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CoSIDA, USBWA offer COVID guidelines

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Goals & Objectives

Identify the challenges involved from both the SID and media perspective related to the pandemic impact on media operations and develop guidelines to address them for the benefit of both schools and media outlets. The guidelines below should be considered a list of possible solutions or best practices for all aspects of media operations related to men's and women's college basketball representing all divisions and governing bodies.

Restrictions

In developing a basic premise for the process, we should acknowledge at the start that guidelines will also be driven in each individual situation by state/local/health/campus or facility guidelines. Conference policies may also be a factor in the process.

Resource Support

For anyone who has questions or concerns as they prepare for the season ahead, all who participated in this process are happy to make themselves available to answer questions and offer guidance.

Credentials

Schools may opt to provide single game credentials only as a more feasible solution in determining media attendance on a game-by-game basis. Regardless,

with the seating limitations enforced due to social distancing SIDs will develop their own priority policies in terms of who is granted credentials. SIDs are encouraged to consider a policy that includes reserving a certain percentage of seats for visiting media or, in games of major national interest, national media. Host SIDs should rely on their counterparts to identify which visiting media are priority for credentials. It's strongly recommended that visiting SIDs provide a priority list of their traveling media requesting credentials to their counterparts at the host school at least seven days in advance of the game. Schools are also encouraged to include their student media in their priority credentialing allocation. Also, the same access priority given to radio and TV should also be applied to all media outlets. In addition, SIDs with big demands from their local media should consider a rotating (moving to the next request on your priority list) approach as a means of balance and fairness in their credentialing policies. For those media not able to be in attendance, all resources for coverage without a credential should be communicated clearly such as links to game notes, live statistics, television coverage, video virtual postgame interviews and pool photography and video highlights, if applicable.

The USBWA recommends that any media representative that has gone to the trouble and expense of attending a game despite the safety concerns be rewarded if added opportunities for in-person interviews are available.

Special Reminder

With the reduction in media seating and parking, it is recommended that media confirm attendance by a designated day in advance of each game so if plans change SIDs can move down the priority list and offer access to another media outlet.

Media Access

The level of safety protocols required for access to venues will vary by host school or organization. Most likely, at a minimum, temperatures will be taken to be admitted and masks will be required. Some schools will also require an on-line health information form be filled out before admittance. Obviously, schools should publish and promote their requirements throughout the year. We recommend a policy that provides consistency across the board in terms of access for print, television

CONTINUED on Page 4

Advice and encouragement in a strange season

The USBWA membership has never encountered more challenges than it will be facing while navigating COVID-19 protocols on campuses this season. The USBWA sought words of advice and encouragement from both writers and administrators to help guide you:

Washington Post reporter Chuck Culpepper: (Chuck has covered on site, during the pandemic, four golf tournaments, one tennis major, two Triple Crown races and eight college football games between Sept. 26 and Nov. 14, in Baton Rouge, Athens, Clemson, Tuscaloosa, Minneapolis, State College, South Bend and Huntington).

Besides doubling or tripling your masking for any airplane flights or roadside restrooms or arenas, and besides getting yourself some goggles for same, and besides forgiving yourself for all profanity when those goggles fog repeatedly, there are the storytelling hindrances. If our jobs can seem a constant and compelling hunt for details, that hunt suffers when we can't work an interview room in a post-game,

can't ask questions either one-to-one or few-to-one.

That makes the hunt for other details ever more essential: the specific sights around towns, the specific sights around arenas, the songs, the sounds, the tenors of certain moments. Such things have become more relevant than ever to all kinds of stories, of course, because of the nature of the pandemic moment. Keep in mind how people trapped at home do seem unusually curious about what's out there.

If trapped at home oneself, which is such a disruption of our normal function, it can help the mind to take that limitation and try to transform it into an opportunity. It can become a time to explore the broader story ideas difficult to pursue while in the process of covering a season. It can allow for more calls, for a more thorough pursuit of details, more intricate knowledge of more subjects on more teams, and for dropping in on more press conferences than ever before, even if all by video. It also might allow for better eating habits, if we can abide such a thing.

First Vice-President Shannon Ryan of the

Chicago Tribune: During those weeks where no games were played, weeks that seemed to stretch on for years, I was often asked, "What are you doing? Are you bored? What do you have to write?"

The truth is, I don't know if I'd ever been so busy.

America was struggling to figure out life during a pandemic. Civil unrest and reckonings with racial injustice were bubbling across the nation. An intense election season fueled anxiety.

Like most historic moments, athletes are touched by these issues – and their voices help shape how Americans view polarizing topics.

The WNBA and NBA showed playing in bubbles could work, managing their playoffs without infection. The players were among the most outspoken about racism and encouraged voting. College athletes marched against injustice and demanded stricter safety protocols against COVID-19.

There are outbreaks among college football

CONTINUED on Page 4

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To many, Jernstedt *was* the 'Architect of March Madness'

On a Sunday in Indianapolis in 2002, the morning after the United States lost a dreary fifth-place game in the World Championships, Tom Jernstedt, then president of USA Basketball, walked into the media area and stayed as long as anyone needed him.

A decade had passed since the Barcelona Olympics, when the Dream Team seemed to have restored U.S. dominance. When a morning-after explanation of the freefall was required, it was not so much what Jernstedt said as how he said it. A thoughtful, complete evaluation had begun.

When Jernstedt died on Sept. 5 at the age of 75, basketball lost one of its most influential, understated leaders and journalists lost an unfailingly honest, humble, appreciative voice.

A headline in The New York Times called Jernstedt "an Architect of March Madness."

One could make a strong case that he was *the* architect.

Those of us fortunate enough to benefit from his generosity of spirit and institutional memory understand that Jernstedt would attempt to correct that statement. But the evidence suggests otherwise.

In a series of roles over 38 years at the National Collegiate Athletic Association that led to him becoming executive vice president, Jernstedt guided the Division I men's basketball tournament from a 25-team event with limited national television exposure to an annual spectacle in the middle of a football stadium.

His imprint is all over the modern history of the game. Jernstedt played an essential role when CBS gained the rights to the tournament with a three-year, \$50 million deal in 1982. He climbed the steps of the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans, to the top of the upper deck, so he could see the view from the last row.

Jernstedt would smile at the awkward memory of being dispatched to a convention of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women to inform the

Malcolm Moran Executive Director



membership that the NCAA was contemplating the creation of championships for women. His memory included the sight of angry administrators racing to pay phones to register their complaints well before his remarks were complete.

When professionals became eligible for Olympic play, Dave Gavitt, then president of USA Basketball, introduced Jernstedt to NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik. "(He) said, 'You're both reasonable people,'" Granik remembered. "I need you to help me get the NCAA and NBA working together."

Jernstedt consistently explained complex issues when things were not going well and passed the credit to others when they were. For that reason, among others, he received the USBWA Katha Quinn Award for exceptional service to the media in 2015.

"When one thinks of the Final Four, one name immediately comes to mind, and that is Tom Jernstedt," former Big Ten commissioner Wayne Duke told USBWA Hall of Famer Jim O'Connell.

And when USA Basketball went through its challenging self-evaluation, Jernstedt sat in the office of then-NBA commissioner David Stern. He said he thought C.M. Newton asked the question: Could Stern ever envision an Olympic team being coached by a collegiate representative?

They were surprised to hear Stern say yes.

Many years and three gold medals later, Duke and Olympic coach Mike Krzyzewski learned of Jernstedt's quiet advocacy.

"That doesn't surprise me, that I don't know that," Krzyzewski said.

COVID-19 creates a flurry of activity

Several USBWA members or college basketball writers lost or changed jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent Rising Star award winner Chris Heady left the Omaha World-Herald to join The William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas. Fellow past Rising Star winner David Gardner was among 10 employees laid off by Bleacher Report.

Jonathan Alexander left the Raleigh News & Observer to cover the Panthers for the Charlotte Observer. Shannon Russell, formerly of The Athletic, became the Louisville beat writer for the Courier Journal. Danielle Lerner, also formerly of The Athletic, became the Memphis beat writer for the Commercial Appeal.

Teddy Greenstein left the Chicago Tribune after 24 years to become senior editor at @PointsBetUSA.

Kevin McNamara, who left the Providence Journal after 30 years, started his own website, kevinmcsports.com.

Rob Dauster, formerly of NBC Sports.com, also

created his own site, The Rebound. Dauster and Jeff Goodman of Stadium have partnered to launch the podcast network Field of 68.

Mirin Fader of Bleacher Report joined The Ringer, where she'll write long-form stories on basketball.

Among writers caught in COVID-related layoffs:

John Bohnenkamp of HawkeyeMaven and Ed Hardin and Conor O'Neill of the Winston-Salem Journal.

Phil Kasiacky announced that his website, Hoopville, is being shuttered after 20 years.

Dave Hirsch resigned after 25 seasons in the Pacific 12 Conference's media relations department.

Steve Shutt announced his retirement after 40 years in athletics media relations, the past 13 at Wake Forest.

Evan Daniels moved from 247Sports, where he was the national recruiting director, to CAA Sports. Corey Evans of Rivals was hired by the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Lodge Notes

Priorities: Mentorship, women's game, staying safe

It has been a cold spring, an interminable summer and an agonizing fall, but one way or another it looks like we are going to have a college basketball season in 2020-21.

There are many challenges in pulling this off safely, which is why Malcolm Moran and I have been having incredibly constructive conversations with CoSIDA president Doug Vance, the NCAA's David Worlock and sports information directors around the country to ensure that the role of essential, independent media organizations will be preserved in a way that does not jeopardize anyone's health. We ask all of you to be vigilant as schools and event operators adjust to the new reality. If you hear about something that troubles you, please let us know. We have established these lines of communication for the purpose of ironing out inevitable disagreements.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about two very exciting initiatives we will undertake in 2020-21.

First, I'm proud to announce that the USBWA is going to launch a nationwide mentorship program. The program will be designed to pair college students, especially but not limited to journalism and communications majors, with our members who will mentor them during the course of the academic year. To aid us in launching this program, we have assembled an outreach committee that includes members of the academic community as well as the CEO of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. It's an excellent

Seth Davis CBS Sports / The Athletic President



team.

We will have more to say about this endeavor as we launch what will effectively be a pilot program for this season, but I am hoping to have extensive participation from you, our membership. We are all very fortunate to be able to do what we do, and from time to time we are all asked by friends and relatives to speak with young people who are hoping to get into this profession. I believe very strongly that we need to impart to the next generation of journalists the tools, principles and ethics that go hand in hand with our work. So many young people see the trend lines and understandably feel discouraged from becoming journalists. It is our job to encourage and educate them. I also believe this will help rejuvenate the USBWA's membership, which is always a high priority.

Second, the USBWA is going to be issuing weekly awards in women's basketball. Mel Greenberg, who has done terrific work over the years to give us a presence in the women's game, will oversee a committee

of voters from across the country who will select a team, player and freshman of the week throughout the season. For far too long, the USBWA has neglected to put enough energy into covering the women's game and recruiting the writers who cover it to be members. American women's basketball, both at the collegiate and professional levels, has never been more entertaining or more popular. There is a ton of upside for us to capture here, and I am looking forward to seeing Mel and his group get

after it.

Given all the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, our industry is at a critical juncture. Far too many of our colleagues have been laid off by organizations who were already struggling economically before the virus struck. The recent mass layoffs at ESPN cut all of us to the bone. There is also a concern that the very real need to secure the health and safety of players, coaches and other participants will be seen as an opportunity to further reduce the essential role of independent media organizations. However, we all know that every crisis also presents major opportunities, and so I am confident that the USBWA will adapt to the current environment and emerge stronger in the end. Now more than ever, the world needs truth seekers and storytellers, and so the health and viability of organizations like ours must endure.

Please be safe, everyone, and keep up the great work. Now let's go cover those games!

Norlander, Quinn dominate Best Writing Contest

Matt Norlander of CBSSports.com and Brendan Quinn of The Athletic each won one category and placed in three others in the USBWA's annual Best Writing Contest.

Norlander won for his column following Duke's 98-96 overtime victory over North Carolina that he wrote couldn't be measured.

"The variables are too ridiculous. The probabilities too unearthly. The coincidences, well, maybe there can't be any when it comes to these two."

Quinn won in game writing for his story about Cassius Winston's decision to play the day after his brother Zachary was killed in a train accident.

Other winners were Brian Bennett of The Athletic for medium-length features, Mirin Fader of Bleacher Report in magazine-length features and John Akers of Basketball Times for Enterprise/Investigative reporting.

Bennett's story explored the after-math of a 200-146 victory by Division III Greenville, Ill., over Fontbonne.

Fader's winning entry explored the short life of the late Gigi Bryant.

Akers' winning enterprise story explored the life of the late Dick DeVenizio, whose began battling the NCAA in 1985.

John Feinstein of the Washington Post was also a multiple place-winner, with a pair of second-place finishes.

MODERATE-LENGTH FEATURE

1. Brian Bennett, The Athletic: A look at the "Holy Grail" (a college team scoring 200 points in a 40-minute game.) Is it a feat? Is it a slap to the face of sportsmanship? Both?
2. Kevin Armstrong, SI.com: COVID-19 puts a halt to playground basketball; a New York tradition is shuttered by the pandemic.
3. Brendan Quinn, The Athletic: High School players building their ever more important "brand." Joe Tipton, a junior at Alabama Huntsville, is a pivot point in the social media world of "edits."
4. Matt Norlander, CBSSports.com: Kobe Bryant's relationship with UC Irvine, a campus near his home.
5. Jeff Greer The Athletic: Rob Butsch has died. For two years, Butsch was Louisville's "Flying Cardinal Bird" who swung from the arena's rafters – part of what makes sports a great connector.

MAGAZINE-LENGTH FEATURE

1. Mirin Fader, Bleacher Report: An in-depth look at Gigi Bryant, who died along with her father Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash in California. An impressive look at young girls and basketball.
2. Brendan Quinn, The Athletic: Telling details are what makes this piece strong. Friends laughing at young Juwan Howard. Years later, a ball left on Juwan Howard court, waiting for the next kid who wants to play.
3. Mike DeCourcy, Sporting News: How NCAA tournament expansion 35 years ago became the foundation of a sports showcase.
4. Ryan McGee, ESPN.com: Rex Chapman (Kentucky/Charlotte Hornets) gets used to new role as a social media influencer.
5. Dan Greene, Sports Illustrated: Chris Beard is the architect behind Texas Tech emerging as a basketball power.

GAME WRITING

1. Brendan Quinn, The Athletic: An intense picture: Cassius Winston plays the day after his brother is killed in a train accident.
2. John Feinstein, The Washington Post: A tribute/obituary of the remarkable life of Morgan Wooten
3. C.J. Moore, The Athletic: Baylor coach Scott Drew comes up with a signature win at Kansas.
4. Matt Norlander, CBSSports.com: Kansas avenges loss to Baylor. Udoka Azubuike is the reason why.
5. Mitchell Northam, High Post Hoops: Kyra Lambert made a beyond-half-court shot on her first shot after returning from three knee surgeries and nearly three years on the sidelines for Duke

COLUMN WRITING

1. Matt Norlander, CBSSports.com: Duke slips past North Carolina with two buzzer-beaters in a flawed classic.
2. John Feinstein, The Washington Post: Better late than never? Former Indiana coach Bob Knight returns to Assembly Hall.
3. Matt Fortuna, The Athletic: Why didn't they cancel college sports sooner? What was there to think about, really?
4. Brendan Quinn, The Athletic: Why did John Beilein fail in the NBA after he jumped from Michigan?
5. Russell Steinberg, Mid-Major Madness: A personal account of losing your job and college basketball at the same time.

ENTERPRISE

1. John Akers, Basketball Times: A look at Dick DeVenizio, who started the discussion of paying college athletes with his 1985 book "Rip-Off U" Now, the NCAA has handed the issue to a committee. Will it matter?
2. Matt Norlander, CBSSports.com: A timetable of COVID-19 shutting down college basketball.
3. Tom Noie, South Bend (Ind.) Tribune: Lunch with DeMatha's legendary Morgan Wooten.
4. Craig Meyer, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: NCAA basketball lags behind in black head coaches. A look at the numbers and stories.
5. Seth Davis, The Athletic: The men behind the history of Gonzaga underline how a contender was built and maintained.



Bennett



Fader



Quinn



Norlander



Akers

Advice and encouragement in a strange season

CONTINUED from Page 1

teams, reminding us of the difficulty of containing the virus spread. The play-or-don't-play debates capture the conflicting ways Americans feel about proceeding during the pandemic.

With or without games, sports reporters shouldn't be confined to box scores. Not by our editors. Not by "stick to sports" readers. Not by our own feelings of limitations, thinking we work in the "toy department."

Some of the most defining moments of our nation have been symbolized through sports and told the stories of America: Jackie Robinson finally stepping to the plate in Major League Baseball. Kathrine Switzer being pulled off the Boston Marathon course. Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists on the Olympic medal podium.

And right now.

Villanova SID Mike Sheridan: Take time to examine how your beat intersects with the rest of the world. And don't shy away from writing about it.

In the last 36 years, I have been blessed to enter dozens of college basketball venues, first as an editor at Basketball Times, and more recently as the men's basketball contact at Villanova. Of course, the experience of entering an arena in 2020-21 is going to feel markedly different than any prior visit.

The challenges for those covering the games

and those of us working to assist you, will be significant. The requirements mandated to ensure safety will alter the experience of covering a game in substantial ways. What is permissible under one state's guidelines might not possible be in an adjoining state.

The few extra minutes with a coach in a post-game hallway or a longer conversation with a player at a campus eatery on an off day, might not be feasible. Press-row capacity will be reduced in many cases. Postgame Zoom conferences will be the norm. You might rarely be in the same room as a coach or a player you routinely cover.

It will present roadblocks.

But I believe it will work, in large part due to the long history of cooperation between the USBWA and CoSIDA. The leadership of both organizations has been assessing the most practical avenues to facilitate coverage in a pandemic. Our fraternity appreciates the pivotal role the print media has played in the growth of our game and we will strive to service the media as we always have.

We can work together to put our best foot forward in 2020-21.

South Carolina women's basketball SID Diana Koval: Patience, creativity and grace. Those are the concepts I keep coming back to in navigating basketball season. If media members

and communications directors can show each other all three, we will all succeed in this setting that has more restrictions to access than we've ever faced. It's not that some things will look different; it's that everything will look different.

In the last 10 months, I have been blown away by our local media – their understanding, their dedication to continuing to cover our teams with respect, their willingness to be part of the solution. I've always seen my job as a partnership with our media, and this year has shown me the true value of a strong partnership. Our goals may not always align in terms of messaging, but when it comes to getting the job done in these strange times, thinking of ourselves as partners goes a long way.

As a communications director, I remain committed to doing everything I can to help media members do their jobs. As a person in close contact with our team, this season I have to be just as committed to doing everything I can to help protect the coaches and student-athletes from this virus. When those two missions come in conflict, I will always err on the side of safety but I will always be open to creative ideas to get the two missions back in alignment. Media who accept the restrictions put on access and are willing to work with communications directors to find alternate paths to their goals will thrive.

CoSIDA, USBWA offer COVID guidelines

CONTINUED from Page 1

or other media representatives. Also, consideration should be given for improved parking for media if there are either no or a limited amount of fans allowed to attend games.

Media Will Call

Any media picking up credentials at will call should expect to adhere to everything fans deal with (bag checks, etc.) and early arrival is recommended.

Media Access Hours

The possibility of schools establishing specific hours of operation or access in the media area may be an expectation for media coverage during the season. The concept of an open press area two hours before tip-off and two hours after is a minimum standard that has been suggested. It's strongly recommended that the post-game two-hour access window start after the last media interview instead of after the end of the game. Regardless, SIDs are encouraged to make sure media are fully aware of the time restrictions in advance of games and be diligent in their responsibility of offering needed support in overcoming the challenges media representatives will encounter under these unusual circumstances.

Media Work Room

The decision to offer the typical media work room availability will vary with each school and its policies. Where work rooms are available, social distancing work space will be enforced. Food or beverages will likely not be available in press rooms as in the past. For those schools restricting working space to press row only, SIDs are reminded of the need to provide adequate WiFi, power, security and that lighting be sufficient to enhance the work environment appropriately. When feasible, media coupons for food/beverage in arena concession stands or designated concession stands exclusively for media would be advisable. Designated restroom facili-

ties for media (separate from fans) are encouraged.

Press Row

Distance should be mandated at the standard 6-foot minimum in all media work areas. As a result, seating for press row will likely be reduced to one-third of its normal capacity which means SIDs will be forced to establish a priority policy for credentials. In addition, press rows will most likely not be at floor level with the possible exceptions of space for radio and TV crews. And, in those instances, limitations and social distancing for broadcast crews may be applied. Masks will be required at all times for those seated on press row or any designated media area. In those instances where the arena has unused fan seating available, SIDs should take full advantage of a possible opportunity to expand media access and seating as long as it's consistent with safety protocols.

Photographers/Videographers

Designated photo areas will most likely be moved back from floor level to the fan seating area depending on venue policies. Regardless, photo credentials will be scaled back and the concept of a photo pool service is recommended. Schools may consider rotating their pool photographer among area media outlets so all area media can have an opportunity for access. The Associated Press or other national photo services requesting credentials should be considered priority outlets. If feasible and space permits, upper photo positions should be identified to accommodate additional videographers or photographers if fans are in attendance, or positions could be established within the stands if no fans are present. In addition, it is recommended that schools allow remote cameras (set up in advance) if photographers are not allowed on the baselines/apron.

Handouts

Media should expect to find the majority of game

information through digital resources and that will include halftime and post-game statistics. The one exception will be updated rosters/flipcards.

Postgame Interviews

It should be anticipated that all post-game interviews with coaches and players will be provided through a videoconferencing system for both home and visiting teams. It is preferred to have separate space available for each team to conduct its postgame interviews, equipped with sufficient lighting and a hard-wired ethernet connection to assure a good quality videoconference.

Team locker rooms and adjacent hallways will likely not be accessible. Host SIDs should accept responsibility for ensuring that visiting SIDs have the same consistent access as the home team for Zoom or an applicable videoconference systems. It is recommended that SIDs work with media in attendance in providing requested student-athletes for post-game interviews.

To create a more feasible and accommodating access availability, conference SIDs should publish links to post-game videoconferencing coach/player interviews of all teams in their conference.

Media Access/Interviews Between Games

Media should anticipate that all coach and student-athlete interview access will most likely be done through videoconference systems (Zoom, etc.).

Neutral Sites/Post-Season

These recommendations should be followed by all of those who have media responsibilities at neutral site games or multi-team events. Additional guidelines may be in place for all post-season tournaments.

A special thanks to representatives of CoSIDA and the USBWA (listed above) who worked in collaboration in the development of these guidelines.

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