

## We'll tackle the usual issues, as well as the unexpected

Based on loose history compiled through random experiences, USBWA presidents seem far more prone to run-on sentences than running on platforms.

There are reasons for this other than white space in *The Tipoff*. The basic reason is simple: Basketball writers' issues evolve, from the occasional flashpoint ("wireless is down," blurted profanely with a hint of panic) to the apparent solution ("wireless is \$20 per site, with wires").

Judging from anecdotal accounts, the wireless worked sufficiently during the NCAA Tournament except for those less-than-blissful moments in the Washington NBA arena named for some communications company (fill in blank).

The courtside wires outlasted the Final Four confetti after the rousing Connecticut-Butler rim-bender. Only a few journalists complained about the cost. As one amateur travel agent pointed out, \$20 was half the price charged for parking one night in a certain hotel lot near Houston's NFL stadium (or, as we should say in deference to a consistent architectural timeline, near the Astrodome).

Report any different 'net experience to the proper USBWA authorities, who'll remain vigilant on the perennial matter of reliable Internet and copy transmission.

Technical issues linger or change. During the annual Monday breakfast this April, a speaker alluded to Dallas columnist Blackie Sherrod's summation of modern sportswriting. In the version first heard at the 1985 World Series, he said: "We used to go to these things and look for a good story, but now we go and look for a three-prong outlet." Three-prongers no longer top the tech list, but something invariably does.

On its best days, the USBWA stands for more than Ethernet at every seat. During the past two years, presi-

dents Steve Carp of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and Bryan Burwell of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* promoted the vital issues of the organization's size and makeup.

Steve's natural energy advanced his goal of expanding the membership. The USBWA grew 50 percent in one year through the efforts of Steve, executive director Joe Mitch and others. Because of that growth, the USBWA could use the resources of more than 900 members to expand some outreach programs and renew others, including the journalism scholarship.

Bryan's self-deprecating attention to dinosaur demographics drove his campaign to make the USBWA younger and more diverse. His essential point: The writers association needs fresh eyes and legs in a media environment fraught with convulsive change, and younger journalists need a functioning funnel that puts their concerns in front of logical problem-solvers.

During the past two years, the USBWA recognized outstanding reporters under 30 with the Rising Star Award and made a conscious effort to include younger members on the board. The push to increase membership will continue, with an emphasis on younger journalists and an acknowledgement of emerging alternative media.

There are things we can do better. Because the USBWA selects several award winners, the deliberative process sometimes could use more deliberation (or at least

contemplation) before the final votes in hopes of making the absolute best choices. This refinement involves researching the options, talking and listening, especially when a red flag is thrown in front of a freight train.

Kirk Wessler of the *Peoria Journal-Star*, now the second vice president, amassed an exhaustive list of Most Courageous Award candidates complete with summaries and links to published stories. His research made the selectors' work easier and more precise. This model might improve the picks in other categories, even those with celebrity candidates and higher profiles.

It seems inevitable that the USBWA will encounter variations of traditional problems, such as credentialing for new media and freelancers. The advocacy role will expand although particular media outlets will contract. That's the nature of change.

At the core, however, some things don't really change. Basketball writers need to see the games they cover and have access to the people they're covering. That's the perpetual platform.

### Lenox Rawlings Winston-Salem Journal President



## More strides are being made on new media, women's fronts

It has been a busy first year working on new media initiatives with the USBWA, and we've made some good progress working with the NCAA on credentialing issues and reaching out to college basketball bloggers.

The NCAA's revised credential policies have enabled blogs like Rush The Court and Basketball Prospectus to get credentials for the NCAA tournament. On the women's side, a number of online ventures, especially Hoopfeed.com, are quickly becoming go-to sources for news with the dearth of newspaper coverage.

Our dialogue with the NCAA will continue as it reviews its procedures, and I've heard from a number of bloggers from around the country who want to let us know who they are. Getting worthy blogs and sites on our radar is still a vitally important component of identifying new sources of information about college basketball outside of the traditional outlets. If you know of any of these sites, or if you are running one yourself, please let me know.

If there are issues you'd like for me to bring up with

the NCAA that are media-related, let me know.

In my conversations with these bloggers, I've explained the NCAA criteria and given them suggestions on working their local sports information directors. Developing good relationships in this way will go a long way toward getting credentials and establishing these new ventures as important components of the college basketball media scene.

Something else I'd like to tackle in the next year is to use our Facebook accounts to provide resource information to USBWA members about the sports media industry. If you've seen the CoSIDA website ([www.cosida.com](http://www.cosida.com)) and its Twitter feed (@CoSIDANews), they both con-

### Wendy Parker Freelance New Media Liasion



tain good professional development material pertaining to digital technology, issues in sports media and sports business. Their profession has been in as much upheaval as the news business, and from time to time I'll be posting items such as this on our social media outlets. I promise not to deluge you.

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# Tisdale Foundation added to list of charitable causes

The USBWA's mission to serve the interests of members and sports-writers covering college basketball also includes making annual contributions to charities to support those in need.

The association's charitable support grew by one with the addition of the Wayman Tisdale Foundation to benefit low-income individuals needing prosthetic devices and to help fund youth basketball programs in the state of Oklahoma.

The foundation is named after former Oklahoma great and NBA star Wayman Tisdale, who was fitted with a prosthesis following amputation of a leg before he died of cancer in 2009. The USBWA named its freshman of the year award this season after Tisdale.

The USBWA's other charitable cause is the National Kidney Foundation in support of Oscar Robertson, who donated a kidney several years ago to his daughter Tia, who was suffering from kidney disease at the time. The USBWA's player of the year trophy is named after "The Big O."

The USBWA makes monetary contributions to both the Tisdale and Kidney foundations.

Presentations of the Robertson Trophy and the Tisdale Award were made in front of huge – and separate -- crowds this season.

The Robertson Trophy was presented at the USBWA's annual college basketball awards breakfast before an audience of more than 400 people during this year's Final Four in Houston. BYU's Jimmer Fredette was awarded the trophy as the nation's most outstanding player.

Other awards presented at the breakfast were Mike Brey of Notre Dame with the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award and Texas coach Rick Barnes with the USBWA's "Good Guy Award," recognizing coaches who are cooperative with the news media.

The USBWA recognized Houston's Phi Slama Jama teams from the 1980s and offered former Cougars player Reid Gettys the opportunity to speak in support of former coach Guy Lewis for induction into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Rice sophomore forward Arsalan Kazemi received the USBWA's Most Courageous Award at the breakfast. Kazemi was recognized for having to deal with prejudice here in the U. S. as the first Iranian-born athlete to play Division I basketball.

Presentation of the Tisdale Freshman of the

Joe Mitch  
USBWA  
Executive Director



Year Award was before another crowd in excess of 400 people at a dinner in Oklahoma City to honor the memory of Tisdale. Ohio State's Jared Sullinger was a fitting recipient of the inaugural award as the nation's most outstanding freshman, displaying an infectious smile and a personality that many said reminded them of Tisdale.

ESPN analyst Dick Vitale was also honored at the dinner with the Humanitarian Award for his work to raise money for children with cancer.

**USBWA MOURNS THE PASSING OF FORMER PRESIDENT AND HALL OF FAME BILL BRILL.** Hundreds, including many USBWA members and several ACC basketball coaches such as Duke's Mike Krzyzewski, paid tribute to Brill at a Celebration of his Life in Raleigh-Durham. Brill died of liver and esophageal cancer on April 9 at the age of 79.

Brill was the first president I worked with when I began my association with the USBWA in 1980 as *The Tipoff* editor.

I was an assistant commissioner of the Metro Conference at the time, and Brill was sports columnist for the *Roanoke Times & World News*.

I had planned to fly on a charter to nearby Blacksburg for a Metro game between Virginia Tech and Memphis State one day in January, and Brill said he would meet me at the airport.

A heavy snowstorm caused the charter to be delayed in arriving, and without the luxury of cell phones back then, there was no way to communicate to Brill when the charter might arrive.

Eventually, some six hours late, the plane did arrive, and Brill was there to greet me. He had waited the entire time for me at the airport.

Brill was loyal to his friends and was especially dedicated to the USBWA. He always said after his induction into the USBWA Hall of Fame in 1990 that "I am damn proud to be in the Hall of Fame." He was the first of three living sports writers to be inducted.

Brill was a legend in the association and in the ACC.

He will be missed.



Mitch and Brill inside Duke's Bill Brill Media Room.



# Fortunately, Tara Sullivan's Masters problems are today a rarity

After more than 20 years in this business, I thought I was a wily veteran. Turns out, I'm a naïve greenhorn.

I thought the whole notion of women in the locker room, of women covering men's sports, was passé. Then I read that a good friend, Tara Sullivan of the Bergen Record, was denied access at the Masters.

That it happened at Augusta National didn't stun me. If the old boys' network had a clubhouse, it would sit alongside those manicured lawns, with brandy snifters at the ready and 1957 on speed dial.

No, what stunned me was the reaction. Of ordinary people who questioned why Sullivan was trying to get into a locker room; who tried to twist her appropriate request for equal access into some sort of unequal rights issue by (wrongly) arguing that men aren't allowed in the women's locker room; and who proved that Neanderthals are neither gender specific (the person who blocked Sullivan was a woman) nor extinct.

They walk among us.

I sent out a Twitter shout out to Sullivan, offering both my support of her as a colleague and my amazement at her class in handling the situation. Within minutes, a few folks crawled out of their caves long enough to let me know neither Sullivan nor I belonged in locker rooms and for that matter, we really had no business covering sports. No, they weren't that polite.

Naturally amid the debate surrounding Sullivan's situation, the whole brouhaha between Ines Sainz and the Jets resurfaced. To me the two incidents couldn't be any more different and are emblematic of the real problem facing women reporters today.

I'd argue that most athletes, coaches and reporters don't even notice a woman in the locker room anymore.

## Parker

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Many of our members regularly blog, use Facebook and Twitter and are literate with the digital world, but the learning curve never ends. If there's something I can help you find or help you do, please contact me. If there's something you're doing with digital tools that you think might help your fellow members, pass that along. I'm always learning new skills and concepts that are useful in the work that I do and want to reach out and share ideas.

At the Women's Final Four in Indianapolis, we were glad to once again have ESPN as the sponsor of our awards breakfast. Thanks go out to Rachel Margolis, Mike Soltys and Josh Krulewitz for their continued support. Carol Stiff, ESPN's vice president and top executive in charge of its coverage of the women's tournament, was on hand and is this year's recipient of the Mel Greenberg Media Award given by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association and named after our own USBWA Hall of Famer. NCAA women's basketball committee chairwoman Marilyn McNeil also offered remarks on the state of the women's tournament.

We were delighted to meet the USBWA's women's Most Courageous Award winner, Memphis guard Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir. Her parents, Alooah and Tariq, and the entire Memphis coaching staff joined us at the Westin Hotel. Many thanks to head coach Melissa McFerrin for introducing us to her very special point player.

I look forward to working with Joe Mitch, new president Lenox Rawlings and the rest of the USBWA board, and with all of you in the coming year. Please contact me at wendygparkergmail.com or follow me on Twitter @wparker. The USBWA Twitter handle is @usbwa.

The worst I seem to endure is that every now and again, an SID will scream, "Woman in the locker room" to the athletes inside.

For 10 seconds, I feel like an incoming hand grenade, but I move on.

That, frankly, is the good news. What happened at the Masters is news because it happens so rarely any more. The sports world is ahead of the curve here.

The bad news is the general population still is mystified about what we do for a living, how we do it and why we need to be in the locker room. (And need, not want, is the right word. I vividly remember standing in a locker room as big as my closet waiting for Jevon Kearsse to turn around and talk. I was directly behind him as he put on his deodorant – aerosol deodorant – and thought there had to be a more dignified way to make a living.)

The reason? For every Sullivan, there's an Ines Sainz.

Did Sainz deserve to be in the Jets' locker room? Absolutely. Were the Jets wrong to mistreat her? Of course.

Should a reporter be photographed atop the shoulders of the athletes he or she covers or wearing skin tight jeans and a low-cut top while at work?

I'm gonna go with no on that one.

I am as wary as the next person of attacking the victim, of saying that somehow a person "asked" to be mistreated based on her behavior.

She didn't deserve what happened to her, but Sainz blurs the lines for a John Q. Public that isn't sure what we're doing in a locker room in the first place.

We expect lawyers to dress and behave in a dignified manner. We expect corporate execs to look and act ap-

## Dana O'Neil ESPN.com Third Vice President



propriately, so why not sports reporters?

So ours is more playground than frontlines, but we're still professionals. It's important that we act like it; that we *all* act like it.

Heaven knows the media rooms of this country are filled with the sartorially challenged. For all the stained golf shirts, rumpled khakis and bad blazers I've witnessed among my male colleagues, I've never seen any of them prancing around in a wifebeater tank top and cutoffs.

And the fact is, if they did, it still wouldn't get as much notice as a woman. Some guys might snicker behind their notebooks, but that's about it.

We stick out in a locker room. We stick out in our profession. We have to work harder to fit in and we can't afford as many mistakes. We have Augusta-sanctioned Neanderthals blocking our way, so we have to prove even more that we belong.

Yes, that stinks, but guess what? That's reality and it's up to us to handle it with decorum and dignity, to silence the naysayers and critics by doing our jobs and doing them well.

Access to the locker room is a right, and Tara Sullivan had every right to follow her peers and do her job.

But it's also a privilege, a privilege reserved for professionals who are there to work.

So my advice is simple: When you walk into a locker room, remember your coaching clichés and act like you've been there before.

Dana O'Neil is a national college basketball writer for ESPN.com.

## Armstrong wins Rising Star Award

Kevin Armstrong of the *New York Daily News* has been named the second winner of the USBWA's Rising Star Award, given to a member of the organization who is under 30 and has shown exceptional journalistic skills.

Armstrong, 27, became a staff writer for the *Daily News* in April 2010 and continues to contribute to SI.com. He also has written about college basketball for the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times* and *Street and Smith's*.

His most rewarding feature, on talent evaluator Tom Konchalski, won first place for magazine length features in the USBWA's most recent best-writing contest. He also took third place for a profile on Jay Wright in 2009.

Armstrong has covered recruiting extensively. His story on the relationship between Kansas guard Josh Selby and Carmelo Anthony's financial advisor, Bay Frazier, led to Selby's nine-game suspension this season. Armstrong has been a USBWA member since he covered Boston College's NCAA tournament runs for the school paper, *The Heights*, from 2004-06.

Dan Wolken, a national sports columnist for the *Daily*, won the inaugural Rising Star Award in 2010.

## Best Writing Contest deadline approaches

The deadline for submitting stories and columns published during the 2010-11 college 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, with \$150 given for first place, \$125 for second, \$100 for third, \$75 for fourth and \$50 for fifth. Winners will be announced in the *The Tipoff* and posted on the USBWA Web site.

Send all entries to: Writing Contest, 1818 Chouteau Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63103, (314) 444-4325. Entries also can be sent by e-mail to mitch@mvc.org

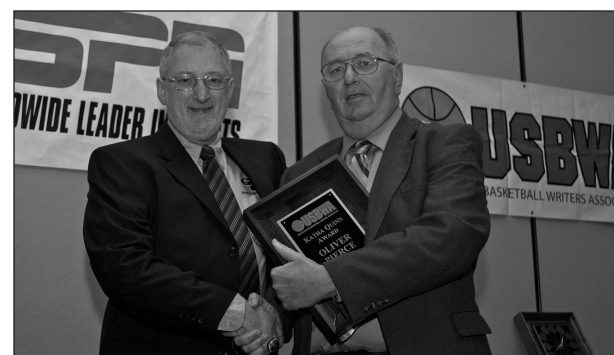
For entries submitted by mail, print the name of the category, author of the story, publication in which the article appeared and date of the publication on a 3x5 card and staple it to the article.



# Breakfast(s) with the U.S. Basketball Writers Association



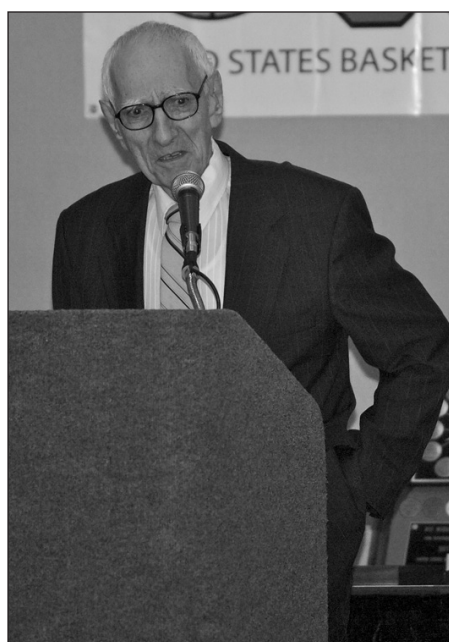
*The Friday morning breakfast featured appearances by members of Houston's Phi Slama Jama, Henry Iba Award winner Mike Brey and Oscar Robertson Award winner Jimmer Fredette.*



*Katha Quinn winner Oliver Pierce and Jim O'Connell.*



*New president Lenox Rawlings and Bryan Burwell.*



*The speeches given by USBWA's Hall of Fame inductees is an annual highlight: Coaching legend Eddie Sutton (representing the late Bill Connors), Mickey Furfari and Art Spander.*