

Katha Quinn winner enjoys making our jobs better

BY JIM O'CONNELL

Why are we giving David Worlock an award? He admits he has one of the best jobs in the world and he gets to deal with the wonderful people in our profession.

Worlock deserves the Katha Quinn Award as much as any recipient in the almost three decades of it being presented.

The award is named for Katha Quinn, the one-time sports information director at St. John's who passed away in 1989 after a long fight with cancer.

She would be pleased with the selection of Worlock, the NCAA's primary media contact for the Division I men's basketball championship. Like Katha, David is an invaluable asset to those covering the tournament. And also like Katha, he is so well-liked by those he works with.

Worlock was born in Herkimer, N.Y., not far from Syracuse. His father, Ren, was a career military man and that meant David was a military brat and that he spent most of his time from grade school to high school in Augsburg, Germany.

Though he was far from the action, he and his family were true college basketball fans and that meant March was the most special of all the months.



David Worlock

"I think I grew up the biggest fan of college basketball and I can remember being about 5 years old and my family being excited because Syracuse made the Final Four in 1975," Worlock said. "When I was 9, Magic and Larry came around and basically after that my life always involved March Madness."

During his college days at Henderson State in Arkansas – his famous classmates were Auburn football coach Gus Malzahn and PGA Tour member Ken Duke – he would schedule his classes in the second semester to be early so he could watch both days of the opening rounds without having to cut class.

Worlock started at the NCAA in 2001 and is looking forward to his 11th tournament. It's not all laurels and handshakes.

"The credential requests for the early rounds is public so people apply figuring it's worth a shot," he said. "I read each one and hit deny when someone says they covered three of their brother's high school games."

He receives plenty of feedback about the tournament and he quickly says among his favorites is when somebody says the media buffet was a problem because the hamburger was undercooked.

"I want to say, 'You could walk up to the concession stand and pay for something,' but I would never say that," he said, laughing.

He's also the ultimate wedding planner. He must seat over 1,000 media people and there's no kids' table. Everybody wants the front row, right near the happy couple.

Worlock said his credo for working the tournament is: "We can't make everybody happy but we can try."

There is one person Worlock takes care of every Final Four. That's his father, who has attended all but one of the national semifinals since his son took over.

Soon, there will be two more people to cater to, his 6-year-old and 4-year-old sons.

"I am looking forward to them being a little older so they can enjoy it with me," Worlock said. "My older son knows Daddy works at the Final Four."

And if you're looking for Worlock right after the championship game he'll be looking up at the big screen while *One Shining Moment* plays with the montage of highlights from the whole tournament.

"I love watching *One Shining Moment*, but then come the credits and I get sad," Worlock said. "Once the song is over, we have to wait seven months for next season to start and 11 months until the tournament comes around again."

Sounds like this guy really likes his job. And we're giving him an award? Yes. He and Katha both enjoyed their jobs and made ours better.

Andrew and Samantha Smith are Most Courageous

BY MATT NORLANDER

One of the most powerful stories in college basketball over the past year involved a man who no longer played the game. The capacity of this story was so inspiring and emotional that it transcended the sport. Its tragic and unjust conclusion came on Jan. 12, when Andrew Smith died decades too young, at the age of 25.

The former Butler Bulldogs center battled multiple manifestations of cancer for more than two years. The disease first surfaced when Smith noticed something wrong with his neck while playing overseas in Lithuania, around Christmastime in 2013. Within a month, he was diagnosed back at home in Indianapolis with a rare form T-cell lymphoblastic lymphoma, a type of cancer that normally afflicts children under the age of 12.

Smith would bravely spend most of his final 26 and a half months facing myriad health setbacks; his final fight came against leukemia. Well before he died, Smith became a symbol of strength and a powerful figure throughout American sports. He wanted to share his story, inspire others and let people know he found peace through his faith and strength through his wife, Samantha. In March of 2015, his story went national, touching the hearts of millions across the country. Smith was a big



Andrew and Sam Smith

man with a huge soul, dry wit, selfless attitude and relentless work ethic.

Andrew's widow, Sam, was – and remains – in the words of Smith's coach at Butler, Brad Stevens, "an absolute rock." She publicly showed courage, grace, humor, vulnerability and so much more throughout her husband's incredible – and at one point, truly miraculous – endeavor.

Together, they are the 2016 recipients of the USBWA's Most Courageous Award. Andrew receives the honor posthumously, while Sam will be the living embodiment of his spirit, strength, faith and character. The two are receiving the

honor despite not being active members in college basketball, which speaks to the power of their story and the weight in which it was felt by so many. It is an unprecedented move by the USBWA.

Smith was a player that Stevens called his toughest – ever. He played a big part on Butler's teams that reached back-to-back national championship game in 2010 and 2011. Smith is one of only three Butler players ever to finish his career with more than 100 wins and 1,000 points. Because of his role in the program from 2009-13, Smith remains an important figure in helping Butler's rise from Horizon League contender to Big East constituent. His 16 rebounds against Bucknell in the

2013 NCAA Tournament are a program record.

Smith's legacy shines brightly, also, because he was an Academic All-American at Butler, a local kid who made the team at the biggest university in the state's biggest city.

Sam was Andrew's high school sweetheart. They made an incredible pair. She was the storyteller of his – and their – journey. Sam's personal blog updates on Andrew's fight and the family's struggle became running commentary throughout the world of college basketball, and even more so in greater Indianapolis. Cancer fights can often be private, painful ordeals. Andrew and Sam decided to share their experiences, to let others in to see how strength could be found and miracle could be possible.

In the summer of 2014, Andrew's miracle arrived after he collapsed in an office building near the Indianapolis airport. He was unconscious, his heart no longer beating, for more than 22 minutes. Most people that face cardiac arrest for even a fraction of that time wind up dead, or at least severely brain damaged for the rest of their life. Andrew suffered no detectable neurological effects from the traumatic episode. Within four days, he was walking out of the hospital.

Not all of Sam's updates were dire. There were many times when Sam shared good news, positive anecdotes and incredible moments of prosperity. In those moments, the force of their love was so evident.

"Andrew packed more living into his 25 years than

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USBWA writing contest entries due on June 15

One of the most popular benefits for members of the USBWA is the opportunity to submit stories and columns in the association's annual best writing contest.

Over 160 entries are typically submitted each year, and the contest has attracted not only veterans but young reporters just entering the profession.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of women writers submitting stories, as well.

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

Plaques and cash prizes are awarded in each category, with \$150 given for first place, \$125 for second, \$100 for third, \$75 for fourth and \$50 for fifth.

The rules for entering the contest are fairly simple. Members may enter more than one category, but may submit only one entry per category. A series of articles may be submitted in the enterprise/investigative category.

Entries must include at the top of each story the category, the story's author or authors, the publication in which the article appeared and the date of the publication. New this year is the addition of an email address and telephone number for the entry's writer or writers.

Only dues-paying members of the USBWA are eligible to enter the writing contest.

Entries must be submitted to contest@usbwa.com in a readable type size. Any entry submitted in type size so small it cannot be read won't be considered. Send Word or text files only. Do not send links to stories on the Internet and clippings from magazines or newspapers. Also, delete any advertising, photos and captions from the files and any unnecessary carriage returns.

The deadline for submitting stories and columns that appeared in print or online during the 2015-16 college basketball season is June 15. Entries received after the deadline will not be accepted.

USBWA SCHOLARSHIP. Applications are now being accepted for the USBWA's college scholarship for the son or daughter of USBWA members. The scholarship is \$1,000 annually for four years and is open to students currently in college or planning to attend a junior college or four-year institution in the fall.

To qualify, students must take a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester in college, maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0, demonstrate academic excellence and show achievement in citizenship and leadership in a community service. The deadline to apply is June 1. Applications are

Joe Mitch

USBWA

Executive Director



available on the USBWA website at www.USBWA.com.

FINAL FOUR STUDENT WORKSHOPS. The USBWA will host two workshops for students on the Friday of the Final Four weekend in Houston – one for students interested in sportswriting and another for those interested in sports photojournalism.

For those looking to pursue a career in sportswriting, the USBWA's "Full Court Press" workshop provides students the opportunity to meet veteran sportswriters and to compete for a \$1,000 scholarship. The scholarship is awarded in honor of the late Larry Donald, a member of the USBWA Hall of Fame and the only person to serve two terms as president of the organization.

USBWA members will lead the discussion at a seminar that is expected to include topics such as the influence of social media, the state of the job market, navigational skills in a 24/7 digital era and survival tactics to deal with increasingly difficult deadlines.

Students electing to participate in the scholarship competition will receive assignments to cover events at the men's championship, including news conferences, practices and the announcement at NRG Stadium in Houston of the USBWA's Oscar Robertson Trophy for national player of the year.

This marks the 16th year for the writing workshop. Some 50 to 60 students are expected to attend.

The sports photography workshop is being held for the second straight year in partnership with famed sports photographer Rich Clarkson of Clarkson Creative. The workshop enables students to take pictures at open practices and the college all-star game and to have their work evaluated by Clarkson and his staff.

Both workshops are organized by the Sports Capital Journalism Program at IUPUI within the school's Department of Journalism and Public Relations. The program's director is USBWA past president and Hall of Fame member Malcolm Moran. This is the fourth consecutive year that IUPUI has been involved in the writing workshop. IUPUI will serve as the host for a similar workshop at the Women's Final Four in Indianapolis.

Students interested in attending the men's or women's workshops can contact Moran at moranma@indiana.edu.

Newell replaces Dodd on KC Star beat

Jesse Newell, who covered Kansas for the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, was hired by the *Kansas City Star* to cover the Jayhawks. He replaces Rustin Dodd, who will cover the Kansas City Royals.

Bernadette Cafarelli, a 32-year veteran of collegiate athletics public relations who spent 22 years at Notre Dame, was named associate commissioner of the American Athletic Conference.

Lodge Notes

Former USBWA member George Rodecker passed away on Christmas eve, two days from his 65th birthday, after suffering heart problems in recent years. Rodecker, also a member of the Metropolitan Basketball Writers Association, was a self-made journalist who wrote for a number of outlets, including *Basketball Times*, *College Insider*, *College Chalktalk* and *Hoopville*.

March is magical when respect is mutual

Congratulations, everyone. We've almost made it to March.

This is the best time of year to be a college basketball writer, which is something I try to remind myself – usually out loud – on the first day of conference tournaments and again on the first day of the NCAA Tournament.

We are lucky. This is our job. Enjoy it. Have fun while working our butts off.

I will do my best to keep that in mind through every 10 p.m. tipoff at the end of a four-game day. Through every game-ending two minutes that last 15 minutes in real time. Through every late or lost shuttle from the hotel to the arena. Through every stilted news conference insistence on referring to “student-athletes.” Through every confrontation with the Soda Police who insist that my Diet Coke is poured in an NCAA-approved cup before getting to the court.

Dealing with the logistical headaches of covering the tournaments should not detract from actually covering the tournaments.

For the most part, we are about to see the best the sport has to offer. The highest level of effort and intensity and passion. The most drama with the highest stakes. The greatest sense of urgency.

For the great majority of the players and coaches we're covering, this is the highlight of their basketball lives. Some will make it professionally, but for most, this is the apex and the culmination of dreams. I believe we should feel and appreciate what they're experiencing – and I think most of us do.

The best media-player interaction I saw in the 2015 NCAA tournament was also one of the saddest: SMU's Yanick Moreira was called for a controversial goaltend



that decided the Mustangs' game against UCLA in the opening round in Louisville. He was devastated, as were all the Mustangs.

But he sat in the SMU locker room and answered every question – showing a great deal more accountability

around the win-or-go-home block and the losing locker rooms that accompany it – thanked him for his time and his gracious manner. It seemed like the right thing to do.

Those are the stories we're about to discover and write. You never know when the big moment is going to happen in the Big Dance, which is part of its charm and allure. You never know when something amazing is going to happen right in front of you. So I'm going to do my best to be ready for it.

As much as we should celebrate and appreciate the chance to cover March, that doesn't mean we have to shill for the sport. Most of us love college basketball and want to see the game grow – or, at the very least, hold onto its spot in a sporting landscape increasingly overtaken by King Football. But we shouldn't be blind apologists for it, either.

If the games are bad, it's OK to say so. If the officiating stinks, make note of it. (Though I also think the scapegoating of officials has gone too far, crossing over at times from fair comment and criticism into excuse-making for the losing teams.) If coaches or players act like jerks, call them on it.

We're here to report the truth, not a sanitized version of it.

It can be easy to feel a bit beaten down and road-weary at this point. We've all written a gazillion stories, and many of us also have filed a gazillion videos and blog updates, too. There are more content

demands than ever on reporters.

But we've almost made it through the dog days of February, and the payoff is in sight. (Well, unless you cover Louisville or SMU. To those folks, I'm sorry.) This is our *One Shining Moment*, too.

For the great majority of the players and coaches we're covering, this is the highlight of their basketball lives. Some will make it professionally, but for most, this is the apex and the culmination of dreams. I believe we should feel and appreciate what they're experiencing – and I think most of us do.

and class in defeat than millionaire Cam Newton did after the Super Bowl. The reporters talking to him were respectful with our questions, and he poured out a lot of emotion at a very difficult time. It was his last college game.

Afterward, several of us – veterans who have been

Keeley proud to be first woman named Rising Star

It is significant enough that the *Raleigh News & Observer's* Laura Keeley is the first woman to be named the USBWA's Rising Star.

Perhaps just as meaningful, Keeley emerged from a pool of eight strong candidates for the award, given annually to a member who is under the age of 30 who shows great promise as a college basketball writer.

And that half of those candidates were women.

"I'm proud that there are so many young women sports writers out there," Keeley said, "and that there are more and more good ones."

While the past winners who determined this year's winner made it clear that Keeley, 26, was named the winner on merit, they were delighted to ensure that the fraternity of Rising Star award winners is never just a young boys' club.

"I think the first female recipient of the award would stand as a testament to the rising wave of gender diversity among college basketball writers and the industry at large," said past winner Eamonn Brennan of *espn.com*. "The USBWA Rising Star Award looks to the future of the business, and so it should reflect and promote the bigger tent our busi-



Laura Keeley

ness is gradually, and haltingly, moving toward.

"This means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to the USBWA as well."

Keeley's career as a sportswriter began as a student at Duke. Her writing career began in the fifth grade, when an assignment to write an editorial for a "colonial newspaper" drew unexpected praise from teachers.

"Maybe I'm good at this," thought the fifth grader.

But there would be other factors to consider. During a visit to Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, a flier intending to promote the prestigious program had the opposite affect on Keeley.

"On the back, it had the average starting salary for Medill grads, and I think it was in the low 30s – and that might even be generous," Keeley recalled. "And I remember thinking, 'Can I survive on that little money?' I wasn't ready to put it all into journalism at that point."

Keeley went instead to Duke, which does not have a traditional journalism program. After a semester of chemistry and calculus, she returned to her journalistic roots by signing up to write for the student newspaper to cover Duke sports for *The Chronicle*.

She interned as a business writer for two sum-

mers with *Bloomberg News*, but she was pulled back to sports writing to become a prep writer for the *Tampa Bay Times*.

Keeley was covering the Blue Devils again one year later when the *News & Observer* hired her in August 2012.

Keeley said she has never felt conflicted while covering her alma mater – even as she covered the Blue Devils in last season's national championship game – perhaps because she was never very far removed from her days as a student who objectively covered the Blue Devils for *The Chronicle*.

She is well aware, however, that she's covering a high-profile program.

"Covering Duke basketball, I assume that most people probably either saw the highlights or watched the game on TV," Keeley said. "I try to be observant, because if I'm not bringing anything beyond what you can see on TV, I'm not really doing my job."

Brennan noted a Duke-Syracuse game story in which Keeley noted that Mike Krzyzewski used the word "amazing" 10 times during his six minutes and 17 seconds on the dais. She also pointed out that "in the first eight minutes of the second half, the Orange missed 15 shots – and grabbed 12 offensive rebounds."

That was a statistic that told readers everything they needed to know about Duke's struggles – and voters why Keeley should be this year's Rising Star.

O'Banion receives Summitt Award

By Mel Greenberg

USBWA Women's Representative

The season ahead was the only concern on Kent State women's coach Danielle O'Banion's mind a year ago in November 2014 as she made a routine visit to her doctor.

A few days later, she was told she was diagnosed with stage 2 lymphoma cancer.

"We call last season an untraditional season, in many ways, but certainly getting that type of news was not part of the plan," O'Banion said brightly earlier this month after being told she will be this year's recipient of the USBWA Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award for women's basketball.

"I'm really grateful for the care I received from my medical team and then the support from our families both at home and at Kent State. It was unbelievable to have that type of support and love."

The Summitt Award and men's Most Courageous Award are presented by USBWA annually to players, coaches, officials or administrators in college basketball who have demonstrated extraordinary courage in the face of adversity.

O'Banion, who as a player was part of Boston College's first two NCAA Tournament squads (1999, 2000), decided after the diagnosis to continue to coach and did not miss a game. She only missed practice on the days she was undergoing treatment to fight the disease.



Danielle O'Banion

"Sticking with that routine was part of the medicine that helped manage it, staying with the next recruit, the next game, the next practice – I really felt that was what helped the whole process go as well as it did," explained O'Banion, who is now in her fourth season with the Golden Flashes.

"Danny uses the same passion, drive and work ethic in all that she does," said Harvard coach Kathy Delaney-Smith, who had O'Banion on her Crimson staff the first two seasons after O'Banion graduated. "As a coach myself who has battled breast cancer, I have enormous respect for Danny who battled her cancer with such a positive perspective and inner strength. She is such a role model."

Memphis coach Melissa McFerrin, who had O'Banion as her associate head coach for four seasons prior to the move to Kent State, echoed Delaney-Smith's tribute.

"From the moment Danielle called and told me ... the first words out of her mouth were positive and how she was going to fight and win," McFerrin said. "I've

never seen anyone approach cancer the way that she did.

"To see someone that I care about so much go through something so difficult and do it with such grace is a tribute to the person she is."

Happily, good news came at the end of the treatments in May when O'Banion was declared cancer free.

"I didn't expect to be as emotional that day when I was going to see my oncologist," she said, "but I squeezed the air out of his lungs and I hugged him when he told me we were in remission. But it is a real blessing to have family support around, and I think a lot of the lessons we learn in sport helped manage a less than ideal situation.

"It was a great opportunity for me to use all the lessons I learned from all the coaches I played under and worked for and certainly try to walk that same walk for our players at Kent State.

"That was a happy, happy day, and I hope each time I go back (for followups), I'll be able to hug him each time for the next four years with that good news."

The Summitt Award is named after the Tennessee coach emeritus who announced she was suffering from early onset dementia prior to her final season coaching the Lady Vols.

O'Banion will receive the award on April 3 at the Women's Final Four in Indianapolis.

Watch lists for USBWA awards

Here are the USBWA watch lists for top player honors:

Oscar Robertson Trophy (men's national player of the year): Grayson Allen, Duke; Kris Dunn, Providence; Kahlil Felder, Oakland; Yogi Ferrell, Indiana; Buddy Hield, Oklahoma; Demetrius Jackson, Notre Dame; Brice Johnson, North Carolina; Jalen Jones, Texas A&M; Sheldon McClellan, Miami; Monte Morris, Iowa State; Georges Niang, Iowa State; Gary Payton II, Oregon State; Wayne Selden Jr., Kansas; Ben Simmons, LSU; Melo Trimble, Maryland; Tyler Ulis, Kentucky; Jarrod Uthoff, Iowa; Denzel Valentine, Michigan State; Fred VanVleet, Wichita State; Kyle Wiltjer, Gonzaga.

Wayman Tisdale Award (men's national freshman player of the year): KeVaughn Allen, Florida; Dwayne Bacon, Florida State; Malik Beasley, Florida State; Henry Ellenson, Marquette; Brandon Ingram, Duke; Jamal Murray, Kentucky; Ivan Rabb, California; Ben Simmons, LSU; Diamond Stone, Maryland; Caleb Swanigan, Purdue.

Ann Meyers Drysdale Award (women's national player of the year): Jillian Alleyene, Oregon; Rachel Banham, Minnesota; Nina Davis, Baylor; Diamond DeShields, Tennessee; Moriah Jefferson, Connecticut; Niya Johnson, Baylor; Jonquel Jones, George Washington; Kelsey Mitchell, Ohio State; Tiffany Mitchell, South Carolina; Kelsey Plum, Washington; Azura Stevens, Duke; Breanna Stewart, Connecticut; Morgan Tuck, Connecticut; Victoria Vivians, Mississippi State; Shatori Walker-Kimbrough, Maryland; A'ja Wilson, South Carolina.

Most Courageous

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most of us will enjoy in a full 75 years," Curt Smith said after his son died. "He lived his faith, relished his family, selflessly served his wife and pursued his passion of basketball at the highest levels."

Prior to his leukemia diagnosis, the Smiths planned for a long life together. The first cancer bout and the heart episode were behind them, and so they bought a house. Andrew began coaching a youth basketball team.

As the leukemia battle waged on in his final months, Andrew still insisted on working out, on riding stationary bikes and keeping his spirits up. Three and a half weeks before he died, Andrew and Sam attended Butler's victory over Purdue in the Crossroads Classic in Indianapolis. He was a quiet man who faced his des-

tiny in a moving way. Smith's death has left Sam with a lifetime ahead of her but an uncertain future filled with shock and the unenviable slow road to acceptance.

Sam spoke at halftime to the home crowd at Butler's first game, five days after Andrew died. She was emotional, thankful, fractured in voice. The definition of what it means to be brave, to be courageous. It was an incredible act of love and appreciation, and one Sam said she didn't do alone. Days after her speech, she couldn't quite remember all she said while standing at center court inside legendary Hinkle Fieldhouse.

"That was all Andrew," she said.

Their story continues to inspire, and that's why Andrew and Samantha Smith are the recipients of the 2016 Most Courageous Award.

Awards luncheon planned for April 4

The USBWA will hold its annual awards ceremony for a second straight year as a luncheon rather than a breakfast at the men's Final Four in Houston.

The luncheon was a huge success last year, with over 150 people attending the event in Indianapolis, nearly doubling the past attendance.

This year's luncheon will be held at the downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel in Houston on Monday, April 4, the day of the national championship game, starting at 12:30 p.m.

The luncheon will feature the presentation of several awards:

- Katha Quinn Award to NCAA director of media coordination and statistics David Worlock for service to the media;

- Induction into the USBWA Hall of Fame of long-time Notre Dame SID and now retired Roger Valdiserri, former USBWA president Blair Kerkhoff of the *Kansas City Star* and veteran sportswriter Bob

Pille (posthumously) of the *Peoria Journal Star* and *Chicago Sun-Times*;

- Rising Star Award for excellence in sportswriting for writers under 30 to Laura Keeley of the *Raleigh News & Observer*;

- Most Courageous Award to former Butler player Andrew Smith and his widow Samantha for their heroic efforts working as a team during Andrew's two-year struggle with cancer that eventually claimed his life;

- Ray Marquette Award to Pat Forde of Yahoo Sports for his leadership this year as USBWA president. ESPN serves as the main sponsor of the luncheon and has done so for many years, dating back to the mid-1980s. Other luncheon sponsors include the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, Connor Sports Flooring, Conference USA and the Atlantic Coast, Big East, American Athletic and Pacific12 conferences.

The USBWA will conduct a short business meeting following the luncheon.