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USBWA, CoSIDA can help each other in confusing times

These are fragmented times.

The blowup started before the recession, but the recession didn't help. The shards started flying before the financial meltdown, but the meltdown didn't help. The media splintering started before newspapers offered their product free of charge, but supplying a cheaper-than-cheap alternative online didn't help.

Basketball reporters – print, web, TV, radio, grandma's basement – often work amid the rubble and rubbish of an unglued age. The chaos cuts several ways, which became obvious during a recent seminar at the CoSIDA convention in Florida. Gathered beside the Gulf of Mexico, the sports information directors described a gap that could widen into a chasm during this transition.

No. 1: SIDs from different campuses cited the difficulty in deciding which reporters, bloggers and talkers qualify for seats at games and access to participants. Through their lenses, the definition of "accredited reporter" seems murkier every winter.

No. 2: The media relations director for a major conference said that he would like to develop relationships with reporters and share information in source conversations based on trust. While surveying the new landscape, however, he finds it harder and harder to identify reporters with predictable value systems that he can engage in the classic model.

These examples reflect the complexity of basic bas-

ketball reporting today, especially on campuses where coaches or others favor controlling athletes and reporters by limiting exposure.

The examples also underscore the value of having an established vehicle for dealing with access issues, which is where the U.S. Basketball Writers Association enters the conversation. The 900-member USBWA isn't just for newspaper writers. Membership is open to broadcasters, student journalists, SIDs, photographers, retirees and even editors (the ultimate sign of inclusive reflexes).

Someone needs to mediate disputes over access and advocate equal treatment. Someone needs to reiterate the intrinsic value of beautifully detailed reporting, which requires proximity to the action and the athletes without the unnecessary impediments of obstructed views and deflected questions. Without decent seats within earshot of reality and freewheeling locker-room interviews, college basketball runs the risk of deleting the sport's essence from the public record.

Live free or die?

Lenox Rawlings
Winston-Salem Journal
President



USBWA unveils dynamic new logo for coming season

The U.S. Basketball Writers Association has a new look. The association's new logo will debut this coming season and is a fresh update on the traditional varsity block-letter concept.

Rachel Sollee of Dallas-based Sollee Designs worked with USBWA webmaster Ted Gangi to update the look while maintaining red as the association's signature branding color. Gangi, entering his eighth year working with the USBWA, donated the cost of the logo redesign to the USBWA.

"The USBWA logo redesign was undertaken to modernize and freshen its appearance," Sollee said. "To keep a level of consistency with the previous logo, the typeface and basketball design elements are still prominent in the design. However, several modifications were added to both elements.

"To create a stronger and more unified design the 'U'

is partially overlapping the basketball and a bold outline was added. A slight slant to the right in the type gives the impression of movement in the logo. Similarly, including



the use of gradients and a red shadow to the basketball added depth. A change in type color to a deeper red helps 'USBWA' stand out. Also, the size of the basketball was increased to intensify the visual interest."

For more information about Sollee Design, contact Rachel at rdsollee@yahoo.com.

The USBWA can't offer such stark options, despite the enlarged fatalism byte in the sportswriter DNA. The USBWA can offer a moderately reasonable mechanism for protecting access to college basketball at a reasonably moderate price.

There are many other reasons to join the organization or renew memberships now.

For student journalists, the \$25 annual dues provide immediate contact with the media network, an extensive membership directory that also includes Division I colleges (with phone numbers and email addresses), voting rights for the USBWA's numerous awards, a Hertz discount card and free subscriptions to *Basketball Times* and *Rivals.com*.

Deadline warning: The invaluable published directory is guaranteed only to those who pay dues by Oct. 1.

Dues for regular members are \$50 and for retirees, \$20. The website – usbwa.com – has an online application form, more details about other benefits (such as writing contests with cash awards) and archived articles from the *Tipoff* newsletter. The printed *Tipoff* comes through the mail as a supplement to *Basketball Times*.

Bryan Burwell of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the USBWA's immediate past president, emphasized an organizational youth movement with a compassionate component. No experienced folks get kicked out, but all vets should solicit more reporters beginning to form their careers at campus newspapers and radio stations or just settling into their professional careers.

Previous presidents Dick Jerardi of the *Philadelphia Daily News* and Steve Carp of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* worked quite hard to increase membership. They succeeded in building momentum that the USBWA should sustain, with an immediate goal of 1,000 members.

A larger membership creates a stronger voice and guarantees the solvency of programs such as the Larry Donald Scholarship for aspiring sports journalists. Freshman Sean Lester of Texas A&M, a participant in the USBWA seminar at the Houston Final Four, won the \$1,000 scholarship.

That's the right kind of thing for the USBWA to do, with eyes on the future rather than the convulsive recent past.

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USBWA’s summer mission: reach a record 1,000 members

The USBWA is on a mission to reach 1,000 members this season.

Never in the 56-year history of the organization has the USBWA been at 1,000 members. We’ve been close a couple times. The last two years, the USBWA was around 900 in membership.

As President Lenox Rawlings pointed out in his column in this issue of *Tipoff*, the USBWA offers many invaluable benefits for SIDs and journalists covering college basketball.

Perhaps the most valuable is the annual membership directory listing the names of every NCAA Division I men’s and women’s basketball coach and SID in the country, complete with phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

In addition, the directory lists the names of beat writers, columnists and radio/TV announcers who cover all 350-some Division I schools.

Former USBWA president Alex Wolff once said: “The USBWA publishes the most comprehensive telephone directory and resource guide on college basketball in the nation. The directory is worth the price of membership alone.”

One new benefit for members starting this year is the reinstatement of the college scholarship program for children of USBWA members.

The USBWA will award one \$2,000 grant each year to the son or daughter of an active USBWA member, who is of college age and is either ready to start or is presently enrolled in a university, college or junior college.

Applications for the scholarship will be accepted between September 1 and April 15 of each school year. Announcement of the grant will be made in June. A three-member scholarship committee will review the applications and select the recipient.

The maximum award to any family shall be \$2,000. The scholarship can only be applied toward undergraduate degrees.

The USBWA had a similar college scholarship program several years ago, but it was discontinued because of a lack of funding.

Complete details for the scholarship program with instructions on how to apply will be posted later in the summer on the USBWA website at www.usbwa.com.

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



Congratulations are in order for past president Alex Wolff, who has been selected to receive the Curt Gowdy Media Award by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., in September.

Wolff was president of the USBWA in 1999-2000 and was inducted into the USBWA Hall of Fame in 2002. As president, he helped start a USBWA-sponsored scholarship program for aspiring sports journalism students and also initiated a sportswriting seminar held each year at the Final Four.

Other USBWA past presidents who have received the Gowdy Award previously include Larry Donald, Dave Dorr, Dick Weiss, Bob Ryan, Malcolm Moran, Jim O’Connell, Bob Hammel, Bob Hentzen, Dick Herbert and Smith Barrier. Other past winners who are either currently or have been USBWA members include Curry Kirkpatrick and Dave Kindred.

Burlison joins USBWA Board

Frank Burlison has joined the USBWA’s Board of Director as its District IX representative.

Burlison, who was inducted into the USBWA’s Hall of Fame in 2005, has been a sports writer more than 35 years. He has worked at the *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, *Orange County Register*, Foxsports.com and the L.A. Newspaper Group (including the *Press-Telegram*, *L.A. Daily News*) and other newspapers.

Burlison has covered every aspect of basketball, from preps to pros and was among the pioneers in covering recruiting and summer basketball.

Burlison has also been a member of the John R. Wooden selection advisory committee, is an original member of the McDonald’s All-America Selection Committee and has attended every Final Four since 1986.



Join the USBWA today!
go to www.usbwa.com

Just \$50. Membership benefits include the USBWA directory, a seven-month subscription to Basketball Times, a Hertz discount card, access to Rivals.com and eligibility to win cash prizes in the USBWA writing contest.