

Bringing an uncomplicated agenda, open to suggestions

I'm honored to be your new president of the USBWA. Hopefully my term does not end in Nixonian fashion, jumping on a helicopter in resignation to avoid impeachment. Mostly because I don't know where I'd find a helicopter.

I do have big shoes (or perhaps tall heels) to fill. Dana O'Neil was a dedicated, competent, energetic USBWA president who got things done – none greater than turning the annual Final Four awards breakfast into an awards luncheon. The spike in attendance validated the genius that went into giving sports writers more hours of sleep on the day of the national title game. Next year in Houston, we expect to see even more of you.

My agenda, if I have one, is uncomplicated: to serve the needs of our membership in whatever manner possible. If you have valid complaints, genuine concerns, bright ideas or thoughtful suggestions, I'm happy to hear them. Best email address for me is pfeaglebeak@aol.com. Fire away. I do see a couple of items to address:

- Timing of our coach and player awards. As many of you know, the release of our 2015 Hank Iba Coach of the Year award was less than ideal – Virginia's Tony Bennett was honored two days after the Cavaliers were upset in the NCAA Tournament round of 32. This led to considerable backlash from one particular fan base that

Pat Forde Yahoo! Sports President



believed its coach was more deserving, and a fair amount of external media criticism of our organization. We have begun discussions about changing the release date of our award winners so that the announcements more closely coincide with the end of the voting period. Delaying the release two weeks does not seem to help anyone.

- Creation of a coaching award in honor of the late Dean Smith. This was suggested in Indianapolis by USBWA member and past president John Feinstein, and it was met with widespread enthusiasm. We are at work on a criteria for the award, which would emphasize impact beyond the court, since Dean was as beloved in that area as for his coaching genius. The surprise is that no other organization thought of this first.

- Continued efforts to engage and energize the younger generation of basketball writers. We've made some progress in that area, but there is more work to do. The profession is changing rapidly and it would be a shame if young media members – starting in college – didn't feel an identification with our association, or find a use for it. There are a ton of talented people in the early stages of their careers who could benefit from a welcoming, inclusive USBWA that can facilitate their career progress. We can help them, and they certainly can help us.

- Continuing dialog with the NCAA to make working conditions at the NCAA Tournament the best they can be. Most of the folks in Indy will at least listen to us. Let me know what messages you want sent their way.

My final pertinent thought is to encourage all of you to embrace covering college basketball with a healthy mix of enthusiasm and cynicism. It's a great game, but it's far from perfect. Efforts to clean it up on and off the court have had mixed results. We should appreciate and publicize what's right in the game, but also cover what's wrong in a full, fair and accurate manner.

Here's to an enjoyable summer as we recharge and get ready for next season. As of this writing, it's a mere 333 days until Selection Sunday 2016.

Hill presentation highlights Women's Final Four event

For the third straight year, the USBWA Women's Awards news conference was held in the venue at the site of the Women's Final Four several hours in advance of the NCAA national semifinals. And this time, the well-attended event that included friends and families of the recipients was extra special.

Because Connecticut's Breanna Stewart was preparing for the Huskies' contest with Maryland, the repeat USBWA Anne Meyers Drysdale national women's player of the year was represented by senior associate athletic director Deb Corum.

Courtney Banghart became the first Ivy League individual to win coach of the year after her Tigers became the first Ivy men's or women's team to go 30-0 during the season and the second of the Ancient Eight women to win an opening-round NCAA game.

Sue Donohoe, who spent many years running the women's tournament as the NCAA vice president of Division I women's basketball, was on the spotlight side in Tampa as she became the first winner of the Mary Jo Haverbeck Award, the equivalent of the Katha Quinn Award on the men's side.

Mel Greenberg Women's Representative



"Mary Jo started a resource website devoted to women's basketball, its news and history, called 'Cup of Coffee,'" Donohoe said. "I spent my mornings with what I would call a 'cup of (Mary) Jo.'"

Ohio State's Kelsey Mitchell, who led Division I in scoring, was named the USBWA freshman of the year.

The highlight of highlights came when Division III Mount St. Joseph's coach Dan Benjamin talked about 19-year-old Lauren Hill, who received the Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award in November at her first game. Hill was suffering from pediatric brain cancer.

The USBWA took the unprecedented move of giv-

ing Hill the award at the beginning of the season, and Summitt made a special trip to Cincinnati to help present the honor in the sold out 10,000-seat Cintas Center on Xavier's campus.

According to her original prognosis, she was unlikely to live past mid-December. Hill, in the intervening months, defied the prognosis and led the charge to raise over a \$1 million to fight the disease.

Summitt's son, Tyler, who just completed his first year as head coach of Louisiana Tech, appeared at the news conference to help Benjamin make the presentation.

"It takes a lot for Pat Summitt to get inspired. Usually she's the one who is the inspiration," Tyler Summitt said. "When she came back and we talked, she said, 'Man, I love Lauren. She's a fighter. I love that kid.'"

Benjamin noted, "I'd much rather she be here than me. Here's a 19-year old girl teaching me about life."

He talked about how while she was in the hospital, Hill was still battling the disease. Sadly, Hill's fight ended with her death five days later, but not before inspiring a nation to pick up the torch and make good on her legacy.

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Greater diversity a goal for USBWA

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



One of the goals for the USBWA in 2015-16 is to identify African-American sportswriters who cover college basketball and to encourage them to not only join the organization but to be active in it as well.

That goal is shared by veteran sportswriter William Rhoden, a prominent columnist for the *New York Times*, who eulogized the late Bryan Burwell during induction ceremonies for Burwell in the USBWA Hall of Fame at the recent Final Four in Indianapolis.

"Bryan's spirit lives on," said Rhoden, who is in his 33rd year in the sports journalism profession. "He wanted a black presence in the business and wanted young black writers to become informed."

Burwell was a sports columnist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* when he passed away last December after a short battle with cancer. He was president of the USBWA in 2010-11, only the second African-American in the USBWA's 60-year history, and is the first black member of the association's Hall of Fame.

Burwell was an advocate for more diversity in the USBWA. The USBWA has few black members in a membership of over 900.

"Bryan was courageous," Rhoden said. "He had the heart of a lion. He was always on the right side of issues. His spirit will never die. This award is forever."

USBWA AWARDS CEREMONY. Some 150 people attended the USBWA's awards luncheon in Indianapolis, the most ever in the 30-plus years the USBWA has been honoring members and others associated with college basketball at the Final Four.

In addition to Burwell, Mark Bradley of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* was also inducted into the USBWA Hall of Fame. "This is the highlight of my career," said Bradley in his acceptance speech.

The USBWA also honored former NCAA vice president Tom Jernstedt with the Katha Quinn Award

for service to the media and college basketball; sports photographer Rich Clarkson with a Lifetime Achievement Award for 60 years covering the Final Four; and *Memphis Commercial Appeal* sportswriter Michael Cohen with the Rising Star Award for journalistic excellence by members under 30 years of age.

An emotional part of the program came when Michigan freshman Austin Hatch was introduced by his coach, John Beilein, to a standing ovation and presented with the USBWA's Most Courageous Award. Hatch survived two plane crashes that killed both of his parents, sister, brother and stepmother.

He suffered a traumatic brain injury and spent two months in a coma and many more in intensive rehab.

"Seeing what he has gone through," Beilein said, "I don't think there's any goal he can't surpass."

HONORING DANA. ESPN.com columnist Dana O'Neil was presented with the Ray Marquette Award for her leadership as president of the USBWA this past year.

During her presidency, Dana sought greater access and improved working conditions for writers covering college basketball. She is the second woman to serve as president of the USBWA.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NCAA. The USBWA is partnering with the NCAA to conduct a media survey for all rounds of the NCAA tournament. USBWA webmaster Ted Gangi, who handles a similar survey of the college football playoffs for the Football Writers Association, is overseeing the program for the USBWA and the NCAA.

Forde elected USBWA president

Pat Forde of Yahoo! Sports was elected president of the U. S. Basketball Writers Association at the USBWA's annual business meeting during this year's NCAA Men's Final Four in Indianapolis.

Forde succeeds Dana O'Neil, ESPN.com, as president of the USBWA.

Elected to the board for three-year terms were Matt Norlander, CBSSports.com, as District I representative for Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut, and Seth Davis, Sports Illustrated/CBS, and Jeff Goodman, ESPN, as at-large representatives.

Other officers elected were Ed Graney, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, first vice president; Vahe Gregorian, *Kansas City Star*, second vice president; and David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*, third vice president.

Returning to the board as district reps, with their year on the board in parentheses, are Nicole Auerbach, *USA Today* (second); Laura Keeley, *Raleigh News & Observer* (second); Kevin Brockway, *Gainesville Sun* (third); Tom Noie, *South Bend Tribune* (second); John Bohnenkamp, *Burlington Hawk Eye* (third); Randy Rosetta, *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (third); Robert Gagliardi, *Wyoming Tribune Eagle* (third); and Bruce Pascoe, *Arizona Daily Star* (third).

Other board members include liaisons Mel Greenberg, women's basketball; Brian Morrison, ACC, sports information directors; and Chris DiSano, College Chalktalk, new media.

Joe Mitch serves as executive director. John Akers is Tipoff editor and Ted Gangi is the USBWA webmaster.

Kaminsky, Okafor, Bennett win USBWA honors

The U.S. Basketball Writers Association named Frank Kaminsky, Tony Bennett and Jahlil Okafor the winners of its three major awards.

Kaminsky is the winner of the Oscar Robertson Trophy, annually presented to the national player of the year.

Bennett is the recipient of the Henry Iba Award, given to the national coach of the year.

Okafor won the Wayman Tisdale Award, given to the nation's top freshman.

Head coach Bo Ryan and the entire Wisconsin team joined Kaminsky for the announcement. "To have Frank Kaminsky receive this (award) as the player of the year speaks volumes to what he has done to elevate our program and his teammates," Ryan said. He's one of a kind, I can tell you that."

Added Kaminsky: "This is obviously a great award, and I am honored to receive it. I have to thank my family, which really helped me grow as a person and grow as a player. I'm just so honored to receive this award."

Kaminsky, the consensus Big Ten player of the year, led the Badgers to the national championship game. He led the 36.4 Badgers in scoring (18.8), rebounding (8.2), assists (2.6), blocks (1.5), field-goal percentage (54.7) and 3-point percentage (41.6).

Bennett led Virginia to a 30-4 record, which tied the school record for wins in a season set last season and in 1982-83. For the second straight season, Virginia won the Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season title. Bennett's career mark at Virginia is a stellar 136-64 (.680 winning percentage).

Okafor, the ACC player of the year, led the Blue



Frank Kaminsky



Jahlil Okafor



Tony Bennett

Devils and ranked among the top five in the ACC in scoring (17.7), rebounds (9.0) and field goal percentage (.669). The 6-11 Okafor became the first freshman to lead Duke in all three categories.

The USBWA men's All-America team features a true five-man lineup of first-teamers, led by three players who led their teams to the Final Four: Kaminsky, Okafor and Kentucky junior forward Willie Cauley-Stein. The team also includes guards Jerian Grant, a senior from Notre Dame, and Ohio State freshman D'Angelo Russell.

Based on regular-season performance, the entire USBWA membership of nearly 1,000 selects the nation's top five players on each of two teams regardless of position.

Overall, the Atlantic Coast Conference leads all selections with three, including Virginia's Malcolm Brogdon, who was named to the second team. The Big Ten and SEC each boast two All-America selections. Joining Brogdon on that second team are Bobby Portis of Arkansas, Seth Tuttle of Northern Iowa, Kyle

Wiltjer of Gonzaga and Delon Wright of Utah.

Cauley-Stein, a 7-0 junior, contributed to Kentucky's potent and balanced attack with 9.3 points per game to go with 6.4 rebounds. He was a first-team all-SEC selection who led the Wildcats to the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Grant, a 6-5 senior, led the Fighting Irish with 16.8 points per game and 6.6 assists while shooting 48.8 percent from the field. Grant was a first-team all-ACC selection and led the conference in assists and assist-to-turnover ratio.

Russell, a 6-5 freshman, was the Big Ten freshman of the year and an all-Big Ten first-team selection. He was the leading freshman scorer in the country and second-leading scorer in the Big Ten (19.3) and also led the Buckeyes with 5.6 rebounds per game and was second on the team with 5.1 assists per game.

Each of the awards were formally presented on April 14 at the Devon Energy College Basketball Awards Gala in Oklahoma City.

USBWA All-America Teams

First Team

Willie Cauley-Stein, Kentucky, 7-0, Jr.
Jerian Grant, Notre Dame, 6-5, Sr.
Frank Kaminsky, Wisconsin, 7-0, Sr.
Jahlil Okafor, Duke, 6-11, Fr.
D'Angelo Russell, Ohio State, 6-5, Fr.

Second Team

Malcolm Brogdon, Virginia, 6-5, Jr.
Bobby Portis, Arkansas, 6-11, Soph.
Seth Tuttle, Northern Iowa, 6-8, Sr.
Kyle Wiltjer, Gonzaga, 6-10, Jr.
Delon Wright, Utah, 6-5, Sr.

Best Writing contest deadline approaches

The deadline for submitting stories and columns that were published during the 2014-15 college basketball season for the USBWA's Best Writing Contest is June 17. The contest is sponsored by the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

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 by email to usbwaofficers@gmail.com.

Entries must include the name of the category, the author of the story, the publication in which the article appeared and the date of the publication.

Bob Ryan wins APSE's Red Smith Award

Bob Ryan, a member of the USBWA Hall of Fame, was named the winner of the Red Smith Award, chosen by members of APSE and presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to sports journalism. Ryan, who spent all 44 years of his career at the *Boston Globe*, will receive his award in San Diego in June.

Bud Withers, another member of the USBWA Hall of Fame, has retired after 45 years as a sports writer. Withers worked for three Northwest newspapers, including the *Seattle Times* since 1999. Withers, who covered 20 Final Fours, was named the sportswriter of the year in Washington and Oregon six times by NSSA.

Bob Baptist has retired from his sports writing career at the *Columbus Dispatch*. Baptist has been the Ohio State men's basketball beat writer since 1997.

USBWA member Jesse Newell of the *Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal* took one first place finish, shared another first-place finish and placed second in a third category of the APSE writing contest.

Newell finished first in beat writing, tied for first in feature writing and placed second in explanatory writing in the 30,000-75,000 circulation category.

USBWA members Mike Sielski of the *Philadelphia*

Inquirer, Brian Davis of the *Austin American-Statesman* and Matt Stephens of the *Fort Collins Coloradoan* also claimed first-place finishes.

Sielski took first place in column writing in the over-175,000 category. Davis took first place in beat writing for 75,000-175,000. Stephens took first in breaking news for under 30,000.

Multiple placewinners included James Crepea of the *Montgomery Advertiser*, who finished third in breaking news and third in features in under 30,000, and John Bohnenkamp of the *Burlington Hawk Eye*, fifth in column writing and 10th in beat writing.

Kelly Lydell of the *Coloradoan* placed fourth in breaking news in under 30,000.

Other members who placed in beat writing included: Jason King of Bleacher Report, third in over 175,000; Mark Ziegler of UT-San Diego, fifth in over 175,000; Jeff Greer of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, tied for sixth in 75,000-175,000; and Seth Soffian of the *Fort Myers News Press*, 30,000-75,000.

Tom Noie of the *South Bend Tribune* placed third in feature writing in the 30,000-75,000 category. David Teel of the *Newport News Daily Press* placed ninth.

Steve Berkowitz of *USA Today* placed ninth, along with Erik Brady, in over-175,000 explanatory writing.

Lodge Notes

A weekend with the U.S. Basketball Writers Association

Men's Photos by Lida DeGroot. Women's Photo by William Ewart.



Player of the year Frank Kaminsky (left) and teammates surround Oscar Robertson.



Writing seminar panelists Pat Forde, Dana O'Neil, Nicole Auerbach and Jim O'Connell.



Rising Star winner Michael Cohen (right); Katha Quinn winner Tom Jernstedt (second photo, left); special honoree Rich Clarkson (third photo, left); Most Courageous winner Austin Hatch.



Victoria and Dawn Burwell presented the late Bryan Burwell's entry into the Hall of Fame.



Longtime Atlanta Journal Constitution columnist Mark Bradley entered the Hall of Fame.



President Pat Forde, with outgoing President Dana O'Neil.



Dan Benjamin; Tyler Summitt; Courtney Banghart; Sue Donohoe; Deb Corum; Anne Meyers Drysdale; Mel Greenberg.