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## Shaheen, Katha Quinn: A perfect match



GREG SHAHEEN

By JIM O'CONNELL

Everyone who was at the 1988 USBWA breakfast in Kansas City remembers everything about that day. Things were a little bigger that year since it was the NCAA Tournament's 50th anniversary.

Katha Quinn made that an afterthought. She gave a speech so full of emotions – from laughter to anger – the room went silent. No-silverware-being-picked-up silent.

I was sitting behind Dave Gavitt, Lou Carnesecca and John Thompson. All three knew Katha very well. They knew her before her fight with liver cancer. They knew her as she kept working despite being in so much pain. Coach Carnesecca knew her the best. She was the person who made sure nobody messed with Chris Mullin. All three future Hall of Famers cried that morning. Several times.

Twenty-five years ago. Unbelievable.

This April, at the 75th anniversary celebration of the Final Four in Atlanta, the Katha Quinn Award will be presented to Greg Shaheen, former vice president of NCAA championships and alliances. When the title jargon was dynamited, he was the man who ran the NCAA Tournament. And he ran it very well. Unfortunately he only ran it until the last one.

There wasn't any big planned goodbye in New Orleans early last April. Shaheen left the Super Dome when the work was done on championship night. That wasn't

fair in a lot of ways.

If we were to check with Katha on any ground rules – she might have ordered Malcolm Moran to follow in serving as the award's caretaker – there aren't any that says the recipient must still have a working ID badge.

We can be that cutting-edge organization when called upon.

When the award is presented, there will be plenty said about why Shaheen deserved it. The biggest would be opening the tournament from the selection process (he brought the word "mock" out of mothballs) to expansion. It was his tournament and it was going to be run the right way. It was always fun to watch him attack some poor soul through a cell phone over stats not being distributed properly at a site across the country.

I was about to give the details of Shaheen's early career and the stuff you read in every story like this. Not here.

Greg Shaheen is getting this award from the people he worked with, not for. Some people in the USBWA have had some great dialogues with him over the years, even one which made the ASAP transcript at the Final Four. You can't argue that he didn't at least listen and then try to help if he could. He did answer emails, some it seemed even before they were even sent.

Katha Quinn and Greg Shaheen are names that should be linked. Now they are.

## We saved what seats we could, but wish it were more

The NCAA Tournament seats that we were able to salvage weren't nearly enough.

Let's just get that out of the way.

The 70-some seats near courtside that the USBWA was able to save are better than the shutout that we were facing early last spring or the 40 that we were shown by NCAA members early last fall. But they're still not enough.

Here's a recap of what we will be getting:

Under the new configuration, a front row of seating opposite the team benches will be used primarily for CBS, ESPN, Dial Global and each participating team's radio teams. The remaining 22 seats during the semifinals will be given to the media, with the number growing to 30 for the championship game (with the media being given the space that was used by the radio stations of the losing teams from the semifinals).

A second media row will provide 24 seats, with 20 going to the media for the semifinals and two seats on each end going to coaches for scouting purposes. Those four seats will also open up for the championship game.

Four seats in each of the four corners of the court, located behind areas reserved for disabled seating, will also be able for the media, for a total of 16 seats.

Four more seats will be provided for two beat writers from each team (which will be swapped out after

each game) on the table located behind the scorer's table.

Overflow media will be seated in either an auxiliary box located between the baselines or in the end zone. When USBWA officers met with the NCAA in Indianapolis last fall, all of the overflow media was headed for end-zone seating.

Those who were paying close attention to our initial news release on this topic will note a change in the number of seats that I'm describing as being "near courtside." That release placed the number at about 130. There's a reason for the discrepancy: I misinterpreted some of the information that was passed along during the conference call in which the NCAA presented the USBWA officers with the final tally.

We were told in the call that in addition to the 74 aforementioned seats and the seats in the auxiliary box, the NCAA would provide about 56 end-zone seats located "on the floor" – a term the NCAA uses to describe seats that are accessible to the floor. Writers who sit

there will indeed have direct access to the floor, but the seats are actually about 100 feet too far from the court to be described as being near the court.

My mistake didn't change the number of seats we are receiving, but it altered how we presented the information to you. I apologize for that.

In this season's Final Four in Atlanta, the auxiliary-box seats apparently will be better than most. But we'll need those end-zone seats in 2014 when the Final Four moves to Dallas, where the games might be nothing more than a rumor from the Cowboy Stadium auxiliary box, and in similar venues.

I wish the news were better.

John Akers  
Basketball Times  
President



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# USBWA's scholarship program will aid member's son or daughter

The USBWA has established a scholarship program for college-age children of dues-paying members.

A \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded annually to the son or daughter of a USBWA member who is entering college next fall as a freshman or is enrolled in a junior college or four-year institution and plans to return to school in the fall.

The scholarship is renewable each year that the student remains in school, up to a maximum of four years, takes a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester and maintains a minimum 3.0 grade point average in college.

Only one scholarship will be awarded each year other than to those students who have their scholarships renewed.

The scholarships will be awarded to students who have demonstrated academic excellence and show achievement in citizenship and leadership in a community activity.

The deadline to apply is March 15, 2013. The application below is also available online on the USBWA website at [www.usbwa.com](http://www.usbwa.com). Applications should be sent to me at [mitch@usbwa.com](mailto:mitch@usbwa.com).

The student selected to receive the scholarship will be notified no later than June 1, 2013.

**USBWA AWARDS:** Nominations are being accepted for the USBWA Hall of Fame, Most Courageous and Rising Star awards.

The Hall of Fame was established in 1988 to honor members, past and present, who have either made significant contributions to the organization or are renowned for their achievements as a sports writer covering college basketball.

A committee comprised of current Hall of Fame members and a USBWA officer reviews the nominations and selects the inductees.

Last year's inductees were Mike DeCourcy of *The Sporting News*; Peter Finney of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*; and Tom Cushman, retired from the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Send nominations for the Hall of Fame to me at [mitch@usbwa.com](mailto:mitch@usbwa.com).

The USBWA Most Courageous Award is the organization's third-oldest

## Joe Mitch USBWA Executive Director



award behind the Oscar Robertson Player of the Year Trophy and the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award. It is presented to one male and one female recipient, recognizing individuals in college basketball for demonstrating extraordinary courage in the face of hardship and adversity.

Last year's winners were Bernard James, an Iraq-war veteran who didn't begin playing college basketball at Florida State until he was 24, and Pat Summitt, the legendary Tennessee women's coach who announced her retirement after being diagnosed with early-onset dementia. Most Courageous nominations should be sent to third vice president Frank Burlison at [frank.burlison@gmail.com](mailto:frank.burlison@gmail.com).

The Rising Star Award is presented annually to a member under 30 for journalistic excellence as a sports writer. Last year's winner was Steve Yanda of the *Washington Post*. Send nominations to USBWA President John Akers at [johna19081@gmail.com](mailto:johna19081@gmail.com).

All three awards will be announced in March and presented at the USBWA's annual awards breakfast at the Final Four in Atlanta in April.

#### USBWA COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

The United States Basketball Writers Association (USBWA) will award a \$1,000 annual scholarship to the son or daughter of a USBWA member entering college as a freshman for the 2013 fall semester or is currently enrolled in a junior college or four-year institution and plans to return to school in the fall.

The student will receive \$1,000 each year he or she remains in school (maximum of four years), takes a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester and maintains a minimum GPA of 3.0. Only one \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded each year other than to those students who have their scholarships renewed.

Applicants must demonstrate academic excellence and show achievement in citizenship and leadership in a community activity.

#### Criteria:

1. Applicants must achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 in high school or college;
2. Applicants must enroll in a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester in college;
3. Recipients must reapply to the USBWA no later than June 1 to receive the \$1,000 scholarship each year the student is enrolled in school. Renewal of the scholarship each year is contingent on the student maintaining a 3.0 GPA in college and enrolling in 12 credit hours per semester;
4. Applicants may submit a maximum of three recommendations with their application.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

CELL PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ USBWA MEMBER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF HIGH SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ HIGH SCHOOL GPA \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY \_\_\_\_\_ COLLEGE GPA \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE OF STUDY/COLLEGE MAJOR \_\_\_\_\_

CAREER GOALS \_\_\_\_\_

HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE ACADEMIC AWARDS \_\_\_\_\_

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES \_\_\_\_\_

Deadline to submit application: March 15, 2013. Mail application and supporting materials to: Joe Mitch, USBWA Executive Director, 803 Wildview Lane, Manchester, MO 63021 or email the application to [mitch@usbwa.com](mailto:mitch@usbwa.com) (314-795-6821). The student selected to receive the scholarship will be notified by June 1, 2013.



# Holding fire was the right approach with NCAA

I'm a flame-thrower. That's my nature. I see something that ticks me off, or hear somebody say things that are stupid or wrong, my first instinct is to nuke 'em. Not literally kill them, of course, but burn them to the ground in print.

So I understand why some of you might be upset with the USBWA officers over the way we've handled the media-seating debate with the NCAA. We could have called for heavy artillery the day the NCAA's Mark Lewis fired the first shot, when he suggested to president John Akers and executive director Joe Mitch major changes were coming. We could have ordered a prolonged campaign of Twitter strafing. We could have sent a brigade of Khrushchevs to pound shoes on tables in Indy.

We didn't.

All of us wanted to, at some point. I don't pretend to speak for my fellow officers, but I am convinced we were wise to hold our fire, difficult as that was. It wasn't what the NCAA was expecting. In fact, we were told some of the new guard at the Indianapolis palace even might have been hoping for an explosion of USBWA outrage as proof that our concerns should not be taken seriously and that it's a waste of time trying to deal with us. Instead, our approach bought us favor and support from staff and committee members who had misgivings

about some of the radical changes.

What kind of radical change? No courtside seats, for one. The more we listened to the NCAA's official rationale for changes and encountered resistance to our counter-proposals, the more we became convinced such an outcome was a real possibility.

The deeper we got into this process, however, the more it became evident we had potential allies on the inside who could work on our behalf, as long as we didn't become a deafening noise. Going ballistic could have painted them into a corner where they were defending crazies, so to speak. Not good for them, or for us.

Believe me, none of us is happy with the compromise solution, and we will work to improve on it as much as possible. All of your officers feel bad about presiding over a period when our tournament working conditions were eroded.

A lot remains unsettled, particularly with non-courtside seating and access avenues at diverse venues

Kirk Wessler  
Peoria Journal-Star  
First Vice-President



the first two weeks of the tournament. Also, while the auxiliary situation this season at Atlanta appears workable, a potentially untenable problem looms over the Metroplex in 2014. The USBWA board will come up with a plan to monitor and evaluate the various sites, so we can address real problems and work with the NCAA to correct them.

It's disappointing to be in this position after the mostly good relationship the USBWA has had with the NCAA over the past decade. But the NCAA front office has new people, with a different view of us, and we have to adapt a different course for problem-solving. We have a lot more work ahead. We'll have to be diligent and smart as we go forward.

# Search for Most Courageous candidates is ongoing

LAGUNA NIGUEL, Calif. – There are a lot of inspiring stories on the college basketball front and not all of them involve late-game jump shots or defensive stands.

One of my tasks as a USBWA officer is to search out and sort through as many potential candidates for the USBWA "Most Courageous Awards" (one each for men and women) that will be presented in Atlanta during Final Four weekend.

Via solicitations to conference and institution basketball media directors – and via forwarded story links from other USBWA officers (thank you, Coach Akers) – I've already been alerted to the compelling stories of several obvious candidates of both genders.

But I'd be disappointed if I missed out on other strong candidates because I didn't do enough due diligence.

So I'm asking you to provide me with some of your "diligence", if you don't mind.

Please drop me a note ([frank.burlison@gmail.com](mailto:frank.burlison@gmail.com)) with the names of the man or woman – or both – that you believe merit consideration for the respective honors, along with brief backgrounds into their stories, as well as links to any media reports on them.

As the USBWA membership directory details so succinctly, "The U.S. Basketball Writers Association annually recognizes a player, coach, official or administrator who has demonstrated extraordinary courage reflecting honor on the sport of amateur basketball."

So that leaves a lot of leeway for candidates to come from any level of college hoops and any position remotely connected to it from within a campus or conference office.

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What better example of the "instant gratification age" that exists, as in so many avenues of society, squarely in the world of college basketball than the rush to judgment when it comes to heavily touted freshmen?

Less than a month – in some cases, just five or six

games – there have already been a litany of one-year players being designated as various degrees of "disappointments" because their play hasn't been nearly as productive and/or spectacular as had been projected by the recruiting or NBA draft "gurus" that are referenced so liberally within media reports.

The problem with that rush to judgment, of sorts, is multi-fold:

For one, shouldn't a player be allowed at least as entire season before he is anointed as "every bit as good as the gurus touted" or "a flop"?

Some players, through emotional or physical maturity (remember, there are a lot of players entering college hoops these days as 20-year-old freshmen, because of being "held back" a year in middle school or high school, or a year at a "prep school"), are not as advanced as a lot of their heavily touted peers.

Or, in many instances, they weren't exposed to the caliber of fundamental coaching needed to make a smooth and successful adjustment to college hoops from Jump Street.

Secondly, those doing the "touting" of said players when they were on the high school (or prep school levels) sometimes didn't do a quality job of evaluating those players' "skills" and "potential" for success on the college level.

There are a lot of "recruiting reporters" who do a superb job of tracking down players' college choices and in creating a network of "sources" who tip them off when a player has "committed" or is about to do so.

Their ability to sit down and watch high school play-

Frank Burlison  
Third Vice-President



ers and break down why they are – or aren't – quality prospects isn't quite as effective, however.

And most of those certainly aren't qualified to riff on a 17-, 18- or 19-year-old's ability to "be a pro" or "play in the league (aka, NBA)".

As someone who has watched, and written about, the vast majority of the better high school, college and NBA players since the late 1970s, I feel I'm more qualified than most to comment on the potential of a players success in college and then, possibly, in the NBA.

And it's almost a hit-and-miss proposition – hopefully I've hit a lot more evaluations than I've missed.

Always be cautious when quoting, or using as background reference, someone who refers to a high school standout or college player as "a sure-fire pro." That phrase is so often spouted by someone who really has no idea how difficult it is to get drafted, much less stick on an NBA roster.

Being prudent in writing or discussing a player's "potential" in college and the NBA is always the best policy.

Doing so will help you avoid the feeling that you need to declare that player a "disappointment" even before he has suited up for his first conference game.

# Armstrong claims first, second in Best-Writing Contest

Kevin Armstrong of the *New York Daily News* finished first and second in the U.S. Basketball Writers Association's best writing contest, becoming the only double place-winner in this year's contest.

Armstrong took first place in moderate length features and second in magazine length stories.

Other first-place winners included Eamonn Brennan of ESPN.com in game story/spot news; Tim Layden of *Sports Illustrated* in magazine length stories; Pablo S. Torre of *Sports Illustrated* in enterprise/investigative; and John Feinstein of the *Washington Post* in column writing.

Armstrong's winning entry, Remembering Gentle Lorenzo, an in-depth look at the life and death of former N.C. State player Lorenzo Charles, the hero of the 1983 NCAA championship game who caught an errant shot attempt by guard Dereck Whittenburg with two seconds left and re-directed it through the rim with a two-handed dunk.

Armstrong wrote: "Life led Charles down varying roads, some unpaved, some luxurious. By the time he left the Wolfpack, he scored 1,535 points, good enough for 15th place on the school's all-time list. He played one season in the NBA, averaging 3.4 points in 36 games with the Atlanta Hawks in 1985-86, then went international, bouncing from Italy to Argentina to Uruguay to Turkey to Sweden. He ended his professional career in the Continental Basketball Association in 2001.

"He never commercialized his name from the championship win," says former UNC forward Bill Chamberlain. "He never lived off the adulation, nor did he want to."

In the game story/spot news category, Brennan created a timeline leading up to the buzzer-beating shot by Duke's Austin Rivers over North Carolina.

Brennan wrote: "Three ... Two ...

"That's when Doc Rivers knew. He'd seen it before. His son had set things up this way: He had forced UNC center Tyler Zeller into an uncomfortable switch, and now he had the big man right where he wanted. Doc's son was hesitating on purpose, waiting for the 7-foot Zeller to back up – just enough to see the rim, just enough to give it a chance.

"One ...

"It hung up in the air the way last-second shots do, floating through space at its own leisure, blissfully unaware of its brief journey's consequence. For half a second – no more – the arcing, dropping basketball was the only thing in the arena in motion. Twenty-two thousand froze in their seats. Some covered their eyes. The Dean Dome was underwater, muffled, a slow-motion scene from a cheesy action movie. Time played tricks.

"Zero ...

"And then, just like that, it was over. Duke 85. Carolina 84. Austin Rivers had just played the most important – and the longest – six seconds of his life."

In the magazine length category, Layden recalled the craziness of March 14, 1981, when three buzzer-beaters – each of them aired live – captured the nation's attention and spawned these two famous words: March Madness.

Layden wrote: "The last shot fell at a little past three on a Saturday afternoon in Los Angeles. Rolando Blackman, a willowy 6-foot-6 Kansas State senior from Panama by way of the Bronx, pounded three dribbles to the right baseline and rose quietly off the floor before stroking a jumper that gave the Wildcats a 50-48 lead over Oregon State with two seconds to play in their NCAA tournament game at Pauley Pavilion. ...

"It was the concluding act in a daylong drama that stands as one of the seminal moments in what has come to be known – and trademarked by the NCAA – as March

## Magazine Length Feature

1. Tim Layden, *Sports Illustrated* – March 14, 1981: Madness Begins
2. Kevin Armstrong, *New York Daily News* – Oklahoma State Grieves Again
3. Pete Thamel, *New York Times* – Everybody Wants a Piece of Nerlens Noel
4. Ken Davis, *FOXSports.com* – Dave Gavitt: He Was Basketball's Visionary
5. Jason King, *ESPN.com* – Perry Jones III Carries A Heavy Burden



Layden

## Enterprise/ Investigative Reporting

1. Pablo S. Torre, *Sports Illustrated* – The Man With a Scam
2. John Akers, *Basketball Times* – Ball Screens and the Point Guard
3. Lew Freedman, *Seymour Tribune* – Chuck Taylors: Coolest Thing on Two Feet
4. Joe Rexrode, *Lansing State Journal* – NCAA Probe of Tom Izzo
5. Michael Cohen, *The Daily Orange* – Scoop Jardine's Life in South Philly



Torre

## Column Writing

1. John Feinstein, *Washington Post* – Time to Honor Lefty
2. Marty Dobrow, *ESPNBoston.com* – Calipari, Pitino and Jack Leaman
3. Shawn Krest, *CBSSports.com* – Duke's Den: Countdown to Craziness
4. David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press* – Christian Laettner Game Never Dies
5. Jack Styczynski, *New York Times* – Downside of Moving to a Tougher Conference



Feinstein

## Moderate Length Feature

1. Kevin Armstrong, *New York Daily News* – Remembering Gentle Lorenzo
2. Luke Winn, *Sports Illustrated* – First Line of Defense
3. Mike Kern, *Philadelphia Daily News* – John Chaney, Poker Ribs and Hot Mustard
4. Vahe Gregorian, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* – Frank Haith's Remarkable Journey
5. Nick Fasulo, *SB Nation* – Finding Billy Edelin



Armstrong

## Game Story/ Spot News

1. Eamonn Brennan, *ESPN.com* – The Shot That Shook Carolina
2. Bob Baptist, *Columbus Dispatch* – Indiana Burns Buckeyes
3. Michael Rothstein, *ESPN.com/Wolverine Nation* – Michigan Tin Cups It
4. Thomas R. Noie, *South Bend Tribune* – Waking Up the Echoes
5. John Bohnenkamp, *Burlington Hawk Eye* – Iowa Stuns Wisconsin



Brennan

Madness. By the time Blackman's floater dropped through the net, two other games had ended in upsets at the buzzer. Early in the afternoon in Dayton, Ohio, a DePaul junior point guard nicknamed "Money," because he was so clutch under pressure, had missed a free throw that he would never forget, even as he later spent more than six years in prison before turning 40. Less than a minute before the Blackman basket, in Austin, Texas, an Arkansas guard named Ulysses C. (U.S.) Reed had made what is likely the only half-court, game-winning shot (so close, Gordon Hayward) in NCAA tournament history, bringing down defending national champion Louisville and keeping the Cardinals from what might have been four Final Fours in four seasons.

"And in a small, refrigerated control room on the fourth (or maybe the fifth, nobody is quite sure) floor of 30 Rockefeller Center in midtown Manhattan, a crew of NBC executives and producers and one very familiar host had pushed the limits of broadcast technology to ensure that the entire country had seen all three finishes. When the day was done, they yelled as loudly as the crowd a continent away in Los Angeles, certain that they had helped change the way a sport would be consumed by its audience."

Torre, who now works for ESPN.com, won the enterprise/investigative category with "The Man With a

Scam," about Houston AAU coach David Salinas, who befriended and defrauded coaches and players in a phony bond scheme before committing suicide.

Here's Torre's lede: "In the predawn darkness of July 15, less than a mile off shore, the missing man floated on a yellow Jet Ski on Galveston's West Bay. David Salinas, the celebrated operator of an elite AAU basketball team called Houston Select, had plenty of fuel to head landward—at 5:45 a.m., in fact, he'd gotten gas at a marina near his vacation home in Terramar Beach. Instead he bobbed in the waves, despondent in his ubiquitous baseball cap, boat traffic narrowly passing by. Salinas had been well-liked and trusted by a wide circle of friends that included Division I college basketball coaches, Texas oilmen and pro athletes. Now all of them wondered where the hell he'd gone. And how deep the trouble would go."

Feinstein won the column writing contest by addressing how Maryland's court-naming for Gary Williams went wrong: "For (Lefty) Driesell — or anyone — to argue that the court shouldn't be named for anyone at all is hollow, especially given that Driesell *has* a court named for him at Georgia State. Here, though, is the biggest problem and a big part of the reason why Maryland managed to turn a night that should have been a celebration into yet another controversy: The school has never properly honored Driesell."