

Remembering Bryan Burwell with his stories

As it usually goes in our business, where one press box and media room blends in with the next, I can't say I remember the exact moment I met Bryan Burwell.

I recall encountering him once, back when the Eagles played at the Vet. To make the on-air atmosphere more authentic, the radio folks insisted on taking out the windows, so we are all freezing and kvetching about it.

Except, of course, Bryan.

He greeted me then as he always did – with a hug, a smile, and a “Well hello, young lady.”

That was Bryan Burwell.

When Bryan died, too suddenly and too early, I asked people to send memories about him. They are, as you'll read, funny and heartfelt, but they also followed a common thread – how much Bryan loved his job.

We could all talk about what a gifted writer he was, and the grace he exuded on television - even after that medium became more about shouting than intellect.

But Bryan's real gift to journalism, his real gift to all of us, is the enthusiasm and joy he brought with him to work each day.

From Yahoo's Graham Watson, who worked with Bryan at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

(From the 2006 Final Four in Indianapolis) It was really late, and Burwell and I are starving. We ascended the escalator that attaches the arena to the Westin and happened upon Shula's Steakhouse. We walked up and the maitre d told us they were closed, no longer serving food. Then Burwell takes a quick glance inside the restaurant and sees someone he knows. He grabs my arm (now remember, at the point I'm a pretty timid 26 year old) and he rushes me past the maitre' d and into the restaurant. Of course the guy follows us, protesting, while Burwell is basically waving him away. We stop

at a group of four people who are sitting at a table and one of the guys immediately stands up and gives Burwell a hug.

It's Charles Barkley. Barkley tells the maitre d that we're with him and to bring us menus and whatever we want. Burwell gives the maitre d this “I told you so” look, and the guy scurries away.

From Bob Ryan of the Boston Globe:

I go back 30-plus years when he was in NYC covering the Knicks. We were part of a group that played a lot of basketball during the NBA playoffs. Did many a Sports Reporters show with him. He was always measured, a common sense voice of reason.

The last time I saw him was in Bristol not all that long ago. He was discoursing on an important topic: namely that too many people falsely label a benign “Cookout” a “Barbecue,” which he thought was sacrilegious. Throwing hamburgers or a hot dog on a grill, he said, was a long way from having an honest-to-God Barbecue, which is truly culinary art.

From Pat Forde, of Yahoo Sports:

The thing I liked and respected about Bryan was his enthusiasm for the assignment, whatever it was. He worked in a pro sports town, but every time I saw him at the Missouri Valley tournament, he was totally into it. He wasn't half-stepping it; he knew the storylines and the teams and the personalities. That was about the 50th most important thing for him to cover in a year,

but he covered it like it was the most important. Because it was that day. It's a fun job and I never saw him fail to have fun doing it.

From ex-USBWA president Lenox Rawlings:

During Bryan's time as president, I was most impressed by his passion for helping young folks understand what they faced if they wanted to take up our line of work. He was encouraging yet candid about the possibilities, and he was downright blunt about the practicalities of entering the field during such economic and journalistic convulsions. But

Dana O'Neil
ESPN.com
President



you could see his face light up when he described the potential rewards to these students, and you could feel his resolve in reminding the rest of us that the USBWA needed fresh energy to survive.

From former USBWA president Kirk Wessler, of the Peoria Journal-Star:

We're at Scottrade Center in St. Louis, when some mid-level shift manager walks into the media workroom about 7:45, less than an hour after the Illinois-Mizzou game ended, and announces we all have to be gone in 45 minutes. I get the guy to call his supervisor, who comes down and we're going at it in the hallway. The super tries to tell me this is the way things always go there, that even the MVC tournament is out of the building by such-and-such time. I say, “Really? I cover that every year and we've never been run out of here before we're done.” He says, “Well the Blues ...” Burwell overhears this and he comes out. The super looks at him like, “I know you!” And Bryan quietly says, “That's bull. When the Blues are playing, we're here till we're done.” And the guy backed off.

From Kansas City Star columnist Vahe Gregorian, who worked along Bryan for more than a decade:

A few weeks ago, I had the incredible fortune to get to see Bryan one last time. His wife, Dawn, ushered me down the stairs where he was sitting. Neither of us knew quite what to say as I walked toward him, trying not to seem despondent. Then he just started crying, or maybe I was first, and I leaned in to hug him up a minute.

And that was enough of the sappy stuff.

A Mizzou football game was on in the background, and we had a lot of catching up and laughing to do. He was eager to get the “preseason” of testing behind so he could begin the “regular-season” grind of treatment.

Bryan could drink only water by then, and at one point Dawn came down the stairs and offered Perrier for a change of pace. Bryan took a few sips as she was walking back up the stairs.

And then he called her back, almost giddily thankful and excited about how good the Perrier tasted.

To the end, that was him: always cheerful, always the same person, always the optimist.

A person you were always happy to see coming and so hated to see leave.



Bryan Burwell (far left), with Jimmer Fredette and Oscar Robertson.

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USBWA has treasured relationship with Oscar

The USBWA has enjoyed a long and rewarding relationship with perhaps the greatest college basketball player of all time – two-time USBWA player of the year Oscar Robertson.

My friendship with Oscar goes back some 35 years ago to the mid-1970s. Oscar was a color analyst on the Metro Conference game-of-the-week telecasts. I served as assistance commissioner of the Metro for media relations.

When the USBWA decided to name its national player-of-the-year award after a former player or coach, the organization looked no further than to Oscar to put his name on the award.

After all, Oscar is a national treasure. He was voted the greatest player in the 20th Century in all of basketball. He was the USBWA’s first national player of the year in 1959 and was coming off a 1958 season in which he was named a consensus All-American at Cincinnati.

The USBWA named the award the Oscar Robertson Trophy in 1998, and in the 17 years since then the Robertson Trophy has become one of the nation’s most prestigious player-of-the-year awards.

There are other player-of-the-year awards – the Wooden Award and the Naismith Award being the most notable – but what makes the USBWA’s Robertson Trophy so unique is that it is the only one named after a player and the only award whose namesake is living.

Since its inception, 49 players have won the award. Virginia’s Ralph Sampson and UCLA’s Bill Walton are the only three-time winners. Texas’ Kevin Durant and Kentucky’s Anthony Davis are the only freshmen to win the award, although Walton did earn USBWA national player of the year in his first season of eligibility. Aside from the “Big O” himself, Hall of Famers Jerry Lucas (Ohio State), Lew Alcindor (UCLA) and Pete Maravich (LSU) are the other two-time recipients.

The original Robertson Trophy, a sculpture made of bronze depicting Oscar rebounding a basketball with his legs spread-eagled, is on display in the foyer of Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Oscar’s hometown. The USBWA commissioned world-renowned sculptor Harry Weber to produce the sculpture of Oscar and the trophy.

The USBWA membership votes on the player-of-the-year award at the end of the regular season, along with the USBWA’s coach and freshman-of-the-year awards. The winner is announced each year at the NCAA Final Four and then is presented with the trophy at the Devon Energy College Basketball Awards dinner the week after the Final Four on April 14 at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



In addition to the player-of-the-year trophy, the USBWA’s Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award, the Wayman Tisdale Freshman of the Year Award and the Wayman Tisdale Humanitarian Award are also presented at the dinner in Oklahoma City.

The Iba Award is named after legendary Olympic and Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State) coach Henry Iba, who won 655 games in his career and led the Aggies to NCAA championships in 1945 and 1946. He also coached the U.S. Olympic team to gold medals in 1964 and 1968 and a silver medal in 1972.

The Tisdale Award for the freshman of the year, first awarded in 2011, is named in honor of the late Wayman Tisdale. Tisdale was a three-time USBWA All-American at Oklahoma and in 1983 was the first freshman to be named a first-team All-American by the USBWA.

Following a stint on the 1984 U.S. Olympic team, he played 12 seasons in the NBA before retiring in 1997 to focus on a blossoming jazz music career. In March 2007, Tisdale was diagnosed with cancer and, following a courageous battle, he passed away in May 2009.

The Devon Energy gala is hosted by the Oklahoma City-based non-profit charitable organization Access Sports, which provides funding for basketball programs in Oklahoma for disadvantaged youth.

Funds from the gala are also used to support the USBWA’s scholarship programs and for contributions to various charitable groups, including the National Kidney Foundation in honor of Oscar, who donated a kidney several years ago to his daughter Tia.

BURWELL TRIBUTE. Bryan Burwell served the USBWA well when he was president of the association in 2010-11. He provided the USBWA with outstanding leadership, especially in the areas of diversity and student-journalist education. He pushed for more minorities and women in the USBWA Hall of Fame and was always ready to participate as a panelist in the USBWA’s writing workshops for student sportswriters.

Bryan was the USBWA’s first black president in 33 years and only the second in its 59-year history.

As has been written by many who knew him, Bryan Burwell was a giant in the sports journalism profession. He will be missed.

Ex-Nebraska SID Bryant passes away

Longtime USBWA member and former Nebraska sports information director Don “Fox” Bryant passed away on Dec. 5 at the age of 85. Bryant served as a member of the Final Four media relations crew.

Bryant was the sports editor of the *Lincoln Star* from 1954 until Nebraska hired him as SID in 1962. He retired in 1997 after 35

Lodge Notes

Steve Wiseman has been promoted to sports editor of the *Durham Herald-Sun*. He will continue to cover Duke basketball.

Jernstedt named 2015 Katha Quinn Award winner

By **JIM O'CONNELL**

Receiving an award is certainly nothing new for Tom Jernstedt.

He has been presented with the John Bunn Award, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame's highest honor short of induction; the Edward S. Steitz Award, USA Basketball's recognition for service to international basketball and induction into the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame as a contributor.

The USBWA would like to add to that impressive list with the 2015 Katha Quinn Award. Katha was the first recipient of the award for service to the media or inspiration to journalism in 1988. It was later named after the former sports information director at St. John's when she passed away at age 35 following a long battle with cancer.

Tom Jernstedt fills both of those criteria as well being someone who has served all of college and international basketball in a manner worthy of all those awards.

A 38-year employee of the NCAA and a former president of USA Basketball, Jernstedt had one responsibility that showed his importance to college basketball.

"When one thinks of the Final Four, one name immediately comes to mind, and that is Tom Jernstedt," said Wayne Duke, the 2006 Katha Quinn Award winner and former commissioner of the Big Ten and Big Eight as well one of the prominent chairmen of the NCAA



Tom Jernstedt

Tournament Selection Commission. "He was the guy in the NCAA who kept the Final Four going and kept it out there for everyone to see. His name is synonymous with the Final Four and that holds true in so many ways with anyone involved in any degree."

Before the 2005 Final Four, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* published a list of the 50 most influential people in college basketball. Jernstedt was No. 1.

"Tom was the heart, soul and the passion behind the NCAA basketball tournament for a long time," former Big East commissioner Mike Tranghese told *Basketball Times* when Jernstedt's tenure at the NCAA was ended abruptly in 2010 by president Mark Emmert. "Whether you were a coach or an administrator or

anybody – if you had a question about the tournament, that's where you went – you went to Tom Jernstedt."

That included the media. Jernstedt was always available to those who covered the Final Four for an answer, an explanation or a reason. No matter how many other duties he was responsible for – and that included being a sounding board for the Selection Committee starting in 1973 – he had time for the media.

He was an integral part of the negotiations of the first contract between CBS and the NCAA for the tournament rights, a three-year, \$50 million contract in 1982, as well as extensions in 1989 and 1994. Just five years

later, the sides agreed on the 11-year, \$6 billion deal.

"As the NCAA Tournament expanded dramatically in the late 1970s and early to mid-1980s, there was one constant: If Tom Jernstedt told you something, you could take it straight to the bank," said Malcolm Moran, who was honored by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame with the Curt Gowdy Award and who was a close friend of Katha's who helps maintain the high standards of the award. "The same was true when the news was not so flattering, when USA Basketball reached a low point during the disappointing 2002 World Championships at Indianapolis. On the day following the final defeat, there was Tom, standing in the middle of the press room, surrounded by reporters looking for explanations. He answered every question, never ducked an issue, and offered some of the thinking that would eventually lead to much more successful days.

"I know that Katha would be very proud to have her name linked with his."

A graduate of Oregon, where he was the Marcus Mariota of his time, the 25-year-old Jernstedt started with the NCAA in 1972 as a director of events. He left the organization as an executive vice president.

In 2013, Jernstedt joined the Big East as a senior adviser for men's basketball. This year, he was a member of the 12-person committee to decide the four teams playing in the first Football Bowl Series tournament.

Thankfully, college sports disagreed with Emmert.

Tom, his wife Kris, and son Cole live in Indianapolis, the same city where the organization he served so well for almost four decades is located.

USBWA to honor Clarkson's eye, 60 years of Final Fours

By **DAVE DORR**

Take a bow, Rich Clarkson.

Your practiced eye, your mastery of telling a story with a camera set you apart. Way, way apart.

What has distinguished Clarkson's acclaimed work for decades was his gift for seeing through his camera lens what everyone else was missing. Writers know it as imagery. It is the uncommon, the remarkable, the dramatic, the powerful. It is what brings a story or photo alive. Clarkson's best pictures need no accompanying text. One look really is worth a thousand words.

In the world of sports photography, Clarkson stands alone. His peers and proteges alike use words like transcendent to describe his talent. He always was a step ahead, searching for ways to make each picture better than the last. He was the first to mount a camera on a basketball backboard, which speaks to his creativity.

His photos have appeared on dozens of *Sports Illustrated* covers, on the pages of *Time* and *Life* magazines and in countless books.

His favorite sport is college basketball. His favorite event is the Final Four. Fittingly, the USBWA will honor Clarkson and his legendary career on April 6 at the Final Four in Indianapolis.

This Final Four will be Clarkson's 60th. His first was in 1952 when he was a freshman at Kansas.

These days he heads his Denver-based Rich Clarkson and Associates LLC, a multimedia company, and, at age 82, does so with a spirited, unending appetite for new challenges. Winston Churchill said success is never final. The secret, Clarkson says, "is a martini every night." His group provides photography for all 89 NCAA championships. His series of workshops bring together annually a faculty of world-class photographers and networking opportunities, a Godsend for aspiring photographers.

He has mentored nearly 100 photographers, some of whom have won Pulitzer Prizes, some of whom are photo editors at major publications. All carry his weighty influence, inspiration and principles of photojournalism – news and sports – he drilled into them. They're still learning from him. They are his legacy.

Clarkson grew up in Lawrence, Kan. His family lived above his grandmother's restaurant.

His basketball baptism came at age seven at the knees of basketball nobility. One day he wandered into a KU practice. Phog Allen introduced him to James Naismith.

By the time he was in junior high he already was serious about journalism. He produced a mimeographed newspaper with 35 subscribers. Another interest was airplanes. This led to his first big-time interview. At dinner that night his dad asked if he came back with an autograph. The story, as Clarkson told the *Denver Post*, went like this: "I said, 'Dad, journalists don't do that.' And that is why, to this day, I don't have Orville Wright's autograph."

In high school, he was covering the Jayhawks and selling his photos to newspapers in Topeka, Lawrence and Kansas City. He devoured photography magazines. He studied lighting techniques in photos. He worked at a camera store.

Years later, as his reputation flourished, he got access at sports events no one else got, thanks to the widespread trust and respect he earned. Adolph Rupp let him shoot from the Kentucky bench. Then, again, you always make your own luck.



Rich Clarkson will shoot his 60th Final Four.

Clarkson demanded perfection from himself. Detail and innovation were up front. He pursued his passion in a lifetime of storytelling that began on the day he borrowed his mom's box camera.

His achievements as one of America's premier photographers are displayed at the Richard C. Clarkson Gallery. It was dedicated in 2012 at the William Allen White School of Journalism on the Kansas campus, where it belongs. Why? Because Clarkson is KU to the core.

Someone once asked him what makes a great photographer. He said, "Uniqueness. I can't define it, but I know it when I see it."

Yes, he knows it well. His camera, his pictures, his storied career sum up the very essence of unique.

USBWA shares special day with Lauren Hill

By MEL GREENBERG

At a recent function here in Philadelphia, popular Saint Joseph's men's coach Phil Martelli approached and started a conversation by noting: "Lauren Hill, there won't be a bigger story in all of women's basketball this season."

Indeed, the well-chronicled stand that the 19-year-old Division III freshman player at Mount St. Joseph's in Cincinnati has taken in pursuing her love of basketball and raising awareness in the face of suffering with a terminal and rare form of pediatric brain cancer has captured the hearts of the nation and many in the sports world beyond the basketball community.

And on Nov. 2 at Xavier's Cintas Center, before a sellout crowd of 10,000 that included top stars from the WNBA and some from the NFL and also before a nationwide TV audience, Lauren realized her goal of reaching her first collegiate game and scoring. At halftime, the USBWA was there to help celebrate the realization of her dream with the presentation of the Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award that involved an unprecedented action by the organization.

"Today has been the best day I've ever had," Hill said after her team had beaten Hiram College. "Thank you. I don't know what else to say but thank you."

In a surprise appearance, Tennessee women's basketball coach emeritus Pat Summitt, for whom the award is named and is battling Alzheimer's disease,



Lauren Hill gets a hug from Pat Summitt, with Mel Greenberg looking on.

made a special trip to help with the presentation, as did former Tennessee star Tamika Catchings of the WNBA Indiana Fever.

A year ago, Hill was diagnosed with diffuse in-

trinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG, and was given at best two years to live. It was just 48 days after Lauren, a star at nearby Lawrenceburg High in Indiana who wears No. 22, had committed to the Lions.

She continued to play last season while taking treatments for the disease but soon after arriving at Mount St. Joseph's in September, she learned the tumor was growing and doctors gave her until December, at best, to live.

At that moment, she still yearned to play in her first collegiate game. Lauren's story became known through social media, with many initiatives involved to raise money for the Lauren Hill Tribute Fund at The Cure Starts Now.

The USBWA will be making a donation as it has for causes specified by previous Most Courageous men's and women's winners.

To help Lauren realize her dream, coach Dan Benjamin was able to get Hiram to agree to move the season opener to Mount St. Joseph's and play two weeks earlier if the NCAA gave an exemption, which it did in an unprecedented action.

A few days later, during a USBWA board teleconference to prepare for the season, it was suggested that perhaps we might take the unusual step of presenting the award right now to give to Lauren while she could still accept it in person.

The motion was approved in a flash. The school was then contacted and, thrilled with the honor, officials suggested that it be given to Lauren at the game with halftime built around the presentation.

Meanwhile, between that time and the actual event, Xavier offered to take the game from the 100 or so seat-gym at Mount St. Joseph's to its larger venue. A week later, tickets were gone within an hour of going on sale.

Fox-Ohio was going to telecast the game, but by Nov. 2, Fox put it on any outlet not involved with Sunday NFL contests. At those places that aired football, the game was aired on a delayed basis.

The network executives also said they wanted to air the entire USBWA presentation. When the half arrived, the running clock between periods would not start until Lauren had received the plaque.

USBWA member Debbie Antonelli, who was the analyst for the broadcast, said beforehand, "Hardest thing I ever had to do. I was around at the end when Kay Yow (her college coach) passed away, but this is much different."

Likewise from here, it was the most challenging speech to write and present, but it was well-received. In the interest of space, you can read the transcript at my womhoops guru blog – <http://womhoops.blogspot.com/2014/11/transcript-of-guru-usbwa-pat-summitt.html>.

Needless to say emotions flowed greatly, especially when Lauren was announced in the lineup, when she scored right at the outset and when she got back into the game and scored again right at the end.

Recently in a call, coach Benjamin noted, "Lauren achieved what she desired. Our job going forward is to carry her legacy every day."

Paige, Okafor head preseason lists

ST. LOUIS – The USBWA announced early season watch lists for national player and freshman of the year.

Heading the lists are preseason picks Marcus Paige of North Carolina for the Oscar Robertson Trophy for player of the year and Jahlil Okafor of Duke for the Wayman Tisdale Award for freshman of the year.

The player and freshman of the year awards, along with the Henry Iba Award for national coach of the year, will be announced in March and presented to the winners at the Devon Energy College Basketball Awards gala at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City on April 14.

Following are the complete watch lists:
2014-15 USBWA MEN'S WATCH LISTS

Oscar Robertson Trophy – Ron Baker, Wichita State; Branden Dawson, Michigan State; Sam Dekker, Wisconsin; Jerian Grant, Notre Dame; Montrezl Harrell, Louisville; Aaron Harrison, Kentucky; Andrew Harrison, Kentucky; Stanley Johnson, Arizona; Frank Kaminsky,



Marcus Paige



Jahlil Okafor

Kansas; James Blackmon Jr., Indiana; Daniel Hamilton, UConn; Justin Jackson, North Carolina; Robert Johnson, Indiana; Stanley Johnson, Arizona; Tyus Jones, Duke; Kaleb Joseph, Syracuse; Kevon Looney, UCLA; Trey Lyles, Kentucky; Chris McCullough, Syracuse; Jahlil Okafor, Duke; Chinanu Onuaku, Louisville; Kelly Oubre Jr., Kansas; D'Angelo Russell, Ohio State; Karl-Anthony Towns, Kentucky; Reid Travis, Stanford; Myles Turner, Texas; Tyler Ulis, Kentucky; Rashad Vaughn, UNLV; Isaiah Whitehead, Seton Hall; Justise Winslow, Duke.

Wisconsin; Caris LeVert, Michigan; Jordan Mickey, LSU; Larry Nance Jr., Wyoming; Georges Niang, Iowa State; Jahlil Okafor, Duke; Marcus Paige, North Carolina; Kevin Pangos, Gonzaga; Terran Petteway, Nebraska; Bobby Portis, Arkansas; Angel Rodriguez, Miami; Juwan Staten, West Virginia; Karl-Anthony Towns, Kentucky; Fred VanVleet, Wichita State; Justise Winslow, Duke; Delon Wright, Utah.

Wayman Tisdale Award – Cliff Alexander,