

Changing times make USBWA even more vital

GLENDALE, ARIZ. – When I covered the Final Four for the first time 25 years ago in Minneapolis, concepts like the Internet and even having a cell phone seemed like the stuff of science fiction.

Not that those weren't pioneering times in the business: I believe I wrote on the newfangled flip-top Tandy Radio Shack, on which you could finally see more than a few lines of type and could magically transmit your stories in less than 10 minutes – unless somebody, say, kicked out the power cord in mid-send and you had to start over.

Even back in the day, though, there was one force we could all count on: the USBWA and its heart and soul, executive director Joe Mitch.

The USBWA was formed in 1956 at the urging of then-NCAA executive director Walter Byers, and it's perhaps never had a more meaningful purpose than it does now.

Then, as now, the USBWA might represent different things to different people.

But to someone awed and anxious about covering a Final Four, there was enormous comfort in being introduced to the organization that year.

Dave Dorr, the USBWA Hall of Famer who was then my colleague at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, coaxed me to attend what was then an awards breakfast and

Vahe Gregorian Kansas City Star President



business meeting. It opened up a world to me.

Here were giants of the profession, welcoming in as peers those of us who had little to no sense of where we were.

Here was a group whose existence was based on helping all of us do our jobs to the best of our abilities.

The USBWA ever since has been a source of sustenance for me, and, of course, it has been just that for hundreds of others over the years.

The camaraderie and sense of shared purpose within our own distinct missions makes all of our work easier, better and more fulfilling.

If you didn't already know that, it was affirmed one way or another during what now is our annual luncheon (thanks, again, to the wisdom of past president Dana O'Neil) and the moving and appreciative speeches of

our 2017 Hall of Fame inductees: Tom Archdeacon, Steve Carp, Frank Deford and David Teel.

Much has changed all around us over the years, but that has only made the resource of the USBWA more vital.

As the incoming president, I'm taking the baton from immediate past president Ed Graney and all Ed's predecessors and will try to build on the terrific work they've done.

We'll continue to fight for seats and access and transparency and seek to find

more and better ways to recognize all that's good in college basketball and those who honor and distinguish us with their work.

As ever, we will strive to add to the strength in our numbers – with a particular aim of recruiting more females and minorities.

Our membership now sits at right around 900 or so. So if each of us just tries to think of two people to ask to join, it's hard to imagine we can't soon get over 1,000 for the first time.

If nothing else, I bet everyone can think of young colleagues covering the game who might not know about the USBWA.

Remember your own days of uncertainty and what it meant to you to have the USBWA and its members to

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Plum earns top honors at Women's Final Four

By Mel Greenberg

DALLAS – Several hours before the NCAA women's national semifinals here in the American Airlines Center, the arena interview room was the scene of presenting the annual USBWA women's awards.

Washington senior guard Kelsey Plum, the new NCAA women's career scoring record holder, was named the Ann Meyers Drysdale national player of the year. The former UCLA Hall of Famer was on hand to make the introduction.

"This isn't always just work," Plum said. "You have to have the right fit, you have to have the right team, you have to have the right coach, the right city, the right university. And God has been good to me, and for that I'm extremely grateful and just humbled.

"The ability to touch people and make a difference. The ability to inspire little boys and girls across the country. That was icing on the cake for this year."

Oregon guard Sabrina Ionescu was named the freshman of the year and Connecticut's Geno Auriemma won his sixth coach of the year honor.

In previously announced awards, Barb Kowal, a former Connecticut and Texas women's basketball

Mel Greenberg Women's Representative



publicist now with the College Sports Information Directors Association (CoSIDA), earned the Mary Jo Haverbeck Award named for the late Penn State pioneering women's basketball public relations staffer.

"Mary Jo was a mentor, a friend, and a colleague," Kowal said. "A very true trailblazer in the '70s and '80s. She knocked on doors to get coverage for women's basketball, probably pounded on doors to be honest, and the rest of us followed."

Also, ESPN's Holly Rowe and Appalachian State coach Angel Elderkin were co-winners of the Pat Summitt Most Courageous Award named for the late

Tennessee legendary coach who passed away last June.

Rowe, in an emotional acceptance speech, told a story of Summitt teaching her to use contact lenses.

"Growing up in Utah, I always appreciated that you can be tough and gracious and demanding at the same time," Rowe said. "That's what Pat Summitt taught me. She was everything to me because she was the first woman I saw on TV who was fierce and could yell and demand and look perfect and win."

Elderkin spoke of her time with Summitt: "One of the greatest lessons that she taught me and all those who have been around her is you win in life with the people you surround yourself with. I didn't do this alone. I did it with the people I surrounded myself with. And the two hours a day I got to coach my team was the best medicine anyone could have.

"It wasn't the chemo. It wasn't radiation. It was this game and the people that are in this game and the team I was able to coach. And the players that love me, supported me and drove me crazy along the way is what saved my life."

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USBWA owes huge debt to the late Wayne Duke

The USBWA owes a huge debt of gratitude to former Big Ten and Big Eight commissioner Wayne Duke, who passed away at the age of 88 on March 29.

Duke is credited with forming the USBWA 61 years ago when he worked in the NCAA office as an assistant to executive director Walter Byers. Byers encouraged Duke to organize an association for basketball writers, similar to what had been done for football writers 15 years earlier. Duke eventually wrote the original Constitution and Bylaws for the USBWA.

Bob Russell of the *Chicago Daily News* was elected the association's first president, and Ed Schneider of the *Chicago American* was named the first executive director.

USBWA MOST COURAGEOUS AWARD.

It is the USBWA's oldest award and since it was first presented 39 years ago, the recipients of the Most Courageous Award have typically been individuals who faced enormous challenges in life, such as cancer, an injury or the loss of an eye or an arm.

Only once before has the USBWA recognized someone for their social activism. Penn guard Dau Jok was the first, returning to his war-torn homeland in Sudan to establish a foundation to help educate Southern Sudanese children through sports.

The second was this year's most courageous recipient – Bronson Koenig, a senior guard for Wisconsin and a member of the Ho-Chunk tribe. Koenig was recognized for the personal courage he showed in support of the Native American community protesting the Dakota pipeline for environmental reasons.

Koenig drove over 700 miles to join the protest. Once there, he spoke with kids at Standing Rock near Bismarck, N.D., and put on free basketball clinics.

"Being a role model, speaking out about issues and offering encouragement to the Native American community is one of the biggest priorities in my life," Koenig said. "I'm trying to make an impact any way I can."

Koenig accepted the Most Courageous Award from USBWA President Ed Graney at this year's USBWA honors luncheon at the Final Four in Phoenix.

"I am here accepting this award not for me but for all the Native Americans out there who are continuing to battle each and every day," Koenig said. "I believe

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



that I get a lot of my courage from just seeing what they go through each and every day.

"When I first heard about the Dakota Access Pipeline, I knew I had to do something. I saw that my platform was a perfect way to raise awareness, and I started using social media to get the word out. But it just wasn't enough for me knowing there are people putting their lives at risk every day.

"The trip was a life-changing moment for me, and I feel the need to keep fighting for my people day in and day out. Honestly, I just did what I thought was the right thing to do ... to make the world a better place."

OTHER USBWA AWARDS AT THE HONORS LUNCHEON. David Gardner, who joined *Bleacher Report* recently after a stint with *Sports Illustrated*, received the Rising Star Award for journalistic excellence by members under 30.

Bernie Cafarelli, who moved from Notre Dame this past season to the American Athletic Conference, was presented with the Katha Quinn Award for meritorious service to the media. Cafarelli is only the third woman to receive the award.

Induction ceremonies for the newest members of the USBWA Hall of Fame were held for Tom Archdeacon, *Dayton Daily News*; Steve Carp, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*; Frank Deford, *Sports Illustrated*; and David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*.

The Ray Marquette Award, named for the late *Indianapolis Star* sportswriter and USBWA executive director, was presented to Graney for his leadership as USBWA president. Graney's goal as president was to serve the membership. He focused on improving working conditions for writers, increasing access to players and coaches and encouraging schools and conferences to provide better security for writers covering games, especially for female writers walking to their cars after late night games.

Gregorian named USBWA president

Vahe Gregorian, columnist for the *Kansas City Star*, moved into the USBWA's presidency position for 2017-18 at the association's annual board of directors' meeting during this year's men's Final Four in Phoenix.

Gregorian succeeds Ed Graney, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, as president of the USBWA.

Seth Davis, *CBS Sports* and *Sports Illustrated*, was named third vice president. Moving up in the rotation of officers were

David Teel, *Newport News Daily Press*, first vice president, and Mike Waters, *Syracuse Post-Standard*, second vice president.

Named to the board as district reps for three-year terms were Shannon Ryan, *Chicago Tribune*, District V; Lee Barfnecht, *Omaha World-Herald*, District VI; and George Schroeder, *USA Today*, at-large. Brian Morrison, *Atlantic Coast Conference*, was chosen as SID representative for a one-year term.

Mason, Ball, Few take USBWA's highest honors

The U.S. Basketball Writers Association named Frank Mason III, Mark Few and Lonzo Ball the winners of its three major awards.

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

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

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

Mason was presented with the award by "The Big O" himself at an April 17 news conference at the Final Four.

An under-recruited and little-known player out of Petersburg (Va.) High School, Mason went on to become one of Kansas' all-time greats and the Jayhawks' first All-American since Thomas Robinson in 2012. He is the first Kansas player to win the Oscar Robertson Trophy.

"To be the first player from Kansas to win the Oscar Robertson Trophy is amazing as there have been so many great players at KU," Mason said. "There is no way I could have won this without great coaches, like coach (Bill) Self, the rest of the staff and great teammates."

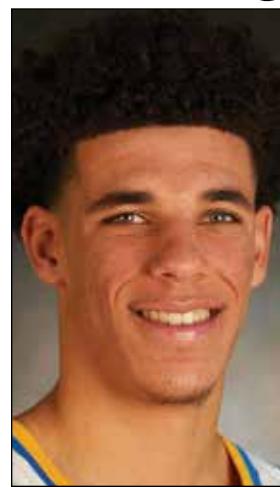
Under Few, Gonzaga reached the national championship game, finished the season at 37-2, posted its second No. 1 national ranking in program history this season and won the West Coast Conference regular-season and tournament championships for a fifth straight



Frank Mason III



Mark Few



Lonzo Ball

year with a team comprised of nine new players. At one point, the Bulldogs were 29-0.

UCLA's Ball led the nation in assists per game (7.6) and total assists (274) while establishing the Pacific 12 Conference freshman assists record for one season. In addition, he averaged 14.6 points and 6.0 rebounds and became the first Pac-12 player to average at least 14 points, seven assists and six rebounds in a season since California's Jason Kidd in the 1993-94 season.

"What we enjoy most about Lonzo is how consistent he's been with our team," said UCLA coach Steve Alford. "Nothing fazes this young man. He's the same guy each and every day and has done a great job at keeping his focus on our next game. He has helped prepare this team

the best that he can, and he does so many things to make everybody else better."

Mason and Ball were among the players headlining the USBWA's All-America first team. Others named to the first team were Villanova senior Josh Hart, Gonzaga junior Nigel Williams-Goss and Purdue sophomore Caleb Swanigan.

Hart was named the Big East Conference player of the year after leading Villanova to conference regular-season and tournament titles as the team's leading scorer (18.7 ppg). Williams-Goss, the West Coast Conference player and newcomer of the year, averaged 16.9 and 4.7 assists. Swanigan, the Big Ten Conference player of the year, helped the Boilermakers capture

the Big Ten regular-season title by leading the league in rebounding (12.6) and finishing second in scoring (18.5).

FIRST TEAM

G Lonzo Ball, UCLA, 6-6, 190, Fr.

G Nigel Williams-Goss, Gonzaga, 6-3, 195, Jr.,

G Josh Hart, Villanova, 6-5, 215, Sr.

G Frank Mason III, Kansas, 5-11, 190, Sr.

F Caleb Swanigan, Purdue, 6-9, 250, Soph.

SECOND TEAM

F Dillon Brooks, Oregon, 6-7, 225, Jr.

F/G Justin Jackson, North Carolina, 6-8, 210, Jr.

G Luke Kennard, Duke, 6-6, 202, Soph.

G Malik Monk, Kentucky, 6-3, 200, Fr.

F Johnathan Motley, Baylor, 6-10, 230, Jr.

Best Writing contest deadline approaches

The deadline for submitting stories and columns that were published during the 2016-17 college basketball season for the USBWA's Best Writing Contest is June 16. Entries received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Entries can be submitted in five categories: column writing, moderate-length features, magazine-length features, spot news/game coverage and enterprise/investigative stories.

Plaques and cash prizes are awarded in each category, with \$150 given for first place, \$125 for second, \$100 for third, \$75 for fourth and \$50 for fifth.

Only dues-paying members of the USBWA are eligible to enter the writing contest.

Members may enter more than one category, but can 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 name of the category, the author or authors of the story, the publication or website in which the article appeared, the date it was published or appeared online and an email address and telephone number for the entry's writer or writers.

Entries must be submitted to contest@usbwa.com in a readable type size. Any entry submitted in type size so small it cannot be read won't 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.

Gregorian

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lean on, and it's easy to see how meaningful membership could be for those seeking a foundation at a time of such uncertainty in our business.

You also might find that if you look through our directory, there will be several people on your staff who cover the game that aren't currently involved. It could well be worth asking them about joining.

Some news outlets might consider paying your dues for you – maybe especially so if supervisors either are in the USBWA or can be persuaded to try it for a year.

The USBWA offers much more than a source of support and a comprehensive directory of everything and everyone you need to know in the game and esteemed writing awards and prizes.

It offers more than eligibility for the NCAA Mock Tournament Selection exercise that takes place each year, more than further benefits such as Tipoff and *Basketball Times* subscriptions and discounts with major airlines, hotels and rental car companies – and even Brooks Brothers' clothiers. See usbwa.com for the latest update on those specifics.

It also offers you a voice and seat at the table in ways that you might not even imagine.

Case in point:

At our annual meeting at the Final Four with the NCAA's David Worlock and Dan Gavitt and representatives of the Division I Men's Basketball Committee, Ed and board member Mark Zeigler of the *San Diego Union Tribune* broached an issue that affects all of us: the diminishing quality of regular-season seating at nearly every arena in the country.

Technically speaking, this wasn't really a matter for the committee itself (beyond the fact that as courtside seats

become more scarce in the postseason, that trend might be considered an influence on how administrators around the country justify their decisions to move us into the rafters or behind baskets or to odd sightlines where you can't see half the court when fans stand in front of you.).

But here's what happened as discussion continued: Dan Gavitt, like David Worlock a friend to us all, took the concerns seriously.

And he kept thinking about what might be able to be done about it.

Then he offered to be our liaison for a meeting with the Division I Men's Basketball Oversight Committee, suggesting, too, that it might be possible to discuss with that committee recommendations for best practices and minimal standards.

We're expecting to meet with them later this year about that. While nothing can be promised, it's exciting to know we have a chance to engage about this frustrating issue.

Also by Ed's request, we made intriguing progress on another front that we've been bring up for years:

Sometime this fall, the Division I Men's Basketball Committee will entertain a presentation from us about having a pool reporter in the room during its bracketing and seeding.

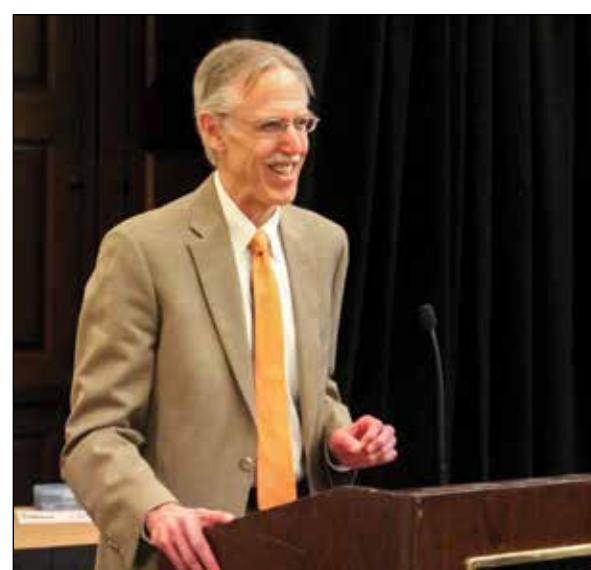
There are many reasons why that might not come to fruition, but it's enormous progress that the committee welcomed us to make the pitch.

We will keep you posted about how all this goes. Meanwhile, please let us know about any other concerns you have that you feel we might be able to help with. My email is vgregorian@kcstar.com, and Joe can be reached at mitch@usbwa.com.

Because the USBWA is here for you ... as ever.

A weekend with the U.S. Basketball Writers Association

Photos by Lida DeGroot.



Tom Archdeacon (left), Steve Carp (center) and David Teel give speeches at their Hall of Fame inductions. Because of health concerns, Frank Deford gave his speech by video.



Students listen to Ed Graney and Nicole Auerbach at the annual Full Court Press, a sportswriting seminar at the Final Four moderated by Malcolm Moran.



David Gardner (Rising Star); Bernadette Cafarelli (Katha Quinn), with Malcolm Moran and Mike Brey; and Bronson Koenig (Most Courageous) accept USBWA awards.