

Moving forward, while remaining alert for icebergs

This being an election year, let my first act as your new president of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association be to make some promises, a few which might be achievable and some whose long-term prospects run along the lines of Donald Trump being endorsed by Paul Krugman.

Example: I promise the next 12 months will be as dramatic and thrilling as a 3-pointer from Kris Jenkins to win the NCAA championship.

If you're scoring at home, that's one of the Trump long shots.

I can, however, assure you of this: I am beyond honored to assume the position and will do everything in my power not to pull a Jordan Spieth on No. 12 at the Masters.

One of my first tweets upon inheriting the gavel from the skilled and sagacious Pat Forde at the Final Four in Houston was to pledge that I would steer the organization at less than 20 knots so as to see all icebergs in time.

That, and have T-shirts made reading: Forgive your enemies, but never forget seating and wireless.

I feel a little like Gene Bartow following John Wooden, except for the part about if things don't work out, I never taught drivers' ed or badminton and don't have many other skills to fall back on.

Forde Minutes? I just hope to deliver five good ones before we all gather in Arizona.

I suppose that's my way of informing First Vice-President Vahe Gregorian to be ready for a promotion at any minute, and this includes when the Royals are tied in the ninth of a playoff game come October. Deadline be damned, Vahe.

More than anything, what I learned from Pat and

Ed Graney
Las Vegas Review-Journal
President



before him the supremely talented Dana O'Neil and before her a lengthy list of other accomplished giants in our business who also assumed the president's role is that nothing is more important than serving the needs of membership.

I will do that to the absolute best of my ability.

While taking part in many of our annual Saturday meetings at the Final Four with members of the selection committee — including this year in Houston — I have concluded over time that the NCAA is willing to work with us and address many of our concerns.

David Worlock is our friend and I promise to take as much advantage of that relationship as he will allow in continuing to improve those areas most significant to all of us doing our jobs.

Many other topics remain of high importance, including naming and honoring the second recipient of the Dean Smith Award, the brainchild of USBWA member and past president John Feinstein; and continuing to engage more and more young basketball writers to become involved with the organization.

I'm also excited about an idea brought forth by

past president and current *Basketball Times* publisher John Akers regarding the formation of ad hoc committees that would address specific issues.

The committees, which would not be bound by terms limits, would be comprised of members throughout the USBWA and cover such topics as increasing access to players and coaches for beat writers, creating greater diversity within the organization, placing a member inside the room during the NCAA selection process, improving media seating during both the regular

season and the NCAA tournament and social media issues.

If you have any desire to serve on such a committee or can think of other issues that should be addressed in such a manner, please reach out.

This goes for any idea or complaint or suggestion you might have.

My email is egraney@reviewjournal.com.

Use it. Often. Tell me what you think, what you want, what you believe our greatest needs are at this time. Tell me which conference offices to pester until such needs are met.

Please reach out and never forget to wear your best and most impressive recruiting hat when talking to those who haven't yet been blessed with the benefits of USBWA membership. Sell the heck out of us to anyone and everyone.

We need to grow and prosper and make sure our voices continue to be heard.

In the meantime, I'll do my best not to hit an iceberg.

That's a promise.

USBWA seeking volunteers to tackle everyday issues

By **JOHN AKERS**

College basketball writers have faced a number of obstacles in recent years that have made it more difficult to do their jobs. There are not only too many issues and too little time for the USBWA to take on all of them, but term limits on district reps and officers make it difficult to create the kind of long-term strategies that are sometimes necessary to find proper solutions.

The USBWA is determined to strengthen its ability to improve working conditions for our members and its ability to truly serve its membership by creating ad hoc committees comprised of members from throughout the USBWA's membership that address specific issues and are not bound by term limits.

The board and individual members will determine the topics covered by these committees, but they might include:

- Increasing access to players and coaches for beat writers.
- Creating greater diversity within the organization.

- Placing a member inside the room with the NCAA's tournament committee during the selection process.

- Improving media seating during both the regular season and the NCAA tournament.

- Social-media issues.

Anyone interested in joining a committee – or to suggest a committee that might be formed – should reach out to John Akers at johna19081@gmail.com by June 1.

The primary function of each committee will be to identify and appraise an issue or problem and to create a strategy to deal with it. Any action taken by a committee must be approved by the USBWA board.

The ad hoc committees will be loosely defined but of a workable size (three to eight members) and freestanding, lasting as long as necessary. They will be comprised of persons who not only are willing, but are eager to use the USBWA to improve their own working situations. At least one member of the USBWA board will be on each committee and act as that group's spokesperson to the board. Each group will strive

for diversity of age, geography, ethnicity, gender and affiliation (print/online), but the over-riding criteria will be a person's desire to be on that committee.

A common-sense approach should be taken in the formation of each committee. For example, a committee on diversity ought to have a particularly diverse membership. A committee on creating more access for beat writers should include beat writers who face access challenges as well as sympathetic SIDs who can help the committee understand all sides of that issue.

Each USBWA member will be limited to one committee.

The length of one's participation on a committee will be flexible, depending on the interest in that committee.

There will be no expectation of participation on committee conference calls, etc., by the executive director, president or any board member other than that committee's spokesperson, though they are certainly welcome to participate, and the board will be updated on the direction being taken by each committee.

The United States Basketball Writers Association
803 Wildview Lane; Manchester, Mo.
63021. Visit us at: www.usbwa.com
314-795-6821; Fax: 314-444-4333

PRESIDENT – Ed Graney, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; C: 702-524-3553;

egraney@reviewjournal.com

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT – Vahe Gregorian, *Kansas City Star*, C: 816-799-6041;

vgregorian@kstar.com

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT – Dave Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*; O: 757-247-4636; C: 757-897-2049; dteel@dailynews.com.

THIRD VICE PRESIDENT – Mike Waters, *Syracuse Post-Standard*; C: 315-416-6031; mwaters@syracuse.com

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Joe Mitch, H: 636-227-9113; C: 314-795-6821; mitch@usbwa.com

BOARD MEMBERS

DISTRICT I – Matt Norlander, *CBSSports.com*, C: 203-308-7486; matt.norlander@gmail.com.

DISTRICT II – Joe Juliano, *Philadelphia Inquirer*; C: 215-932-7413; jjuliano@phillynews.com

DISTRICT III – Laura Keeley, *Raleigh News & Observer*; C: 724-816-7401; lkeeley@newsobserver.com

DISTRICT IV – Jeff Greer, *Louisville Courier-Journal*; C: 502-593-9435; j.allen.greer@gmail.com

DISTRICT V – Tom Noie, *South Bend Tribune*; O: 574-235-6153; C: 574-229-1234; tnoie@sbtinfo.com

DISTRICT VI – Jenni Carlson, *The Oklahoman*; O: 405-475-4125; C: 405-630-4100; jcarlson@oklahoman.com

DISTRICT VII – Carlos Mendez, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*; C: 817-917-2282; cmendez@star-telegram.com

DISTRICT VIII – Geoff Grammer, *Albuquerque Journal*; C: 505-206-0138; ggrammer@abqjournal.com

DISTRICT IX – Mark Zeigler, *San Diego Union-Tribune*; C: 619-246-3881; markzeigler@msn.com

WOMEN – Mel Greenberg; C: 215-815-5943; poll@att.net

AT-LARGE – Seth Davis, *Sports Illustrated*; C: 917-225-5788; seth_davis@simail.com.

AT-LARGE – Jeff Goodman, *ESPN*; C: 508-397-8936; goodmanesp@gmail.com.

SID – Bernadette Cafarelli, *American Athletic Conference*; O: 401-453-0660; C: 574-532-0249; bcafarelli@theamerican.org

NEW MEDIA LIAISON – Randy McClure, *Rush The Court*; C: 415-608-1837; rushthecourt@yahoo.com

TIPOFF EDITOR – John Akers, *Basketball Times*; H: 704-849-8627; C: 980-422-1294; johna19081@gmail.com

WEBMASTER – Ted Gangi, C: 214-909-9314; ted.gangi@sportswriters.net

There were no dry eyes during Samantha Smith's speech

The most emotional moment at the USBWA's annual awards luncheon at this year's Final Four in Houston came when Samantha Smith spoke about her late husband Andrew, a former Butler player, and his courageous struggle with cancer.

"It was an incredibly moving speech," tweeted *USA Today's* Nicole Auerbach. "There was not a dry eye in the room."

Samantha received the USBWA's Most Courageous Award that was awarded to both her and posthumously to Andrew. It was an unprecedented move to honor two people from the same family with the award.

"I'm truly honored and humbled to accept the Most Courageous Award today," Samantha said.

Samantha spoke about the draining effects chemotherapy had on Andrew. Yet, not once did he complain through all of his medical issues.

"For Andrew," Samantha said, "courage was receiving 12 hours of chemotherapy and then rushing to make it to the final hour of a bone marrow registry drive."

Andrew died at the age of 25 this past January after a two-year struggle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and later leukemia. Smith was diagnosed with lymphoma in 2014 after discovering a mass in his chest the year before while playing professionally in Lithuania.

He lost 40 pounds as a result of chemotherapy but started a job in financial services in July 2014. Four days into his new job, Smith went into cardiac arrest for 22 minutes and spent three days in a coma. Miraculously, he displayed no signs of neurological damage. Smith had a bone marrow transplant in November, but the transplant failed and the lymphoma turned into leukemia.

Andrew and Samantha went public with his illness, hoping to help others in similar situations. Samantha created the blog "kickingcancerwiththesmiths.wordpress.com" that chronicled Andrew's medical condition. Together, they raised awareness for the "Be The Match" bone marrow registry and the need for more young adults to register and be available to donate their marrow.

A TIME TO CELEBRATE. The USBWA wrapped up its 60th anniversary year by honoring basketball's finest at the College Basketball Awards dinner in

Joe Mitch

USBWA

Executive Director



Oklahoma City, one week after this year's thrilling NCAA championship game in Houston.

At the dinner, Yahoo Sports' Pat Forde, in his last official duty as USBWA president, presented Oklahoma's Buddy Hield with the Oscar Robertson Trophy as the national player of the year and Xavier's Chris Mack with the Henry Iba Award as the coach of the year.

ESPN analyst Fran Fraschilla handed out the Integris Wayman Tisdale Award to Ben Simmons of LSU as the freshman of the year and the Tisdale Humanitarian Award to former Missouri coach Norm Stewart.

The dinner drew a record crowd of over 600 people, due mainly to the presence of the Sooners' Hield.

A week earlier in Houston, the USBWA honored some of its own at the association's awards luncheon.

Raleigh News & Observer staff writer Laura Keeley received the Rising Star Award, recognizing journalistic excellence by members who are under 30 years of age.

Induction ceremonies for the newest members of the USBWA Hall of Fame were held for Blair Kerkhoff, *Kansas City Star* college columnist and former USBWA president; retired Notre Dame sports information director Roger Valdiserri; and the late Bob Pille, a long-time USBWA member who was a sportswriter for 38 years, including 22 years with the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

David Worlock, the NCAA's primary media contact for the men's Division I basketball tournament, received the Katha Quinn Award for service to the media.

The Ray Marquette Award was presented to Forde for his leadership as USBWA president. Forde sought to improve working conditions for writers and to increase access to players and coaches. He follows a long line of presidents who have made the USBWA a strong and vibrant organization today, representing nearly 1,000 members.

Graney elected USBWA president

Ed Graney, columnist for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, moved into the USBWA's presidency position at the association's annual business meeting during this year's men's Final Four in Houston.

Graney succeeds Pat Forde, Yahoo Sports, as president of the USBWA.

Mike Waters, *Syracuse Post-Standard*, was elected third vice president. Moving up in the rotation of officers were Vahe Gregorian, *Kansas City Star*, first vice president, and David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*, second vice president.

Named to the board as district reps for three-year terms were Joe Juliano, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, District II; Jeff Greer, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, District IV; Jenni Carlson, *The Oklahoman*, District VI; Carlos Mendez,

Fort Worth Star-Telegram, District VII; Geoff Grammer, *Albuquerque Journal*, District VIII; and Mark Zeigler, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, District IX. Bernadette Cafarelli, *American Athletic Conference*, was chosen as SID representative and Randy McClure, *Rush the Court*, as New Media liaison.

Returning as district reps, with their year on the board in parentheses, are Laura Keeley, *Raleigh News & Observer* (third), District III; Tom Noie, *South Bend Tribune* (third), District V; and Seth Davis, *CBS Sports* (second), and Jeff Goodman, *ESPN* (second), as at-large representatives. Mel Greenberg is the liaison for women's basketball.

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

Best Writing contest deadline approaches

The deadline for submitting stories and columns that were published during the 2015-16 college basketball season for the USBWA's Best Writing Contest is June 15. 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: \$150 for first place, \$125 for second, \$100 for third, \$75 for fourth and \$50 for fifth.

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 a type size too small to read will not 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.

Entries received after the June 15 deadline will not be accepted.

Hield, Simmons, Mack win men's honors

Oklahoma's Buddy Hield, LSU's Ben Simmons and Xavier coach Chris Mack won the USBWA's highest honors this season.

The charismatic Hield, a native of the Bahamas and a two-time Big 12 Conference player of the year, averaged 25.0 ppg, which was second nationally. Hield caught the nation's attention with a 46-point game in a triple-overtime loss at Kansas.

"Buddy Hield is richly deserving of the Oscar Robertson Trophy. He is a thrilling shooter and scorer who has led his team to the pinnacle of college basketball success, the Final Four," said USBWA President Pat Forde of Yahoo Sports. "Like Oscar himself, he also is a complete player capable of filling the stat sheet in a number of categories. But most importantly, Buddy is a self-made star from very humble beginnings in the Bahamas who has seized the four-year opportunity college basketball has provided to make himself the best he can be. The sport is better because of Buddy."

Simmons, a 6-10 forward from Australia, led all freshmen in rebounds with an 11.8 average and was third among all freshmen in scoring with a 19.8 mark. He ranked fifth nationally among all players with 22 double-doubles and shot 56.0 percent from the field.

Simmons was also named to the USBWA's All-Freshman team, along with Jaylen Brown of California, Henry Ellenson of Marquette, Brandon Ingram of Duke and Jamal Murray of Kentucky.

Mack's Musketeers were unranked in preseason Top 25 polls but climbed to No. 5 entering the postseason.

Hield and Michigan State's Denzel Valentine, who was Hield's top challenger as player of the year, headline the USBWA All-America team.



Buddy Hield



Ben Simmons



Chris Mack

Men's First Team

G Malcolm Brogdon, Virginia (6-5, Sr.)
G Buddy Hield, Oklahoma (6-4, Sr.)
F Brice Johnson, North Carolina (6-10, Sr.)
F Ben Simmons, LSU (6-10, Fr.)
G Denzel Valentine, Michigan State (6-5, Sr.)

Men's Second Team

G Kris Dunn, Providence (6-4, Jr.)
F Georges Niang, Iowa State (6-8, Sr.)
F Jakob Poeltl, Utah (7-0, So.)
G Tyler Ulis, Kentucky (5-9, So.)
F Jarrod Uthoff, Iowa (6-9, Sr.)

Rexrode moving to Tennessean

Joe Rexrode, who covered Michigan State for 15 of the past years for three newspapers, is leaving the *Detroit Free Press* to become a columnist at the *Tennessean*.

Lodge Notes

Following the sale of the *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, where Robert Gagliardi was an employee for 23 years, Gagliardi is now an employee of the *Laramie Boomerang*.

UConn's Stewart, Auriemma capture top women's honors

INDIANAPOLIS – Connecticut senior standout Breanna Stewart made United States Basketball Writers Association history, becoming the first women's star to win three Ann Meyers Drysdale National Player of the Year honors, named for UCLA Hall of Famer.

The former Bruins great helped present the award, as she has done annually since her name went on the award in 2012.

Geno Auriemma, who has guided the UConn program to 11 NCAA titles, picked up his fifth USBWA National Coach of the Year award to lead the organization's list, which has Notre Dame's Muffet McGraw in second place with three previous presentations.

The two honors were among several others announced at the annual USBWA Women's Awards news conference, which held at Bankers Life Fieldhouse, site of the NCAA Women's Final Four.

Because the event was held close to the scheduled time for the Huskies' tipoff against Oregon State in the first semifinal game before Washington met Syracuse, neither could attend the news conference to receive their plaques.

Former USBWA All-American Stefani Dolson, a recent teammate of Stewart, accepted on behalf of the native from Syracuse.

"On behalf of Breanna, I'd like to thank the basketball writers," Dolson said. "She deserves this award. She worked for everything she accomplished. She's something special. She's one of my really, really good friends. She worked so hard in every facet of this game and I'm sure she's so proud to get this award."

Auriemma, who will be coaching the USA women's squad for the second time in the Olympics this summer, won his 11th title, breaking the NCAA basketball record set by the late UCLA men's mentor John Wooden.

Connecticut started the day still alive in the quest to become the first women's team to win four straight NCAA titles.

The USBWA's National Freshman of the Year winner was also announced, with the honor going to California's Kristine Anigwe, a 6-foot-4 forward/center from Phoenix. During the season, she picked up a Pac-12 record eight Freshman of the Week awards on the way to winning the rookie postseason award in the conference.

Her 20.3 points per game made her the highest scoring freshman in Cal history and she led all freshmen at Power 5 schools with 8.9 rebounds and was third overall nationally.

When told during of her honor, Anigwe responded,

"I feel humbled and grateful to win this award."

"It was fun and challenging to play against some of the top players in the country this season. I couldn't have done it without the support from my teammates and coaches," she continued. "I'm blessed that they believed in me and I'm looking forward to building on what I learned this season while I live my dream playing at Cal."

Two winners previously announced also picked up their awards.

Danielle O'Banion, who is now between jobs after coaching at Kent State, is this year's winner of the Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award. O'Banion in the fall of 2014 was diagnosed with lymphoma during a routine visit to her doctor. She continued to coach Kent State the entire season and this past May was declared cancer-free."

Caroline Williams, the primary media liaison for USA Basketball's women's programs, including the Olympic squad, among her other duties, is the second winner of the Mary Jo Haverbeck Award named for the late pioneering women's sports information director at Penn State.

The award is similar to the Katha Quinn Award on the men's side.

A weekend with the U.S. Basketball Writers Association



An emotional Samantha Smith accepts the Most Courageous Award also given to her late husband, Andrew.



Player of the year Buddy Hield and Oscar Robertson.



The Kansas City Star's Blair Kerkhoff is inducted into the USBWA's Hall of Fame.



Kirk Wessler and Linda Pille, the niece of Hall of Fame honoree Bob Pille.



Hall of Famer Roger Valdiserri, the longtime Notre Dame SID, is introduced by Malcolm .



David Worlock receives the Katha Quinn Award.



Pat Forde is given the Ray Marquette Award by Joe Mitch.



Laura Keeley is this year's Rising Star.