

# Unusual times could lead to positive change

To understate the obvious, this is an unusual time to become the new president of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association.

Normally, the gavel is passed from the outgoing to incoming presidents at our Final Four awards luncheon. Alas, there was no luncheon this year because there was no Final Four. It is regrettable that my predecessor, Mike Waters, did not get the sendoff he deserved. My intention is to be sure that is remedied next April in Indianapolis, where we will recognize both the 2020 and '21 award winners and Hall of Fame inductees. That feels like a looong way off, but a new president can hope, can't he?

There is cause for optimism as we see many schools planning to bring back their students to campus this fall, which clears the way for college sports to resume. Many of those scenarios call for either no fans or a limited number, which raises the question of whether and how the media will be permitted to do our jobs. Safety should always be the primary concern, but the USBWA must be vigilant to ensure that our needs and those of our audience are accounted for in these decisions. I intend to be highly engaged in these conversations, and I can unequivocally report that we have many willing partners amongst the ranks or coaches and sports information directors, not to mention the NCAA's Dan Gavitt and David Worlock.

It has been especially disheartening to see how the COVID 19 pandemic has impacted our industry. Many friends and colleagues have been laid off since

Seth Davis  
CBS Sports / The Athletic  
President



the outbreak. It has always been a part of the USBWA's mission to facilitate networking and job opportunities, but as president I plan to make it a top priority to find ways to strengthen our ability to do so. I welcome all suggestions on this front.

Just when it seemed life was inching ever so slowly back to normal, our country was again rocked by turmoil as a result of the tragic murder of George Floyd. This horrific incident and the public outcry that followed has forced all of us to think deeply about the role of race in our society and culture. We have always known that sports was an important part of this fabric, but the events of the past few weeks have really driven that notion home. I hope that all of us will emerge from this determined to bring more empathy and wisdom to our work. The scores, standings and stats are important, but we are uniquely positioned to advance the cause of justice through our storytelling. I encourage you to think about how we can do this better.

All of us have been wondering how we can bring about positive change – as citizens and parents, first, but also as members of the fourth estate. From our own small corner of the universe, I am hopeful that the USBWA can help find ways to make our profession more diverse. By any reasonable measure, we have not measured up. I do not doubt that genuine efforts are being made to diversify the editorial staffs at newspapers, magazines and digital companies across the country, but this industry needs to do a much better

job identifying emerging talent and growing the pool of qualified candidates. The need for increasing diversity isn't just related to gender and race, by the way, but also age. A central challenge for the USBWA has always been to replenish our ranks. This was the intent behind our Rising Star award, but we can do more. Staying young and fresh helps keep us strong as an organization while allowing us to impart the ethics and practices of good journalism to the next generation of writers.

I have a few ideas that I am looking forward to activating over the next 10 months that I hope will address this, and I encourage you to pass along suggestions. Things might look difficult now, but I have faith that we will come out of this period with renewed purpose and appreciation for how lucky we are to do what we do. One thing we've learned for certain is just how much America loves and needs sports, especially the NCAA tournament. Here's hoping that we see it all play out again in 2021. Please be safe, everyone.

## Dufresne had an eye for drama as national college hoops voice

By **HERB GOULD**

We are all in shock at TMG College Sports. Devastated and grieving.

Our founder, Chris Dufresne, is gone.

Chris, who died at 62 on May 25, is primarily remembered as a college football writer. But he put his deft touch on a wide range of sports, including pro football, golf, Olympic sports. And he did some of his work covering college sports, where his talent for spotting drama, irony and understated humor served him well. That all came together on a piece he wrote about Bobby Knight after a tough loss in the 1997 NCAA Tournament.

I'm not really sure where to begin. I remember when Chris approached me four years ago with the idea of starting a free-

wheeling college football website. Four old sportswriter buddies would gather in one place from the four corners of the country. Chris in L.A., Mark Blandschun in Boston, Tony Barnhart in Atlanta, me in Chicago – and put on a show.

We would write what we wanted when we wanted. Chris was taking a buyout at the L.A. Times, but still wanted to write about the college sports scene that he loved. And he correctly had the feeling that Mark, Tony and I felt the same way.

It seems like we were just getting started. But then, I feel that way about Duf, as he was universally known. Sixty-two years old? This is cruel and wrong. And words can't describe the empathy I feel for his wonderful wife, Sheila, who

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## Millsaps: unyielding without threatening; revered by all

By **DAVID TEEL**

As VCU basketball's sports information director in the early 1980s, Tom Baker worked for a coach who – how to be charitable here? – was a bit unhinged.

So as J.D. Barnett emerged from the locker room following a 1984 loss at neighboring Richmond, he went off on Baker. In Barnett's mind, a game-day column by the Times-Dispatch's Bill Millsaps — the topic was VCU star Calvin Duncan's recent slump — had caused Duncan to have another poor performance.

And since Baker had arranged the interview ...

"It's YOUR fault," Barnett ranted

at Baker. "If Duncan hadn't done that interview, we would have been FINE."

"That's horsesh\$,," Millsaps, a towering figure built like an offensive tackle, interjected. "Don't you ever blame your sports information director for losing a game you coached. He's doing his job and he's doing it well."

Barnett calmed down and, according to Baker, "never yelled at me again."

Baker told that story in a letter to the Times-Dispatch following Millsaps' death in April at age 77. And the exchange was classic Saps. He was unyielding yet not threatening, fiercely protective of media access and revered

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# As we prepare for '20-21 season, it's still a question of 'if'

There is so much we cannot know about the 2020-21 college basketball season. We cannot know if it will be played, when it will be played, how it will be conducted, who if anyone will be watching in person and how and when it will end. Not long before the 2020

NCAA tournament was canceled in March, but after the decision had been made to proceed without fans, I reached out to a knowledgeable observer with a simple question. Without the presence of fans, was the committee considering a smaller facility to replace Lucas Oil Stadium as the Indianapolis regional site?

Even with so many changes happening so quickly, the answer was jarring.

"It's no longer a question of where," the observer said. "It's a question of 'if.'"

As Indianapolis prepares for its eighth men's Final Four in April, is it possible that a similar question will become relevant?

The uncertainty surrounding the status of the upcoming season has created a sense of urgency as the USBWA examines and updates the services it provides for its membership. Policies are going to change out of necessity, and some of those changes could become dramatic. Access issues will become more complex for multiple reasons, including the possibility that some beat reporters might be unable (because of economic issues) or unwilling (because of personal health concerns) to travel to some or all road games. Virtual coverage, with post-game availability via Zoom or cellphone conversations, might become part of the necessary new normal.

Our organization will seek solutions with schools, conference offices and our friends and colleagues at the Football Writers Association of America and CoSIDA. In early March, the USBWA was represented on a conference call of media-related organizations supervised by Associated Press Sports Editors president Todd Adams of the Raleigh (N.C.) News & Observer. Those communications will continue throughout the summer.

One ominous possibility became clear recently

## Malcolm Moran Executive Director



when several high-profile institutions announced changes to their academic calendars including a switch to strictly remote instruction after Thanksgiving or the end of the fall semester before Thanksgiving break. As a consensus appeared to begin to develop, based on a premise that another wave of COVID-19 infections could emerge during the fall, the implications of starting a season against the backdrop of alarming statistics and overtaxed emergency rooms became problematic.

There is one thing we do know: One non-negotiable factor will be absolute transparency in the reporting of positive test results.

The outcomes of the calculated risks taken by institutions to preserve at least part of their season will be determined by the success of the protocols in place. For a beat reporter, the immediate disclosure of a positive test is more than just an essential piece of information to inform the public about the state of the program. The information is vital because it can impact the well being of everyone around the program, including coaches, trainers and administrators that media members encounter in their daily reporting.

To be clear: This issue has absolutely nothing to do with the ongoing discussion of the timely disclosure of injury information and the availability of athletes for competition. This is vital information at the center of an ongoing global crisis. An undisclosed sprained ankle poses zero threat to anyone coming in contact with the athlete or those around him or her.

The success rate of all these calculated risks will determine the credibility of the institutions that take them. We have all learned, much too painfully, that a positive test – even if the individual is asymptomatic – can have tragic consequences.

## McNamara leaving Providence Journal

Kevin McNamara announced that he was leaving after more than 30 years at the Providence Journal, including three decades of covering the Providence Friars.

"Thank you to my bosses/comrades, plus all the coaches and athletes who've made the job (mostly) a dream come true," McNamara wrote on Twitter. "Welcome opportunity to explore different challenges, some sport-ing, some not."

David Teel joined the Richmond Times Dispatch and Richmond.com as a columnist after 36 years at the Daily Press in Newport News, Va.

Jody Demling, a longtime Louisville sports personality and USBWA member, spent nearly a week on

a ventilator after being diagnosed with COVID-19. He was hospitalized in early April and released on April 15.

Luke DeCock of the Raleigh News & Observer and Tom Noie of the South Bend Tribune won first place in APSE's writing contest, DeCock for breaking news in Class B and Noie for game stories in Class C.

### Lodge Notes

Bennett Durando of the University of Missouri finished in a tie for second for APSE's Student Contest. Durando, a USBWA member, also finished second in feature writing and third in breaking news for the Columbia Missourian in the Class D category. Durando is a former USBWA scholarship winner.



# Especially now, reporters need to listen

This is a story about taking a knee; about taking a stand or taking a seat.

It's a story that the Marty Glickman, the famed radio voice of the New York Giants and New York Knicks, told many times in the years before his death in 2001.

See, before he embarked on his illustrious broadcasting career, Glickman enjoyed an incredible athletic career as a running back at Syracuse and member of the 1936 U.S. Olympic team as a sprinter.

As Glickman recounted, the Syracuse football team went to play a game against Maryland in College Park, Md., in the fall of 1937.

Syracuse's star quarterback was a man named Wilmeth Sidat-Singh. In a time of racial segregation, Sidat-Singh was often passed off with a wink and nod as a Hindu rather than African-American. But Sidat-Singh was the name of his stepfather. Sidat-Singh, who grew in New York City and attended DeWitt Clinton High School, was born in Washington D.C.

In the days leading up to Syracuse's game against Maryland, Sam Lacy, the great black journalist, broke a story that told the truth of Sidat-Singh's race.

Maryland administrators, who were willing to buy into the myth that Sidat-Singh was Hindu, refused to play the game if Sidat-Singh took the field.

Glickman was sitting right next to Sidat-Singh when Syracuse's athletic director, along with head coach Ossie Solem, walked into the locker room and broke the news to the team. Maryland would not play against a black man.

Sidat-Singh was going to have to remain on the bench.

Glickman thought of saying something, defending his teammate, standing up for a cause. But he didn't. In his words, he stared at the floor and told himself that he would be labeled a troublemaker.

"A trouble-making Jew-boy."

And the worst part was Glickman was in Sidat-Singh's shoes just one year earlier.

In 1936, Glickman, then just 18 years old, had

## Mike Waters Syracuse Post-Standard Past President



qualified as a sprinter for the United States' 4x400 relay team. He went to the Olympics. The Berlin Olympics. Hitler's Olympics. On the morning of the 400-meter relays, the U.S. coaches had informed Glickman and another Jewish member of the team, Sam Stoller, that they were being replaced. The decision was seen as an obvious move to avoid further embarrassing Hitler.

No one stood up for Glickman in Berlin and, to his everlasting regret, Glickman did not stand up for Sidat-Singh in College Park.

Syracuse lost 13-0. One season later, Maryland traveled to Syracuse. This time, Sidat-Singh played and Syracuse won, 53-17.

The story remains relevant today.

All across the nation, people are standing up against police brutality and racial inequality.

In the wake of George Floyd's death while in the custody of Minneapolis police officers, there have been protests, demonstrations and rallies in major cities and small towns.

Many of these events have included the voices of young athletes. Even more athletes have found their voices through social media, reaching out to hundreds and thousands of followers.

These young men are the Marty Glickmans and Wilmeth Sidat-Singhs of their time. They have finally discovered their power.

They are speaking up despite the fact that Glickman's fears of being labeled a troublemaker still ring true. Glickman's fears in 1937 played out as recently as four years ago when the NFL blackballed Colin Kaepernick right out of the league after he took a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality toward blacks.

As for those of us in the media? I was recently a guest on a former Syracuse center Etan Thomas' Twitch show "Center of Attention." Thomas is a well-known

author and social activist.

Thomas asked me about my role as a sports journalist in covering the stories of racial inequality. Now, I'm not a columnist. During my J-school years, it was ingrained in me to be objective. The old "No cheering in the press box" philosophy.

However, these times are different for many of us. How do we not stand up for racial equality? How do we fail to recognize the mistreatment of blacks by law enforcement?

This is what I told Thomas:

"As a reporter, your job is to listen. On a college basketball beat, I listen to players and coaches, whether it's a matter of race or a matter of basketball. As a white guy in his 50s, I don't know what's like to be a black man of any age, but I know how to listen.

"Then, I can amplify their voices. I can give them a way to express themselves. They have to trust me with that. I appreciate their experiences and I want to hear them. That's my job as a beat writer. I'm not a 'stick to sports' or a 'shut up and dribble' guy. Sports and society overlap all the time and they have for decades."

None of us have covered a game in well over three months now, but many of us have written some of the most important stories in our careers.

As athletes stand up, let's make sure we listen.

# Dayton pair, Duke's Carey claim top honors

For the first time since the 2003-04 season, the winners of the Oscar Robertson Trophy and Henry Iba Award came from the same school. Dayton sophomore forward Obi Toppin and head coach Anthony Grant headlined this season's individual award winners in voting by the U.S. Basketball Writers Association.

Vernon Carey Jr., Duke's standout center, earned the Wayman Tisdale Award as the nation's top freshman.

On the women's side, Sabrina Ionescu of Oregon is the winner of the Ann Meyers Drysdale Award as the National Player of the Year, Dawn Staley of South Carolina earned the National Coach of the Year Award and Aliyah Boston of South Carolina is the Tamika Catchings Award winner as the National Freshman Player of the Year.

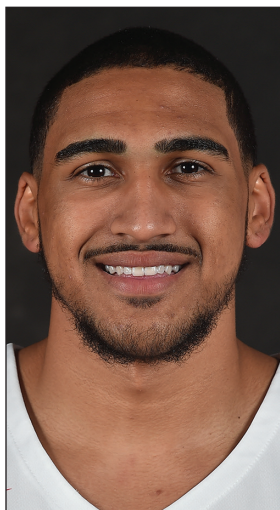
Toppin, a 6-foot-9 sophomore, averaged 20.2 points and 7.3 rebounds and was the A-10 Player of the Year. He shot 63.3 percent for the season, which was fifth best nationally. He also led the nation with 107 dunks.

Toppin, Iowa center Luka Garza and Seton Hall senior guard Myles Powell were named first-team All-Americans by each of the four major awarding organi-

zations: the USBWA, Associated Press, NABC and The Sporting News. Aside from Toppin, Garza and Powell, the USBWA's All-America first team consisted of seniors Markus Howard, a guard from Marquette, and center Udoka Azubuike of Kansas.

The second team consisted of Carey, guards Devon Dotson of Kansas, Malachi Flynn of San Diego State, Payton Pritchard of Oregon and Cassius Winston of

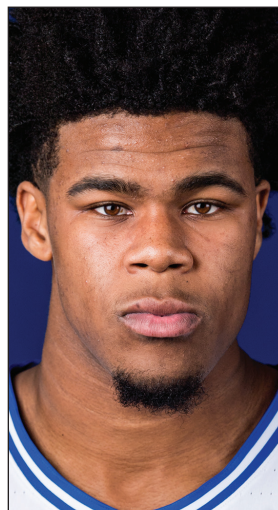
Michigan State. The third team: Jared Butler of Baylor, Tre Jones of Duke, Jordan Nwora of Louisville, Filip Petrushev of Gonzaga and Jalen Smith of Maryland. Grant, a former team captain and MVP at his alma mater, led Dayton to a school-record 29 wins against only two losses, both of which came on neutral floors and in overtime, including one to top-ranked Kansas. The Flyers were picked third in the A-10 preseason poll but ascended to No. 3 in both final polls after a perfect conference season that earned Dayton its third conference title in the last five years. Carey was the only player ranked in the Atlantic Coast Conference's top 10 in scoring (third, 17.8), rebounding (fourth, 8.8), field goal percentage (first, .577) and blocked shots (sixth, 1.6). The ACC Freshman of the Year was the only freshman on the 15-man USBWA All-America team and posted 15 double-doubles on the season, second among NCAA freshmen and second in the ACC. Ten of his double-doubles were 20-10 performances and he was in the top four among freshmen nationally in scoring, field goal percentage and rebounding.



*Obi Toppin*



*Anthony Grant*



*Vernon Carey Jr.*



# Millsaps: unyielding without threatening; revered by all

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by subjects and colleagues alike.

A Tennessee native, Saps worked at the Times-Dispatch from 1966 until his 2005 retirement, the first 28 years in sports, the last 11 as vice president and executive editor. At his core, he was a sports guy.

A 2002 USBWA Hall of Fame inductee, he served as our president during the 1985-86 season. He was an 11-time Virginia Sportswriter of the Year, and in 2011 he received the Red Smith Award from the Associated Press Sports Editors.

“Willie Nelson sang that his heroes have always been cowboys,” Saps said in his acceptance speech. “MY heroes have always been sports writers, such as Blackie Sherrod, Jim Murray and Red Smith.”

Saps worked alongside, and socialized with, those heroes, writing elegantly and authoritatively from virtually all the large events: the World Series, Super Bowl, Final Four, Masters, Kentucky Derby and Olympics. He earned the trust of athletes, coaches and politicians.



*Bill Millsaps*

“At first I thought I was dizzy. Then I realized it wasn’t me. It was Candlestick Park.”

That was the lede Saps dictated to the copy desk from a pay phone outside the stadium after an earthquake struck San Francisco prior to Game 3 of the 1989 World Series.

But even as he traversed the country and globe with other revered columnists — the Washington Post’s Dave Kindred, Atlanta Journal-Constitution’s Furman Bisher and Roanoke Times’ Bill Brill were running mates — Saps befriended and counseled the next generation back home.

He taught us to report and prepare tirelessly, but never to take ourselves too seriously. He considered and treated us like peers.

“He was genuine,” former Richmond basketball coach Dick Tarrant told the Times-Dispatch’s John O’Connor.

Former T-D columnist Paul Woody recalls a 1980s Friday night when the staff was shorthanded due to illness. Saps, then the sports editor, asked aloud in the office how he could help. Someone

mentioned a big high school basketball game that might go uncovered, and that was all Saps needed to hear. He grabbed a legal pad and drove off to Highland Springs High.

Saps was the founding father of the Times-Dispatch Invitational Tournament, a four-team college basketball holiday event staged at the Richmond Coliseum from 1976 to 1991.

And after each night of the tournament he held court in a hospitality suite he arranged at a neighboring hotel.

Saps liked his steaks rare, wine red and bourbon straight, tastes I witnessed more than a few times, hanging on his every word as he dispensed wisdom and shared his personal story.

A native of Daisy, Tenn., Saps grew up reading the Chattanooga Times. He dabbled in basketball at the University of Tennessee and joined the Knoxville Journal in 1963 before landing in Richmond.

“Every morning, I’d wonder how the people at the Times made all those words and all those lines in the paper fit so nicely,” Saps wrote in a 1978 Times-Dispatch column. “It appeared to be a wonderful jigsaw puzzle, a daily miracle of stories and headlines and pictures.”

For decades, Saps was essential to that daily miracle. RIP, my friend.

## Dufresne had eye for drama as national college hoops voice

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designing our website and guiding four old scribes through the modern digital obstacle course that went with it.

It’s the same with their three sons, Danny, Drew and Joey, who have lost their father far too soon. I just want to give them all a hug, and a shoulder to cry on.

I am thinking now of the first time I really got to know Chris. A lot of laughs and meals and toasts would follow.

But the first time was when Duf delivered a marvelous story about Bobby Knight during the 1997 NCAA tournament. Over a late-night beer, he told me he had followed Knight walking alone in the rain back to his hotel after a discouraging blowout loss.

“Really?” I kept saying. “Then what happened?”

You know that movie Broadway Danny Rose, where the comics sit around a deli listening to a story and throwing in their two cents? You’ve got it. I just kept asking him things. He told the backstory so well. It was fascinating and worthy of a journalism class.

The enterprise he showed in finding the story and writing skill were what I admired about Chris Dufresne the sportswriter. He could be a gumshoe, he could turn a phrase, he saw the details and the big picture.

The wry way he told what he found and how he handled the story were what I cherished about Chris Dufresne the man.

He was cynical, a common trait among good newspaper people. But he also was gentle and understated. He was interesting, but he always was interested. He always had time for people. He had a great perspective on life.

And what a great life. This was a guy whose father drove a newspaper circulation truck, who worked his way up from the L.A. Times loading dock to become a beloved senior voice in the sports section.

And this was a guy who was a great friend to so many people in the newspaper business and many other arenas of life. If the measure of a person’s life is, as they say, how many people he or she touches, there’s no measuring stick big enough to describe the impact of Chris Dufresne.

God bless, you, buddy. Those last days were filled with cancer-caused pain that you bore with great dignity. R.I.P. We will miss you. Big-time.

**(TMG Sports has established a sports journalism scholarship in Chris Dufresne’s memory at Cal State Fullerton. [give.fullerton.edu/dufresnescholarship](http://give.fullerton.edu/dufresnescholarship))**



*Chris Dufresne*

## Indiana’s Knight Takes Road Less Traveled

By **CHRIS DUFRESNE**

**MARCH 15, 1997**

**TIMES STAFF WRITER**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — “He’s crazy,” the arena employee said as he pushed the elevator button.

“Who’s crazy?” I asked.

“Knight,” the guy said. “He’s walking back to town. It’s not safe.”

It was 12:45 a.m. Friday morning, an hour or so after Indiana had been humiliated by Colorado in an East Regional first-round game, 80-62.

It was raining outside. Lawrence Joel Coliseum officials scurried about, wondering what to do.

“Let him go,” one said.

It was 2-1/2 miles from the arena to the hotel where the Hoosiers were staying.

I got in my rental car and tried to guess which way Knight might have headed. There was only one logical route, University Parkway, a four-lane, divided highway. As I drove toward the city lights, I saw a man walking briskly and boldly against traffic in the far lane. I made a U-turn to get a better look, took the right-hand lane and drove toward the silhouette. He was wearing a dark jacket and a houndstooth hat pulled low over his forehead. Rain fell against my headlights as I passed.

It was Bob Knight.

To be sure, I executed two more U-turns and made another run toward him. He was walking, eyes fixed ahead, in the middle of the lane. I drove straight at Knight to see if he would move to the side of the road. He did not, so I switched to the left lane.

With red signals flashing, his season on the blink, Knight crossed the intersection at University and Northwest

Boulevard and began to walk up Cherry Street, a man alone with his thoughts.

The Colorado defeat had to rank with one of Knight’s lowest moments. His team was flat and listless and never in the game. To borrow the metaphor of the highway, this is the loneliest stretch in Knight’s 26 seasons at Indiana. He has won 598 games, 40 in the tournament, three NCAA titles, but his program is in mini-crisis.

For the third consecutive year, his Hoosiers had been eliminated in the first round of the NCAA tournament.

“When you’re soundly beaten, there’s not an awful lot you can say beyond that,” Knight had said after his latest NCAA loss.

Knight has gone four years without winning a Big Ten title, the longest drought in his career. The Hoosiers have been to only one Final Four since last winning the national title in 1987. Knight’s teams remain well-coached but have lacked the skill players to compete beyond the Big Ten. The Hoosiers shot only 35% against Colorado, making 19 of 54 shots.

Knight had no answer for Colorado guard Chauncey Billups, who scored 24 points in 32 minutes.

“He is an exceptionally good guard and we really tried to work to do some things to contain him and we just didn’t at all,” Knight had said.

And afterward, there was nothing Knight could do, except take a long walk on a rainy night.

I lost Knight on my third pass, near downtown. I did notice a red, late-model sedan idling on a side street. I suspect it was an Indiana official keeping watch on his enigmatic, legendary coach.

Just like the rest of us.