello Allen Field House.

With Rush, I think Kansas is the best team in the America. Without him, the Jayhawks are still really good.

After two NCAA rounds, I thought KU was playing better than anybody. The Jayhawks had the misfortune of drawing their stylistic opposites in the West Regional – Southern Illinois and UCLA. Had they played against teams with lesser defenses or that wanted to run, I can't imagine KU would have lost.

As I was watching UCLA beat KU in the regional final,

I also could not believe how many really tough and very long shots the Bruins made. I was left with the impression that KU was not terribly lucky that day. They were playing against a team with a hard style to beat in a tournament setting on a day when every shooter looked like J.J. Redick.

So, I like Kansas. I also like Louisville, Memphis, North Carolina, Georgetown, UCLA

and Tennessee. I think you can find the 2008 national champion in this paragraph somewhere.

Rick Pitino is the only coach to take three programs to the Final Four. No coach has ever won the championship at two different schools. I feel very confident Rick is going to be the first to do that, too. If it is not 2008, it will be soon. Count on that.

And count on another wonderful season.

Some people let us down. Some sports let us down. Sometimes, we let ourselves down.

College basketball, as a sport, never really lets us down. From October to April, there is simply nothing like it.

Today's game: No let-up between final buzzer, opening tipoff

"Welcome back my friends to the show that never ends ..." better known as the college basketball season.

Between staying on top of recruiting during the summer, seeing if your team's starting power forward has sufficiently recovered from off-season knee surgery and any academic issues with the NCAA Clearinghouse regarding an incoming freshman, it's a wonder any of us have time to take a real vacation, see our families or take care of that little project around the house.

Unfortunately, covering college basketball has been a year-round beat for years now. And with the citizen journalists on the Internet breaking stories or rumoring about this kid signing with one school or another kid deciding to transfer, there's no time to let down our guard.

We talk all the time about coaches suffering from burnout. But what about the beat writers? How do we keep our batteries from flaming out?

In some parts of the country, we catch a break. Our football brethren in the SEC and Big Ten find themselves doing their beat 24/7/365. But for our ACC hoops brothers and sisters, their lives are no different than those who cover Alabama, LSU and Florida football. In ACC country, hoops are a year-round passion. A day off is seldom.

So, again, I ask, how do we avoid burnout?

A lot has to do with our editors. The smart ones realize that it's not worth losing their beat person because they

Steve Carp VP - Las Vegas Review Journal



didn't scoop the country on the new ops guy. The good editors demand their people disconnect their computers, stash their Crackberries, put their cell phones in hibernation and get the hell away from the job.

Some editors have been beat writers themselves and they understand the daily pressure of coming up with copy. Others don't have a clue and ride their reporters like rented mules, especially those at non-union papers where the Guild would step in and demand they back off.

But I'd venture to say most editors are understanding and want their reporters to maintain their sanity. So they work with them to keep them out of the paper and away from their beats when the opportunity presents itself.

Hopefully, most of you have good relationships with your boss and are encouraged to take some down time. Chances are your coach is sick of seeing you day after day and I'm sure it's vice versa.

Maybe you managed to get to the beach with the significant other. Or you got to camp out with the kids. Maybe you rediscovered your golf game or used all those airline miles and Marriott points you've accrued to treat yourself to a vacation in Canada, Mexico or overseas.

Most important, you hopefully gave yourself a chance to decompress, let those e-mails in your in-box sit for a few days unanswered and catch your breath.

It's fall. It's time to go to work. Let the show begin!

Meet your president: Andy Katz



Andy Katz

Andy Katz, a senior college basketball writer for ESPN.com, is this year's President of the United States Basketball Writers Association.

In addition to covering college basketball on a daily basis and breaking news for the site, Katz pens the "Daily Word" and "Weekly Word," popular columns covering a variety of topics and issues from around the sport.

A regular analyst on ESPN's *College Hoops Tonight* and ESPN2's *College Hoops 2Night*, Katz also serves as a reporter for ESPN at the Final Four and other major tournaments. He also contributes to *ESPN*

The Magazine and ESPN Radio and provides in-studio college basketball analysis for ESPN and ESPNEWS Network, ESPN's 24-hour sports news cable network.

Prior to joining ESPN.com in January 2000, Katz served as the national basketball writer for the Fresno Bee from 1995-99. He also has had stints at the Albuquerque Journal (1990-1995) and Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (1989-1990).

Working Media Members Code of Ethics

To be observed by the working media at any and all press rows.

The United States Basketball Writers Association reminds its colleagues to observe the rules of being respectful and courteous while working basketball games:

1. Refrain from cheering while at press row and in the press work room
2. Do not use inappropriate language while seated at press row;
3. Furthermore, refrain from making derogatory or negative remarks to fans, officials, coaches, student-athletes, team members, and other people at the arena
4. Members of the media should work and act in a professional manner at all times before, during, and after games
5. Workers at press row should be seated during play, standing during play can be distracting to fans behind you who pay for their seat
6. Avoid behaviors at press row that may be distracting to fellow workers
7. If press row is tight, pull those loose papers in close; no need to spread out making others feel cramped and uncomfortable
8. If able, cap beverages when not in use--lots of equipment and electronics could be near you at the table

9. Keep your workstation area neat in the press work room; in some instances work rooms can be crowded and space could be limited

10. Report any suspicious person(s) in the media only areas who are not properly identified

11. Be responsible for any guests you may bring to a game, their actions reflect upon you and your company

Institutions grant us the privilege to sit at the media table and use their facilities to write about (or broadcast) their schools to the world. We must all work together! Without the schools we have no jobs; without us, they have limited communication to their fans and supporters.

The arena is a common ground for all media types. The prime of some peoples' work is written and broadcast within the walls where basketball is played and distractions and inappropriate behavior are never warranted or necessary.

The USBWA kindly asks you observe the professionalism desired and regret that action may be taken against those who fail to observe this code.

Furthermore, the USBWA does not condone unprofessional behavior at any time by its members or others at any sporting event. Actions deemed inappropriate by any media member at press row should report the individual(s) to a security guard, usher, and/or host official immediately to be removed.

Keeping us on the cutting edge of latest technology

I am charged with trying to help the membership keep up with ever-changing technology and, in turn, helping you find tools that may help you do your job.

As we get set for the season, I thought I'd take up some space with a little preseason checklist of things you might want to carry with you or purchase for your use.

Since almost everything I do is done online, I'd like to think that I have accumulated some expertise on just about any situation. So, without further ado, here are my recommendation:

Battery-operated phone charger

Energizer and others make this great little device that runs on standard batteries. You simply plug it into your cell phone and it charges your phone. Hey, there's nothing worse than a dead cell phone in today's world.

Thumb drive

These handy little devices have gotten so cheap (around \$10 or less), they are now sold at the cashier at most office supply stores. And, you don't need a 4 GB drive (unless you really feel compelled to spend more than you need to). Generally, a 512 MB or 1 GB thumb drive will do the trick as a place to store files and move them from one computer to another. They come in really handy if you are trying to exchange files with a colleague and cannot get online.

Blank CDs

Not as important, but it never hurts to have some in your bag just in case you are having USB and e-mail issues at the same time.

External hard drive

Now that they are falling in price and size, go get one and use. Store your personal and work files on it and backup your important information on it. Most of all keep large files off your hard drive when you can by storing them on an external. Laptop computers are subject to so much vibration and handling and the more you save and delete and save files on your internal hard drive, the more you risk a crash. Backing up with an external saves you in all situations.

And, electronics stores are practically giving them away. Believe it or not, a 80-100 GB drive should do, but the cost per gigabyte decreases as you go up in size.

SlingBox

This is man's greatest new invention. If you haven't seen it in action, trust me. For around \$150, you can "sling" your television to your laptop or smartphone. In other words, you can watch television on your laptop with any high-speed connection. Although I have encountered some places (namely schools) where you are firewalled, you can watch the local programming from your cable or satellite box or TiVo on your computer. While traveling in New York, for example, I can watch the local Dallas news. Or, I can watch a show or game that I have previously recorded. With no monthly fees, it's the best \$150 you will spend this year.

A web-based e-mail account (gmail, Yahoo!, AOL or Hotmail)

This is a must-have, especially if you depend on a secure business e-mail address. No telling when you will have problems with connections, firewalls, you name it. Having a free, web-based account allows you to communicate when you have a corporate e-mail breakdown. And, it's easy to set up an account in about five minutes.

Wireless mouse

Say goodbye to cords and that hand-cramping touchpad. I bought the Logitech Nano VX the other day with a USB transmitter that's so small that you just leave it in all the time. It also comes with a nice little carrying case. It's an inexpensive luxury (around \$40 after rebate) to have if you have to be at the keyboard all day writing and researching.

A great laptop bag

Check out the LapTrap from Shaun Jackson Design (sjdesign.com). I have had this bag for several years and it's fantastic. It serves as a sleeve in a messenger bag, but has room for CD's and cables and other accessories. Shaun Jackson Design and Higher Ground Gear (highergroundgear.com) have other models as well. So, give your freebies to the kids and drop a few bucks on a great bag.

Since I am always looking for the next best thing in technology, look for more product suggestions throughout the year. But, I do hope this helps you get in gear for the season. See you in San Antonio!

Ted Gangi is the webmaster of the USBWA's official site, usbwa.com. He also runs collegepressbox.com, a media website for 56 schools in five Division I football conferences. He is based in Dallas.

Ted Gangi USBWA Webmaster

