

Hall of Fame welcomes Bilovsky, Lopresti, Rawlings

Frank Bilovsky made his bones in the Big Five's heyday. Mike Lopresti was born and raised in Indiana, where he has spent his entire professional career. Lenox Rawlings grew up in the Tobacco Road neighborhood, worked a brief spell elsewhere and returned to become a regional icon.

It's not a requirement for USBWA Hall of Fame inductees to be rooted in the nation's most fertile hoops soil. But when great journalism talent lives among great subject matter, the resulting body of work winds up a slam dunk for election.

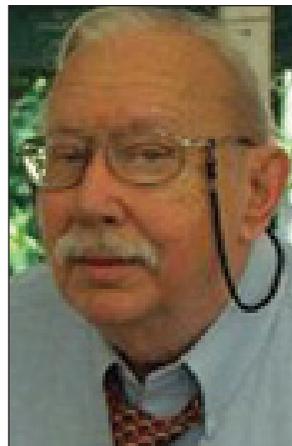
At age 13 in rural Pennsylvania, Bilovsky was smitten by college basketball when Lebanon Valley College from nearby Annville was invited to the 1953 NCAA tournament. The Flying Dutchmen defeated Fordham before falling to Bob Pettit and LSU. Lebanon Valley? How great a story was that?

"That was my baptism," Bilovsky says. "My confirmation was the Big Five, when I went to La Salle."

He graduated in 1962, got hired by the late Philadelphia Bulletin a year later and was assigned to cover the Big Five. His prose told the story of those doubleheaders at the Palestra until the Bulletin's demise in 1982.

"Frank played a huge role in transforming the Big Five into a Philadelphia institution and the Palestra into a national landmark," Hall of Famer Dick "Hoops" Weiss says.

A national sportswriting landmark is what Lopresti's column has become in USA Today. Lopresti got his journal-



Frank Bilovsky



Mike Lopresti



Lenox Rawlings

ism start at his hometown newspaper, the Palladium-Item, while a high school student in Richmond, Ind., where he still lives. He worked for the P-I until joining the startup crew for USA Today in 1982. Atlanta will mark his 34th Final Four.

Hall of Famer and former longtime Gannett colleague Steve Wieberg tells a story that wraps Lopresti's gifts in a tight package. The Soviets had just defeated Team USA in the 1988 Olympics semifinals, their first meeting since the infamy of Munich '72. Lopresti had barely finished his game story for the news service when he was informed USA Today wanted a column from him, too – and, oh, he had 20 minutes.

Lopresti tapped out the column on his primitive laptop, then puffed up the stairs to ask Wieberg for a quick read "to make sure there's nothing in there that's stupid or wrong."

"I scrolled down ... scrolled down ... scrolled down," Wieberg says, "until I'd read through it, and then looked at him. 'Bleep you,' I said. I couldn't have written anything half as good if I'd had hours or even days to think it through."

It's hard to imagine anyone saying "Bleep you" to Rawlings, who retired in December after 34 years writing sports columns for the Winston-Salem Journal, where his work was must-read material for anyone remotely interested in the ACC. He previously worked in Raleigh, Greensboro and Atlanta.

A graduate of North Carolina, Rawlings never played favorites as he wrote about some of college ball's hottest rivalries, and he never shied from criticizing whoever and whatever deserved rebuke. That approach might have angered a few coaches and more than a few boosters. But Rawlings' way with words disarmed them and his honesty commanded respect. And it was just damn difficult to argue with his demeanor.

"An old-style, Southern gentleman," wrote the Salisbury Post's Mike London, who got Rawlings' style exactly right in one word: "Elegant."

Bilovsky, reflecting on his own career, could have been speaking for all three inductees when he said, "I've led a charmed life."

Yes, and basketball fans who've read our three honorees' handiwork are the beneficiaries.

These vice-presidents put in overtime, and then some

Typically, the offseason duties of a USBWA vice-president are ... nothing. I spent three offseasons in the role, and I cannot remember ever being asked to do a single thing.

It was with that knowledge that Kirk Wessler, Dana O'Neil and Frank Burlison were informed early last summer that Joe Mitch and I had learned that the NCAA again had its eyes on the media's courtside seats. We didn't know when, or to what extent, but we knew that with Greg Shaheen no longer in charge of the NCAA Tournament, changes for us were in store.

That was all they needed to hear. The next few months included several hour-long teleconferences among us that led to each of them taking a day out of their busy schedules for our September meeting with the NCAA in Indianapolis. Throughout it all, their only complaints were directed at an organization that believed it somehow made sense to inhibit our ability to tell the story of their game.

The vice-presidents provided the perfect blend of personalities and talents.

Wessler has the touch of a columnist with the administrative experience of a sports editor – a combination that

plays well not only in Peoria. Kirk's a big-time talent who's as mid-major as Mark Few, Brad Stevens or Shaka Smart.

When the NCAA asked who should be given first dibs on any courtside seats that might be saved for us, ESPN.com's O'Neil was the first to stand up for the participating

down-sizing and defunct newspapers – the deepest of appreciation for this profession that we represent.

They pushed and pulled each other – and Joe and I, as well – and filled in when necessary. Wessler's firm rebuttal to the NCAA following our meeting in Indianapolis set just the right tone that enabled us to salvage what courtside seats we could. O'Neil took the point on several subsequent issues.

Without these three, we not only would be without any courtside seats this tournament, but the entirety of our media seating would be tucked away in end-zone seating.

This wasn't the presidency that I had envisioned. Hopes of somehow bridging the gap between SIDs and beat writers got sidetracked. Given the manpower that was put into the seating issue instead, we might also have restored print media guides, created better access to players and negotiated that

long-awaited Creedence Clearwater Revival reunion.

Plenty of issues still remain. The best of news is that I write this, my final column as the USBWA president, knowing that the hardest-working bunch of vice-presidents will step up and take them on, all year long if necessary.

John Akers
Basketball Times
President

teams' beat writers. She also was easily the most tenacious of the group, blessed with an ability to express her outrage and indignation without making it personal. The next person who claims to dislike Dana will surely be the first.

Burly brought passion and – significant in these days of

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USBWA continuing relationship with Naismith Hall of Fame

The USBWA is pleased to welcome back the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame as sponsor of the association’s Best Writing Contest.

After a brief hiatus as sponsor of the writing contest, the Hall of Fame has committed to a three-year sponsorship agreement with the USBWA.

“We are proud to renew our partnership with the USBWA,” said John Doleva, president and CEO of the Basketball Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame’s sponsorship provides funding for cash awards and plaques that are given annually to contest winners in each of five categories (columns, spot news, investigative reporting, moderate-length feature and magazine-length stories).

The Hall of Fame also serves – along with ESPN – as a sponsor of the USBWA awards breakfast held on the morning of the national championship game at the NCAA men’s Final Four.

The USBWA is also working with Doleva to resurrect an exhibit at the Hall of Fame museum in Springfield, Mass., that listed the names of all past presidents of the association, dating back to the USBWA’s founding in 1956.

Doleva said the Hall of Fame museum is experiencing record growth, with attendance increasing by over 14 percent last year. Doleva attributes the increase to a “60 Days of Summer” promotion that featured something happening every day at the museum, such as clinics and book signings.

Exhibits such as biographies and memorabilia of the newest members of the Hall of Fame – as well as those already in the Hall and the numerous interactive displays at the museum – also help attract new and returning visitors. Every year, the Hall of Fame announces the newest class of inductees at the Final Four during a news conference following the USBWA’s Monday morning breakfast.

The announcement always brings joy to those selected but disappointment – and sometimes controversy – to those who aren’t.

“Joe O’Brien (former executive director of the NABC) used to say the cream always rises to the top and eventually those deserving will get into Hall,” Doleva said.

Doleva said the Basketball Hall of Fame is proud to recognize the achievements of people at all levels in basketball – players, coaches, college, professional, women, men and international constituents.

“This is what sets the Basketball Hall of Fame apart

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



from other Halls of Fame,” Doleva said. “We address all aspects of the game. It’s total representation. We recognize the entire game.”

To be inducted into the Hall, an individual must receive 18 of 24 votes from the Honors Committee. Five special committees deal with specialized categories such as international basketball, early African-American pioneers, players and coaches from the old ABA and contributors.

In addition to those being inducted and introduced at this year’s Final Four, the Hall also will announce the recipients of the Curt Gowdy

Award for print and electronic excellence. Past award winners on the print side who are also in the USBWA Hall of Fame include Dave Dorr, Bob Ryan, Larry Donald, Jim O’Connell, Malcolm Moran, Alex Wolff and Dick Weiss.

USBWA AWARDS.

The USBWA’S Oscar Robertson Player of the Year Trophy, the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award and the Wayman Tisdale Freshman of the Year Award will be presented on Monday, April 15, at a College Basketball Gala in Oklahoma City.

The USBWA is partnering with a non-profit organization in Oklahoma (Access Sports) on the gala, with proceeds going to the Wayman Tisdale Foundation for disadvantaged youth and the National Kidney Foundation on behalf of Oscar Robertson.

The gala is a departure from previous years, when the USBWA split its awards presentations between two venues. The Robertson Trophy and Iba Award were presented at a Final Four breakfast, and the Tisdale Freshman Award was handed out 10 days later at a banquet in Oklahoma City in honor of Tisdale, an Oklahoma native and former Sooners and NBA star who passed away from cancer.

This year, the USBWA decided to bring presentation of all three of its awards under one roof by participating in the gala in Oklahoma City. In addition to the presentation of the USBWA player and coach of the year awards, a Humanitarian Award will be presented to Michigan State coach Tom Izzo. Past winners include ESPN’s Dick Vitale and Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski.



Most Courageous: BC's Kelley, Oakland's Francis

When it comes to the basketball universe, "courage" isn't an entity that is found only on a court.

In the cases of Beckie Francis and Dick Kelley, courage can be demonstrated in the baring of long-held and painful secrets and in persevering with day-to-day chores while suffering the impact of a debilitating and un-sparing disease.

Francis, in her 13th season as the women's coach at Oakland University, and Kelley, the sports information director at his alma mater, Boston College, since 1989, are the winners of the USBWA's Most Courageous Awards.

The women's most courageous award is named in honor of former Tennessee coach Pat Summitt, who received the award after revealing she was suffering from early onset dementia.

Last fall, Francis publicly disclosed that her now-diseased father had sexually assaulted her from the time she was 4 years old until she was in the seventh grade.

Francis had told her story to her players and fellow church parishioners before deciding to go public with her experiences, partly, she said, because of the attention the scandal surrounding the accusations against Jerry Sandusky, the former Penn State assistant football coach.



Beckie Francis

"It's not easy to talk about," she said during an interview with the Associated Press. "It's something I tried to hold back and hide because I was afraid of what people would think. It's to a point now where situations are coming out in the media with all kinds of cases from schools,

In the cases of Beckie Francis and Dick Kelley, courage can be demonstrated in the baring of long-held and painful secrets and in persevering with day-to-day chores while suffering the impact of a debilitating disease.

churches, everywhere, and I'm tired of it."

The 47-year-old Francis said she didn't tell her mother until she was in her 30s because "I was in total denial ... and that's another example of why I want to talk about this," she added in the AP interview. "I know that people are so embarrassed and they think, 'Oh, I'm just going to forget about it. It was in the past. Move on. Buck up. Suck it up.' But there are so many things. It can affect your health. It just affects our confidence. And since I have let it go, I am

happier than I have ever been. I am totally free."

She told the USBWA, "I am humbled to receive this award. I broke down in tears when I was informed that the USBWA was recognizing me and bringing attention to what has become a national problem. I told people, 'This organization gets it.'"



Dick Kelley

Kelley was struck with the incurable amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in 2011. Even with his declining health and mobility, he is a viable and vibrant presence on campus and in BC's athletic department and basketball facilities.

The school's men's basketball coach, Steve Donahue, told Pete Thamel of Sports Illustrated that, "I think what separates Dick is that most guys in his job are really into the team and

want them to win. (Kelley) is so much more genuine about caring for the guys as people and helping the guys. His attitude is, 'I'm going to make these guys be part of BC and support them anyway that I can.' You never got the sense that Dick was doing this to get publicity for the school. He was genuinely caring about the people and who they are."

When informed by Joe Mitch of the USBWA of his impending honor, Kelley wrote, "I am overwhelmed ... I am very grateful."

Twenty-five years ago, Katha Quinn set the standard

By MALCOLM MORAN

She had to know she was dying.

As she stood before us in Kansas City a quarter century ago, honored for turning strength of will into an event at the Pan American Games during the previous summer, Katha Quinn spoke of a future that had not been promised. She acknowledged her circumstance without dwelling on it. She chose to concentrate on everyone else, especially the people at St. John's University, the Big East conference and beyond who had made her role as sports information director so rewarding.

And when she was finished, in a room filled with tears, the applause went on and on and on. In the history of the USBWA, there had not been a moment quite like it.

Katha had been honored for an achievement she did not consider remarkable. She had agreed to supervise the basketball media operation at Market Square Arena during the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis. She wouldn't allow a little thing such as a diagnosis of liver cancer get in the way of her job.

The diagnosis was made in January, approximately six months before the event. So she made her commitment part of a recovery plan. Actually, the commitment became the focal point. Obsession might not be too strong a word.



Katha Quinn

"Dying is no big deal," Red Smith once said. "The least of us will manage that. Living is the trick."

The way she lived her life became the lesson she left behind. Katha began to undergo experimental chemotherapy treatments that would continue for 18 months. According to St. John's officials, previous treatments with other patients had not extended more than seven months. Katha

When she was finished, in a room filled with tears, the applause went on and on and on. In the history of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association, there had not been a moment quite like it.

was going to be there in the late summer, and she was going to complete the job. She followed every instruction. She endured the treatments. She took naps. She ate fruits and vegetables. She made it to Indianapolis, navigated through the demanding tournament schedule and supervised an efficient operation.

During the final days of the tournament, in the middle of a quiet afternoon, there was concern on her face as she

asked a question:

"How do I look?"

The truth was that she looked great. On behalf of those of us that had not been following a healthy regimen, regularly choosing to conclude our workdays with a cheeseburger and adult beverage at 1:30 a.m., the truth was that Katha was in the 98th percentile among credentialed media members in Indianapolis.



Greg Shaheen

That is how she looked on that Monday morning in Kansas City when she received a then-unnamed award for outstanding service to the industry. In the quarter century to follow, the roster of Katha Quinn Award winners has grown into a collection of outstanding public relations officers and administrators. This year's award is going to Greg Shaheen, the former NCAA executive vice president, championships and alliances.

The sad reality was that the truth lied. The 50th Final Four was Katha's last. She passed away the following March, one day before her birthday, at the age of 35.

"Yesterday she said to me, 'I need a miracle,'" Lou Carnesecca, then the St. John's coach, said after her passing. "What she didn't know was that she was the miracle." Malcolm Moran is director of the National Sports Journalism Center at Indiana University Indianapolis.

ESPN.com's Medcalf wins Rising Star award

Being named the winner of the Rising Star Award is another humbling career experience for a sharecropper's grandson, ESPN.com's Myron Medcalf.

Medcalf, 29, is the fourth recipient of the Rising Star award, which goes to a USBWA member who is under 30 years of age and shows exceptional promise in our profession. Medcalf played football and ran track early in his career at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and he served as the public-address announcer for three of the Mavericks' sports teams, but he was never a sports writer while in college. And, yet, early in his college years, he made a bold declaration.

"When I got to Mankato, I told people that I wanted to go work for ESPN," Medcalf recalled. "People would kind of look at you crazy, because no one even knows where Mankato is. I didn't go to Michigan or Syracuse or one of those bigger schools. So, how are you going to get there?"

Medcalf's initial answer to his own question was to become the first African-American editor-in-chief of his school's newspaper, the MSU Reporter. He also took internships at both ESPN the Magazine and at the Minneapolis Star-Tribune that led to fulltime jobs. The internship at the Star-Tribune following his graduation at Mankato led to jobs covering the night cops beat and City Hall, both in St. Paul. He was named Minnesota's AP Young Journalist of the Year in 2006.



Myron Medcalf

Little did Medcalf know that these experiences would be the perfect preparation for becoming the University of Minnesota men's basketball beat writer in 2007 and for the Golden Gophers' particularly turbulent season of 2009-10. That year, the highly recruited Royce White was involved in a pair of legal matters that led to his suspension from the team, his announcement on YouTube that he was leaving the program and his withdrawal from school. Another top recruit, Trevor Mbakwe, was suspended while he awaited trial for a felony assault charge. Starting point guard Al Nolen became academically ineligible at midseason.

"It was one bad thing after another," Medcalf said. "It seemed like literally every other day, there was something new happening with the program. I think I grew a lot, because it forced me to pull all of my experiences together and write a lot of high-profile stories.

"When other young sports writers ask me what they should do to get on a sports-writing path, I always tell them that they should do everything but sports for a time. For me (covering the Gophers), I was essentially covering a crime beat. I might not have known where to look for documents I needed if I hadn't had experience as a crime reporter. I had to deal with a lot of people who had nothing to do with basketball – lawyers and judges and victims. Then you had to tell a sports story that wasn't really a sports story."

The drama didn't end with the 2009-10 season. A year later, Medcalf learned that Devoe Joseph was transferring in midseason from a 3 a.m. email from Joseph's mother.

Through it all, Medcalf said his skin grew thicker and that he learned some important lessons along the way.

"The biggest thing I learned is that you have to be fearless in this business," Medcalf said. "You don't want to get so close that you can't write the story where the coach wakes up next to a strip club, drunk. If you get that call, you have to be in a position to write it."

Hired by ESPN.com in 2011, Medcalf found that his ability to work with video, TV, radio and live chats to be as valuable as his writing skills. Though he had no formal broadcast training, he believes that co-hosting that Saturday evening sports radio show at Mankato State helped him become a multimedia journalist.

He also has noticed that he might again be a pioneer of sorts. The first African-American editor of his school newspaper is now the only African-American national college-basketball writer.

The significance of his achievements sunk in the first time he covered a Final Four, in 2010.

"Covering the Final Four with all these other national reporters felt like I had achieved one of the things I'd really set out to accomplish," Medcalf said. "Remember, in my family, I'm two generations away from sharecroppers. My mom's dad was chopping wood in a forest in Louisiana. My grandfather was a sharecropper in the South who couldn't read or write.

"And here I am. I'd like to think that's progress."

Robertson, Tisdale lists feature Bennett, McLemore

The 12 finalists for the U.S. Basketball Writers Association's Oscar Robertson Award, given to the nation's top player, include two freshmen and pairs of players from both the Indiana Hoosiers and the Kansas Jayhawks.

Anthony Bennett of UNLV and Ben McLemore of Kansas were also named to a 12-man list of finalists for the Wayman Tisdale Award, given to the nation's top freshman.

McLemore was joined by shot-blocking teammate Jeff Withey on the Oscar Robertson list. The Hoosiers' Victor Oladipo and Cody Zeller also were named to the list.

Zeller was one of just four players from the USBWA's preseason list of candidates who remained on the midseason list, along with Trey Burke of Michigan, Doug McDermott of Creighton and Deshaun Thomas of Ohio State.

Others named to the watch list included Michael Carter-Williams of Syracuse, Kelly Olynyk of Gonzaga, Mason Plumlee of Duke and Russ Smith of Louisville.

McDermott, a first-team All-American during the 2011-12 season, has been among the nation's scoring leaders, at nearly 24 points per game, and Thomas has been the Big Ten Conference leader, at about 20 ppg. Plumlee has been among the nation's rebounding leaders, at about 11 per game, while also averaging more than 17 ppg. Withey has been among the nation's top four shot-blockers, at more than 4 per game.

2013 OSCAR ROBERTSON TROPHY MIDSEASON WATCH LIST

- F – Anthony Bennett, UNLV (6-8, 240, Fr., Brampton, Ont.)
- G – Trey Burke, Michigan (6-0, 190, So., Columbus, Ohio)
- G – Michael Carter-Williams, Syracuse (6-6, 185, So., Hamilton, Mass.)
- F – Doug McDermott, Creighton (6-8, 225, Jr., Ames, Iowa)
- G – Ben McLemore, Kansas (6-5, 195, Fr., St. Louis, Mo.)
- G – Victor Oladipo, Indiana (6-5, 214, Jr., Upper Marlboro, Md.)
- F – Kelly Olynyk, Gonzaga (7-0, 238, Jr., Kamloops, B.C.)
- F – Mason Plumlee, Duke (6-10, 235, Sr., Warsaw, Ind.)
- G – Russ Smith, Louisville (6-0, 165, Jr., Brooklyn, N.Y.)
- F – Deshaun Thomas, Ohio State (6-7, 215, Jr., Fort Wayne, Ind.)
- C – Jeff Withey, Kansas (7-0, 235, Sr., San Diego, Calif.)
- F – Cody Zeller, Indiana (7-0, 240, So., Washington, Ind.)

McDermott and Burke were named the USBWA Players of the Week. McDermott was honored on Dec. 16 after following up a 30-point effort against Akron with a 34-point game against California. Burke was honored on Jan. 7 after posting 23 points and a career-high four steals against Northwestern and 19 points and a career-high 11 assists against Iowa.

Carter-Williams has led the nation in assists, at about 9 per game, with Burke not far behind at about 7 assists

2013 WAYMAN TISDALE TROPHY MIDSEASON WATCH LIST

- G – Jordan Adams, UCLA (6-5, 220, Atlanta, Ga.)
- G – Kyle Anderson, UCLA (6-9, 235, Fairview, N.J.)
- C – Isaiah Austin, Baylor (7-1, 220, Arlington, Texas)
- F – Anthony Bennett, UNLV (6-8, 240, Brampton, Ont.)
- G – Jahii Carson, Arizona State (5-10, 175, Mesa, Ariz.)
- G – Kevin (Yogi) Ferrell, Indiana (6-0, 178, Indianapolis, Ind.)
- G – Ben McLemore, Kansas (6-5, 195, St. Louis, Mo.)
- G-F – Shabazz Muhammad, UCLA (6-6, 225, Las Vegas, Nev.)
- F – Nerlens Noel, Kentucky (6-10, 228, Everett, Mass.)
- F – Glenn Robinson III, Michigan (6-6, 210, St. John, Ind.)
- G – Marcus Smart, Oklahoma State (6-4, 225, Flower Mound, Texas)
- G – Nik Stauskas, Michigan (6-6, 190, Mississauga, Ont.)

and 18 ppg. Carter-Williams also has been among the national leaders in steals, at about 3 per game, with Oladipo averaging about 2.5 per game. Oladipo and Olynyk have also been among the nation's leaders in shooting percentage, at about 66 percent. Oladipo is also known for his spectacular dunks and his shut-down defense; in a victory over No. 1 Michigan, he was credited with defending four different players and holding them collectively to just four points.

Six freshmen from the preseason Wayman Tisdale candidates remained on the USBWA's midseason list: Bennett, Kyle Anderson of UCLA, Isaiah Austin of Baylor, Shabazz Muhammad of UCLA, Nerlens Noel of Kentucky and Marcus Smart of Oklahoma State.

Newcomers to the list included McLemore, Jordan Adams of UCLA, Jahii Carson of Arizona State, Yogi Ferrell of Indiana, Glenn Robinson III of Michigan and Nik Stauskas of Michigan.

Noel has led all players in blocks at more than 4 per game and has been among the top three freshmen in rebounding and steals. Muhammad, Bennett and Carson have been among the nation's top four freshman scorers, with Bennett also ranking among the top 10 rebounders and Carson among the top 10 freshmen in assists.

The names of the 12 finalists will appear on the ballots for both the Oscar Robertson and Wayman Tisdale awards.