



## Winners of collegepressbox.com best writing contest announced

The results from the collegepressbox.com 18<sup>th</sup> annual Best Writing Contest for FWAAs members are listed below. All places in the contest will be recognized at the FWAAs Annual Awards Breakfast on Jan. 10, 2011, at the BCS

Championship Game Media Hotel in the Phoenix area. Places 1-3 receive certificates and cash prizes, and honorable mentions get certificates. First-place winners in each category also will receive commemorative footballs.

### GAME

- First place:** Bud Withers, *Seattle Times*  
**Second place:** Michael Lev, *The Orange County Register*  
**Third place:** Pete Thamel, *The New York Times*  
**Honorable mention:** Eric Hansen *South Bend Tribune*;  
 Brett McMurphy, *AOL FanHouse.com*

### LOOSE DEADLINE

- First place:** Brett McMurphy, *AOL FanHouse.com*  
**Second place:** Lindsay Schnell, *The Oregonian*  
**Third place:** Jason King, *Yahoo! Sports*

### FEATURES

- First place:** Joe Rexrode, *Lansing State Journal*  
**Second place:** Mark Anderson, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*  
**Third place:** Chris Low, *ESPN.com*  
**Honorable mention:** Matt Fortuna, *The Daily Collegian*; Scott Cacciola, *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*; Joseph Person, *The State*

### COLUMN

- First place:** John F. Silver, *Manchester Journal Inquirer*  
**Second place:** Gene Wojciechowski, *ESPN.com*  
**Third place:** Jason King, *Yahoo! Sports*  
**Honorable mention:** Bud Withers, *Seattle Times*; Peter Kerasotis, *Florida Today*;  
 Herb Gould, *Chicago Sun Times*

### ENTERPRISE

- First place:** Steve Wieberg, *USA TODAY*  
**Second place:** Brett McMurphy, *AOL FanHouse.com*  
**Third place:** Stewart Mandel, *SI.com*  
**Honorable mention:** Dennis Dodd, *CBSSports.com*  
 Jason King, *Yahoo! Sports*



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## 'Bama picked to repeat

DALLAS — The Alabama Crimson Tide is the favorite to repeat as the Grantland Rice Trophy champion in the Football Writers Association of America annual pre-season poll.

Alabama, which finished 14-0 last season after beating Texas in Pasadena, would become the fifth straight Southeastern Conference team to win the FWAA trophy if the FWAA voters are accurate. Before last season, Florida won in 2008 and 2006 and LSU in 2007.

The Grantland Rice Trophy has been awarded to the top team in college football by the FWAA since 1954. Alabama has been named the winner five times — in 1965 (co-winner with Michigan State), 1978, 1979, 1992 and last season.

Alabama claimed nine of 15 first-place votes and tallied 231 votes in the 2010 FWAA pre-season poll. Ohio State, which garnered three first-place votes, was second with 205 points. Boise State

had two first-place votes and was third with 199 points. The other first-place vote from the 15 voters went to Nebraska, which was eighth in the poll with 133 points.

Rounding out the Top 10 are Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, TCU, the Cornhuskers, Virginia Tech and Iowa.

### First. place votes in brackets

1.	Alabama (9)	231
2.	Ohio State (3)	205
3.	Boise State (2)	199
4.	Florida	164
5.	Texas	147
6.	Oklahoma	145
7.	TCU	142
8.	Nebraska (1)	133
9.	Virginia Tech	126
10.	Iowa	109
11.	Oregon	89
12.	Miami (Fla.)	84
13.	USC	50
14.	Wisconsin	42
15.	Florida State	26
16.	Auburn	22



## New and improved membership directory on its way to you

The 2010-11 FWAA member directory is online and also on its way to you. This year's edition has many new features, including a redesign and expansion of the school pages. We have also added Twitter feeds in the members section as well as to each team page. In addition, we now list an e-mail address for every team beat writer in the team section. The team pages, now listed by conference, also include the names of key support staff, the administrative assistants for each head coach and athletic director and media will call and parking information. The 254-page book — the largest we've ever produced — should once again be a great companion for you throughout the year. Also, look for the media guide disc in the mail shortly. Thanks to the AT&T Cotton Bowl and collegepressbox.com, we will again have every Division I media guide on one disc.

# Column: John F. Silver

*Comment by the judge, Mickey Spagnola: This was an example of passion and great human understanding of a young man's plight in life cut short. Now you might say it's easy to write a column about a "sick cat," and you guys know what I mean. But this was more than just a great subject to write about. This writer did a very balanced job of portraying and making me feel why Jasper Howard's death was so unfair and cruel, outdistancing the next two columns which did a great job of taking a stance with well-written opinions.*

By **JOHN F. SILVER**  
*Manchester Journal Inquirer*

STORRS — Jasper Howard loved the UConn football team. He loved Connecticut. He loved life.

That it was taken away at a place of refuge such as Storrs is a tragedy none of us can fully comprehend.

Howard was murdered in front of the Student Union, steps away from the football team's campus home, the Burton Family Complex, and across the street from Gampel Pavilion. It is a world away from where he grew up in Little Haiti, a violent area of Miami that is filled with despair and discouragement. Storrs was supposed to be Jazz's place to be free. Free from violence, free of oppression, and constant crime. Free to be himself, as God intended.

It was supposed to be his place to live, not to die.

"He was a special young man," a teary-eyed UConn coach Randy Edsall said Sunday. "He made you smile, and made you love life. A guy you loved to be around. He enjoyed life."

Growing up in Miami, Howard saw the brutal side of life far too many times. Little Haiti is the kind of place people don't like to talk about. Violence, drugs, street crime, and death are daily occurrences. It is Miami, but the glitz and glamour of South Beach are also a world away. Its lack of hope even made the coaching staff of UConn cringe when talking about it.

Howard's tale isn't new or unique. His story of a hard life is playing out in our cities daily. It would almost be a cliché if wasn't so sad. Howard was the product of a single-parent home, raised by his mother, Joangila. He had two younger sisters who adored him, and until he learned how to play football, he wasn't likely to go anywhere. That's the life Howard was destined to live. He didn't ask for it and it wasn't his fault. He was just born into it.

But Howard wanted something different. He had enough of the violence in Miami. That was not the way he wanted to live. He was a beautiful athlete to watch — quick, agile, and explosive. Those gifts were his ticket out of his situation, and he made sure he took advantage of them.

**JOHN F. SILVER**  
*Manchester Journal Inquirer*

Age: 33

College: University of Connecticut

**Background:** Starting my fifth year covering the UConn football team for the *Journal Inquirer* and have spent a decade covering sports in Connecticut including the last seven years at the *Journal Inquirer*.



I have covered nearly everything in Connecticut including a PGA Tour stop and an ATP-WTA tournament that is a week before the U.S. Open. I started my career at the *New Britain Herald* where I did the most important job at the paper — the baseball agate page. Several months later, I escaped from the desk and started covering the Central Connecticut State University men's basketball team just in time for its run to the NCAA tournament for the 2001-02 season. At the *Journal Inquirer*, I have done nearly everything at the newspaper from covering Little League to world title fights at local casinos. In addition to covering UConn, I help out as a layout editor and put out the section twice a week in the off-season. I have won a handful of regional SPJ awards for feature writing on college football and basketball as well as spot news. I am married to my lovely wife, Shannon, and we have two children, 3-year old Julia and 9-month old John Jr.

When the time came to play football, Howard went as far away as he could. The 5-foot-9 cornerback from the inner city came to a "cow college" in Storrs. Howard found something here. He found a reason to live and hope.

When Howard came to Connecticut, he didn't trust a single person here. It was hard on the coaching staff and his teammates. They didn't know how to reach him. The inner city had hardened him. He didn't smile, had little hope in his eyes, and he was soft-spoken and reserved.

That was Howard as a freshman. Soon, he latched on to a couple of teammates, Darius Butler and Tyvon Branch. He became their little brother and he came out of his shell. Once shy and distrustful around the media, Howard soon became confident and charismatic. It was the same around the team.

The Jasper Howard who arrived in Storrs three years ago was a scared boy, unsure of his place in the world. The Howard who had developed into a defensive leader

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Game: Bud Withers

*Comment by the judge, Mickey Spagnola: Great job of telling me a story about the football game instead of simply regurgitating play-by-play. In fact, the writer captured my attention, and I really didn't even know much about the game, but I wanted to keep reading and reading. He was able to weave overall summary into the game story while focusing a major portion of piece on how this one crucial play in the compelling struggle between two state schools turned this into a four-point game in the end. Smooth from the lead to the last line.*

**By BUD WITHERS**  
*Seattle Times*

EUGENE, Ore. - They billed this as the Civil War for the ages.

They were wrong. It was better.

Oregon State acquitted itself magnificently. Oregon was a duck's feather better.

The Ducks, reeling against a two-score deficit in the third quarter, got off the mat, overhauled the Beavers and then nursed a fragile four-point lead down the stretch and won the 113th meeting of the two neighbors, 37-33.

"They never doubted themselves," said first-year Oregon coach Chip Kelly of his team. "They never flinched."

For their trouble, and they had a lot of it this season, the Ducks will face Big Ten winner Ohio State in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1.

Hollywood doesn't write stuff as good as what took place here at Autzen Stadium on a December evening when the temperature sank to 28 degrees at the start of the telltale fourth quarter.

There were five lead changes. There were the knifing runs out of the spread option by Oregon freshman LaMichael James, who had his seventh straight 100-yard game.

There was the poise of Oregon State quarterback Sean Canfield, and there were the ubiquitous Rodgers brothers, James and Jacquizz, who helped take the Beavers to the very doorstep of their first Rose Bowl appearance since 1965.

And finally, there was the collision at the Oregon State 31-yard line. If some football teams have The Drive and The Catch in their lore, the Ducks will have The Shoulder.

Oregon State, down 37-33, had just threatened deep in Oregon territory. But on fourth-and-15 from the Oregon 27, Beavers coach Mike Riley elected not to have Justin Kahut try a fifth field goal, into what was an ever-so-slight breeze. Canfield's sideline pass to James Rodgers was mistimed, and the Ducks took over.

**BUD WITHERS**

*Seattle Times*

Age: 62

College: Washington State

**Background:** Withers is married, with two grown sons, and lives in suburban Seattle. He has written three books and contributed to ESPN's 2005 encyclopedia of college football. Away from the laptop, he runs (frequently) and golfs (lamentably). In April, he was inducted into the U.S. Basketball Writers Association hall of fame. In 2008 he won first place for columns in the FWAA Best Writing contest.



After a 30-yard run by LeGarrette Blount - out of the doghouse and back onto a playing field for the first time since his misbegotten punch at Boise State exactly three months ago - Oregon faced fourth-and-three at the OSU 33.

Too far to try a field goal. Too close to punt.

Oregon State flushed the Ducks' quarterback, Jeremiah Masoli, to his right. He seemed cornered by OSU safety Lance Mitchell at the Beavers' 31. But the muscular, 5-foot-11 Masoli, who has Mitchell by 15 pounds, rammed him backward there, continuing to the Beavers' 27.

"It was a pass to me," said Ducks tight end Ed Dickson, reviewing the call. "I wasn't open and he took off running. He basically did what he does best. He said, 'It's me or the other guy.'"

The Beavers had one more shot. They forced a fourth-and-two at their 19, while calling their second timeout. And again, the Ducks went all-in, deciding against a field goal.

Masoli pitched to trailing back Kenjon Barner, who forged left for 5 yards, and it was as good as done.

Nobody here will forget this one. They better not. It was a fitting climax to an extraordinary season of Pac-10 football, maybe the best ever.

Coming in, the question was whether the Beavers could stand in against an Oregon offense that mutilated OSU for 694 yards last year in Corvallis.

The Beavers, led by rugged defensive tackle Stephen Paea, mostly did that, 37 points notwithstanding. Last year, Oregon scored 65.

Their crucial lapse was the one that turned the game. With the Beavers ahead 33-28, James squirted free over

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Contest rules for 2010-11

Rules and procedures for the 2010-11 FWA Best Writing Contest.

1. FWA members in good standing can now begin sending entries for the following categories:

- GAME Story (Immediate Deadline)
- LOOSE Deadline (Spot News and Second Day Game Stories)
- FEATURE Story/Profile
- ENTERPRISE/Investigative
- COLUMN/Analysis/Commentary

2. Deadline: June 15, 2011. Entries sent after June 15, WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

3. Limit: One (1) article per category.

4. Entries had to appear in print or on-line between Feb. 1, 2010, and Jan. 31, 2011.

5. Entries MUST BE SENT electronically via e-mail to [contest@sportswriters.net](mailto:contest@sportswriters.net). Entries not sent to this e-mail address WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

6. At the top of each entry, this information should be included:

- Publication or on-line service where story ap-

peared.

- Writer or writers
- Category
- Date of publication
- E-mail address and telephone numbers for the writer or writers

7. The entries will be sorted and stripped of identifying information and forwarded to the judge(s).

8. Entries MUST BE SENT in MS Word or text files only. DO NOT SEND HTML files, Word Perfect files, stories in other word processing software or links to stories on the Internet or electronic libraries.

9. Delete advertising, photos and cutlines. The file should contain only your story and your ID information.

10. Take out unnecessary carriage returns to improve the readability of your entry for the judges.

10. Files containing your entries should follow this naming convention: **yourname-category.doc**

The category must be one of these five words:

Game, Loose, Feature, Column or Enterprise

Questions? E-mail [ken.stephens@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ken.stephens@sbcglobal.net)

## Column winner (continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*

for the Huskies was a man. Butler and Branch are now in the NFL. Howard could very well had been on his way there as well.

"Jazz is a young man who grew so much in the three years he has been here so far," Edsall said. "The strides this young man has made not only as a player, but as a person, it's just incredible. You could see a big difference this year in him as far as his growth, maturity and development."

Howard was the first in his family to go to college. He was proving that good people doing good things have a chance to improve their families' lives. That's why Jazz was in Storrs.

"There was a time I can remember him coming into my office, He was thinking he wanted to go home his freshman year because things at home weren't that good," Edsall said. "He thought he could help his family by going home and going to work so he could make money to help his mom and sisters out. He was always concerned about other people and what he could do help others."

Howard didn't like to talk about what he had seen in his life. It was just too painful to talk about, and best left unsaid.

We got a glimpse of that last year at the International

Bowl in Toronto. Rev. Jesse Jackson gave a speech at a luncheon, and Howard was fixated on Jackson's talk. It was about making life better in the inner city. Howard's eyes were focused on Jackson throughout the speech. When Jackson asked the participants if they knew someone who was taking drugs, Jazz nodded and raised his hand.

Jackson asked if they knew anyone who was in jail over drugs.

Jazz's hand rose.

Lastly, Jackson asked if anyone there knew someone who was killed over drugs.

Jazz's hand went up yet again.

He came here to get away from that. Storrs is a haven for people to experiment with their lives. College is a time to live, learn, and grow. Jasper Howard did that for the two-plus years he was in Storrs. He was becoming a top-flight cornerback, an educated student, and was an expectant father. His girlfriend is pregnant with Howard's child.

Tragically, the place he thought was paradise was the place of his death. Edsall talked to Jazz's devastated teammates about how many times life isn't fair

Life wasn't only unfair to Jasper Howard. It was cruel. He had so much to offer, but despite his best efforts, he was never given the chance.

# Features: Joe Rexrode

*Comment by the judge, Gene Duffey: Well told, poignant story. The writer made you feel close to the situation with good attention to details. Good quotes from Joe DeLamielleure and George Perles.*

**By JOE REXRODE**  
*Lansing State Journal*

EAST LANSING – Lorene Shinsky delivered her son, John, to an orphanage when he was 8 years old.

Edmund Shinsky had just died of a heart attack, robbing Lorene of a husband, John of a father and the household of an employed steelworker.

John then started a fire in their small house in a rough neighborhood in Lorain, Ohio. Trouble was already finding him, so off Lorene sent him to Parmadale Orphanage in Parma, with a toothbrush and a bag of clothes.

It was 1959. In 1983, having renewed contact with Lorene, John invited her to East Lansing to watch him receive his doctorate in education and special education from Michigan State. He bought her a brand-new outfit for the ceremony.

Lorene returned to Ohio on a Sunday night, and John called her. He wanted her to know she would be financially secure if anything happened to him.

The next day, John got a call from a coroner in Ohio. Lorene was dead at 53 of a brain aneurysm.

“I had to bury her,” Shinsky said of his mother, “in the same outfit.”

Some people experience life-changing moments. Shinsky’s life has been a string of them. He has used each one to build toward the fulfillment of a 40-year mission – opening his own orphanage.

That will happen in September in Matamoros, Mexico, where by multiple twists of fate Shinsky and his wife, Cindy, have been drawn to address the plight of children in the crudest of conditions.

Some live in garbage dumps. Many have been abused. One 9-year-old girl was tied to the axle of a car by her parents and left to die.

Asked to describe the worst case, Shinsky declined because he didn’t want to repeat it and because “you can’t write it anyway,” he said.

On Saturday, at halftime of MSU’s spring football game at Spartan Stadium, Shinsky will set out on a 2,000-mile bike trek to Matamoros to help raise \$500,000 he needs to finish the orphanage and get it running. He’s already raised about \$800,000.

He’ll be accompanied on bikes by two of his closest friends, MSU football teammates in the early 1970s – Joe DeLamielleure, who went on to become an NFL Hall of Famer, and Eljay Bowron, who went on to become the head of the Secret Service.

**JOE REXRODE**  
*Lansing State Journal*  
Age: 37

**College:** Michigan State

**Background:** I’ve been the Michigan State football and basketball beat writer at the *State Journal* since January 2003, but I covered those beats as far back as the mid-1990s for the college newspaper, *The State News*.

Nothing like a little Nick Saban to give a young journalist some humility and a fear of loud noises. I was a part-time reporter at the *State Journal* for the 1999-2000 year, helping cover Saban’s 9-2 breakthrough at MSU and bolt for LSU, followed by Tom Izzo’s national championship basketball team. I then spent two years on the news copy desk before switching to the sports desk, then taking over for retiring mentor Jack Ebling on the beats. I’ve also covered the NBA finals, NFL football, NASCAR, professional golf, college women’s basketball and high school sports over the years. I wrote a 2006 book on the history of Michigan State football and have won 15 writing awards, including APSE and Best of Gannett honorable mentions in 2004 for a feature on John L. Smith’s wife and her battle with cancer; and an Associated Press of Michigan first place in 2008 for a five-day series on MSU’s athletic budget struggles. I am married (Katie) with two sons (Jack and Brennan) and a pending daughter to be named later.



They remember Shinsky as a freshman at MSU, declaring in 123 East Wilson Hall that he would some day build a place for children.

“Forty years later, we’re riding on a bike to this guy’s orphanage,” DeLamielleure said. “Do you know how unbelievable that is to me? It’s like make believe.

“If you knew John as a freshman in college, you wouldn’t believe what he is now. He’s a miracle. No one can explain what John is.”

He is an orphan, an educator, a doctor and a cancer survivor. He is regarded as one of the toughest football players to come through MSU.

Mostly, he’s a man who has no doubts about why he’s here.

It was pretty simple at Parmadale.

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## Features (continued)

*(Continued from page 6)*

“The toughest kid ruled,” Shinsky said.

Structure and discipline were part of the deal, too, and Shinsky needed them. He got a two-parent family and a nice home in Lyndhurst at age 12, when Bob and Martina Weiss became his foster parents.

Football coach Bill Gutbrod and others at Cleveland St. Joseph High worked with Shinsky, who was admittedly “an animal” as a teenager. His intensity, brute strength and size (6-foot-4, 220 pounds at age 16) made him a highly sought football prospect.

He picked Duffy Daugherty and Michigan State over Michigan and its first-year coach, Bo Schembechler. Ohio State, Notre Dame and many others were in pursuit.

Shinsky took a sideswipe hit to his left knee as a senior, though, and he had to have cartilage removed. That knee would plague him, require surgery each year at MSU and ultimately cost him a pro career.

Education would be Shinsky’s ticket. A high school diploma was the first step and a major one. On his graduation day, a woman approached him, said “Congratulations,” and rushed away.

It was Lorene, nearly 10 years after their last contact.

Shinsky didn’t have a chance to say anything, but he vowed to find her.

At MSU, Shinsky quickly identified himself as the toughest kid in the neighborhood.

“He was crazy,” said DeLamielleure, an offensive guard who would go on to become an All-Pro with the Buffalo Bills. “We battled every day in practice. If I could go to practice and block John Shinsky, I could block anyone.”

“Let me tell you, there was not a tougher player,” George Perles, MSU’s defensive line coach at the time, said of Shinsky. “If John’s legs hadn’t gone out on him, he would have played a lot of pro ball. Pound for pound – and that’s saying a lot because he was a big guy – he was the toughest I ever coached. He didn’t know how to quit.”

In his summers, Shinsky ran free camps for children with disabilities. He has always identified with them, he said, because “individuals with disabilities are always striving to be part of something or part of someone, and I know how that feels.”

Also in college, Shinsky reconnected with his mother. He bought her a phone, invited her to East Lansing for a game. They formed a relationship.

Soon after Shinsky graduated from MSU with an education degree, he married his college sweetheart, Pat, a union that would last 19 years.

He looked at pro ball, even though he knew several

knee surgeries and a back surgery that kept him out of the 1971 season would scare away the NFL.

But the Chicago Fire of the brand-new World Football League came with a \$50,000 contract. Shinsky was about to sign – then he read the fine print. Any more knee injuries would be considered a “pre-existing condition” and cost him his salary.

He took a \$6,000-a-year job teaching special education at Walter French Junior High.

“One of the best decisions I’ve ever made,” he said.

Shinsky soon settled into 20 years as director of special education for the Lansing School District. He was in charge of about 3,500 children with various disabilities.

Having kids of his own “was not in the cards,” he said, but in a way he had thousands. DeLamielleure and his wife, Gerri, decided to adopt two Korean boys after having four children of their own.

The second, Matthew, was adopted at 4 years old and arrived with issues. It took years of Shinsky’s help to solve them.

“He tested me every day of his life,” DeLamielleure said of Matthew, now a 26-year-old father and ship builder. “Without John’s help, this kid would have been a lost soul. He would have been in jail.”

Shinsky gained master’s and doctorate degrees from MSU, then tragically lost his mother. At her funeral, he spoke with his maternal grandmother, Marie Cesare, for the first time since he was a young boy.

She gave him another jolt – Lorene had been adopted at 2 years old.

Shinsky and Cesare were not biologically related. Yet in the same conversation, he told her that if she ever needed help or a place to say, he’d be there.

A decade later, Cesare took him up on that and lived the last four years of her life under his care.

The orphanage is called The City of Children of Matamoros, Mexico, or Ciudad De Los Ninos. Six of 12 planned buildings are completed, and 40 children can be accommodated, with a final goal of 140.

Shinsky has seen things he won’t repeat, but he wants to do more than save children from poverty, abuse and garbage dumps. He wants to invest in them.

Education, vocational training and spirituality will be key parts of this facility.

“They will be equipped to be leaders in society,” he said. “It’s about empowering them, and we’ll expect them to take advantage of the gifts bestowed on them.”

It all happened so quickly. A college student sitting next to Shinsky on a plane named Brian Berg told him

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## Features (continued)

*(Continued from page 7)*

about a run-down orphanage in Matamoros, at which Berg was volunteering.

Shinsky and Cindy, who were married in 2000, immersed themselves. They bought some land, helped the orphanage build nine buildings, whipped up \$150,000 between their own money and donations.

Soon after the project was done, in 2003, Shinsky got a call from a prominent developer in Matamoros, Ramiro Gonzalez.

He wanted to donate 17 acres of land if Shinsky would build an orphanage from scratch.

"To me it was fate -- I thought we were done in Mexico," Shinsky said.

"As soon as John got that call he said, 'This is what we were meant to do,'" said Cindy, associate superintendent of special education for the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency. "And he's right. This is what we were meant to do."

The Shinskys have had a lot of help on this, from the MSU community, friends and former teammates such as Kellie Dean, pro bono architects in Mexico and an 82-year-old Texas man named Damon Noland who volunteered to help with much of the construction.

Shinsky's neck cancer played a role as well. He was diagnosed in 2007, had a tumor removed and endured 33 painful radiation treatments and two sessions of chemotherapy.

He couldn't talk for three weeks. He couldn't taste for three months. Cindy stepped into a more active role and

formed the orphanage's fund-raising committee.

Shinsky redoubled his efforts when he regained his strength -- and there was little doubt from those close to him that he would regain his strength.

"What it said to me was, I need to get in gear, get things in order," said Shinsky, who remains cancer free despite having an 80 percent chance of recurrence in the first year after treatment. "I hate to say it, and I never thought I'd say this, but it was a blessing to the orphanage for me to have cancer."

Now the orphanage is almost complete, after a lifetime of turning points and decades of dreaming. Shinsky is doing this because he is certain he wouldn't be here without his own move from the streets of Lorain to Parmadale.

He is doing this because of the call from Gonzalez that made him believe it's his fate.

And he is doing this because of a call he placed while a student at MSU, to Lorene Shinsky on a phone he had just bought for her. He had to ask the question.

"Why did you give me up?" he said.

"Because I loved you more than I loved myself," she said.

"The meaning behind that is unbelievable," Shinsky said, looking back 40 years later on the biggest moment of all and the woman who saved his life. "You talk about unconditional love for somebody. That, to me, is a role model. Unselfish, unconditional love. That is why I have to give back. That is why I'm doing this."

## Game (continued)

*(Continued from page 4)*

the left side in front of the Oregon bench, his heels nipping past OSU defensive end Gabe Miller, on a 52-yard touchdown run to put the Ducks ahead for good, 34-33 late in the third quarter.

James had 166 yards rushing. If there was a game-turning factor, it was Oregon's success in limiting Jacquizz Rodgers on the ground; he had 64 yards on 16 carries. But he received for 73 yards and his brother had 10 receptions for 139 yards as Canfield threw for 306.

The hurt had to be monumental for Oregon State (8-4), which, for the second straight year, was denied the Rose Bowl by the Ducks. A play here, a play there - that tackle by Mitchell? - and it might've been different.

"It stings," said OSU receiver Damola Adeniji. "It

hurts deep."

For Oregon (10-2), it completed a comeback from that awful night in Boise that began the season.

"I wanted it for him," said Oregon running backs coach Gary Campbell, talking about Blount. "I recruited that kid. I love him. He made a mistake. That's not who he is."

"We came into the season with high expectations," said Dickson, referring to Boise State, "and it seemed like they were crushed after that first game."

They weren't. The Ducks are going to Pasadena in style. It took the best effort of their ancient rival to push them there.

# Enterprise: Steve Wieberg

*Comment by the judge, Kevin Sherrington: Wieberg's piece was clearly the top entry in the field. It takes on an obvious topic, the arms race in college athletics, but does more than just cite the numbers, as most stories do. It incorporates the current economy and its impact on the classroom, which doesn't seem to be having much effect on athletic spending. A wealth of data, sources and perspective, all woven into a seamless piece. Excellent.*

**By STEVE WIEBERG**  
USA TODAY

BERKELEY, Calif. -- Jeff Tedford is a proven, program-building football coach who makes no apologies for the contract extension he landed -- and the \$2.8 million he's guaranteed to earn -- at the University of California this season.

He's on board, too, with more than \$430 million in planned improvements to Cal's venerable Memorial Stadium. They'll make the 86-year-old bowl more earthquake-resistant, and the upgrades should catch the eyes of football recruits. "So yeah," Tedford says, speaking over the clatter of construction outside his office, "it's a big deal."

But he allows that this is a time for sensitivity.

Higher education is in crisis, staggered by a depressed economy that has shrunk state appropriations, endowments and overall institutional budgets. The Berkeley campus has taken a near \$150 million cut in state funding and is laying off faculty and staff, imposing furloughs, cutting back new enrollment and paring course offerings while hiking students' tuition.

Most sports programs, though, spend on. Starting with football coaches' salaries.

USA TODAY's latest study of compensation reveals that Tedford is one of at least 25 college head football coaches making \$2 million or more this season, slightly more than double the number two years ago. The average pay for a head coach in the NCAA's top-level, 120-school Football Bowl Subdivision is up 28% in that time and up 46% in three years, to \$1.36 million.

Furthermore, USA TODAY's first comprehensive look at the salaries of assistant coaches finds many approaching and even exceeding presidents' compensation and most eclipsing that of full professors. At the top: The \$1.2 million Tennessee is paying defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, an NFL veteran who returned to college football to work for his son, head coach Lane Kiffin.

At least 66 football assistants, including more than two dozen in the Southeastern Conference, make \$300,000 or more, and USA TODAY found that perks

## STEVE WIEBERG

USA TODAY

Age: 55

College: Missouri

**Background:** Part of USA Today's original startup staff in 1982. Begged off the NASCAR beat, and has focused on college sports and the Olympics since 1983. Works out of the Kansas City area, where he and his wife, Paula, somewhat uncomfortably straddle the heated Missouri-Kansas rivalry. One of their twin sons, Eric, is a KU graduate (and currently working as the NCAA's men's basketball intern). Daughter Katie, a recipient of the FWAA's Volney Meece scholarship, finished this year at Steve's alma mater, MU. Nobody is much bothered that their other son, Michael, graduated from Truman (Mo.) State.



once reserved for head coaches are commonplace: multiyear and rollover deals, supplemental income from TV and radio, performance bonuses, retention bonuses, cars, complimentary tickets and country club memberships.

Tennessee's nine assistants earn an average of more than \$369,000, Texas' better than \$327,000.

By comparison, the American Association of University Professors put last year's average salary for full professors at public doctoral universities at \$115,509. Two years ago, the most recent period covered by The Chronicle of Higher Education's annual survey of presidents' compensation, median pay and benefits for CEOs at public research institutions was \$427,400. Nearly one in 10 pulled down less than \$300,000.

As the coaches' numbers soar, so do concerns among the presidents. USA TODAY's findings come a little more than two weeks after the release of a survey of bowl-subdivision university presidents by the watchdog Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics in which 85% of the respondents said they felt football and basketball coaches' compensation "was excessive."

With schools making greater use of privately raised money to pay coaches, the presidents were pessimistic in the survey about their ability to slow the spiral. They saw coaches' salaries as "a key contributor to the (fiscal) 'arms race' in intercollegiate athletics" and "the greatest

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# Enterprise (continued)

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impediment to sustainability," the Knight Commission noted.

Big-ticket capital projects aren't drying up, either. Auburn is in the middle of building an \$85 million basketball arena, and UCLA, another UC system flagship, is putting \$185 million into the renovation of 44-year-old Pauley Pavilion. Arizona recently unveiled a plan to spend \$378 million on facilities upgrades in every major sport in the next 20 years or so, starting with a new complex in the north end zone of Arizona Stadium that would house offices and locker rooms and incorporate 5,000 premium seats.

The spending "doesn't surprise me. It shocks me," says Hodding Carter, a former assistant Secretary of State for public affairs under Jimmy Carter who's now on the faculty at North Carolina and a member of the Knight Commission.

He points to the economy's ravages on education. "Here was a God-given opportunity in the forum of a true disaster," he says, "to step up to the issue and finally say, 'Look, I don't care where the money is coming from. It is unseemly for one institution on (a) campus to be acting as though these were happy days forever while everybody else is getting it in the chops.'

"It's just too bad. It calls into question the commitment of much of the institutional leadership in higher education."

Arizona's board of regents has launched a review of all of the system's intercollegiate athletics programs and whether the students, schools and the state see enough benefit to justify current levels of spending. Former U.S. senator Dennis DeConcini, who is on the board's capital committee, will lead the effort.

"I don't have an agenda," DeConcini says. He cast the lone dissenting vote on a raise that boosted football coach Mike Stoops' guaranteed pay to almost \$1.3 million this season, though he says he has fewer problems with the flagship university's ambitious building plans.

"Reading it, much of it is justified," he says of the proposal. "On the other hand, it's a terrible time to be announcing \$400 million in expenditures ... in the middle of a recession and raising tuition and furloughs and everything else."

At least 34 states, including Arizona, have cut assistance to public colleges and universities since the recession began, according to the non-profit, Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The center also tracks the schools' cost-cutting responses. Arizona State has eliminated 550 staff positions through attrition and layoffs and more than 200 faculty associate positions, imposed employee furloughs

ranging from 10 to 15 days, closed about four dozen academic programs, merged others and limited enrollment in its nursing school. Florida will lay off more than 50 staff and faculty and eliminate 150 positions. The California State University system, whose 23 campuses include Fresno State and San Diego State, is cutting enrollment by 10,000 students.

## Some athletics trimmed

Athletics hasn't been immune.

The Texas-based Division I-A Athletic Directors Association says a third of the schools responding to a survey this year had cut athletics staff in the last five years and about one in six had chopped at least one sport. This year, at least 15 schools have said they would eliminate a total of 32 teams.

In football and other sports, teams are being told to take fewer players on the road. Leagues are rethinking schedules and travel, downsizing postseason tournament fields and questioning the number of videographers and other once-unheard-of specialists who populate schools' athletic programs. Staff overgrowth is increasingly cited as a fiscal issue.

Anticipated savings are modest, however. Salaries take the single biggest bite out of athletics operating budgets in the top-tier Bowl Subdivision -- a median 33.3%, according to the NCAA's most recent analysis. Coaches' compensation accounts for more than half that, and little whittling is going on there.

The argument is the same from Florida to Ohio State to Texas -- that money paid to good coaches is a good investment, that their success equates to higher ticket sales and more marketing and sponsorship opportunities and that football's profits keep smaller sports afloat.

At California, athletics director Sandy Barbour points to a football renaissance in Tedford's eight seasons with the Golden Bears. A program that won a single game the season before he arrived is positioned for its seventh consecutive trip to a bowl. Crowds at Memorial Stadium have doubled to an average of almost 61,000. Players are graduating.

"If we let him go because we're not willing to pay market, we'll pay a huge price," Barbour says, "because I don't know that we can go out and find another coach with that combination of skills and (academic) emphasis."

The ceiling goes much higher. Southern California's Pete Carroll and Florida's Urban Meyer, whose teams have won or shared four of football's last six national

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# Enterprise (continued)

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championships, are among a trio earning \$4 million or more, USA TODAY's study shows.

Carroll was at close to \$4.4 million in 2007, the most recent year for which the private school's tax reportings are available. Meyer, whose No. 1-ranked Gators are chasing their third national title in four years, is making \$4 million after agreeing to a new six-year, \$24 million deal in August. His average annual raise: 23%.

Meyer tops the pay scale in the heavyweight SEC, which is saying something. Flush with revenue from new 15-year TV deals worth \$3.1 billion with ESPN and CBS, the league boasts six of the nation's 15 best-paid head coaches and nine of the top 25. On average, its schools are paying their head coaches \$2.64 million this season (counting all but Vanderbilt's Bobby Johnson, whose numbers aren't made public by the private institution).

Big 12 coaches average almost \$2.1 million, led by Oklahoma's Bob Stoops at \$4.3 million.

Those two conferences also are setting the bar for assistants' salaries, which are spiking nationwide as head coaches seek stability in their staffs and lean on schools to beef up pay and perks. Cal's Barbour calls it the next frontier in college athletics' spending arms race.

Of the 60-plus assistants USA TODAY found making \$300,000 or more this season, 29 are in the SEC and 15 in the Big 12. Tennessee became a pacesetter, handing its head coaching job to Lane Kiffin, who in turn recruited a who's who staff of assistants and paid them accordingly.

"I really think you have to spend money to make money," the younger Kiffin says. "When you go out, get those coaches, that's going to translate into recruiting, winning, ticket sales, your team doing better, (and) I don't think you ever ask those questions again."

He cites Alabama's rise under Nick Saban, who is making \$3.9 million this year. "When he was hired ... every article was, 'I can't believe how much we paid Nick Saban at Alabama,'" says Kiffin, earning \$2 million this year. "Well, guess what? Nobody writes about it anymore because they win. So when we start winning, nobody is going to write about how much we pay our assistant coaches because, in turn, we're going to make a lot more money by them being there. I don't think it's a big deal."

He smiles. "And I took a lot less so we'd have money for them."

Meanwhile, the cash-strapped UT system warily eyes the expiration of federal stimulus money and the prospect of trimming 500 jobs in two years, two-thirds of them on its Knoxville campus. Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen, chairman of the system's board of trustees, ex-

pressed discomfort earlier this year, telling the Associated Press, "When your neighbor's enduring hard times is not the time to flash your Cadillac in the driveway."

The UT athletics department is one of the few able to give its university a financial lift, contributing \$10.35 million to the school and university system in September and pledging \$1 million a year for the next 15 years.

Still, budget figures show that while athletics salaries and benefits are expected to rise 12% this year, the money Tennessee will spend on academic salaries is projected to fall (from \$127.68 million in 2008-09 to \$127.18 million).

## Sports budget backlash

At some schools outside the football-worshipping South, tolerance is wearing thinner as education budgets grow tighter.

California's faculty has taken aim at the university's annual seven-figure subsidization of athletics -- \$7.7 million a year ago, a projected \$6 million in 2009-10 -- and loans atop that to cover budget deficits. Last year's shortfall was \$5.8 million. The school lent the money. Another athletics deficit of \$6.4 million is projected for this year.

Fueling emotions on the campus is the discovery that the university forgave \$31.4 million in athletics debts in 2007.

Cal's Academic Senate approved a resolution last week that, among other things, called on the chancellor to end the subsidies and draw up a plan for athletics to pay off its existing debt. The action "is not about whether or not we like athletics, nor is it about the football coach," says computer science professor Brian Barsky, who has taught at the school for 28 years. "It is about athletics living within it means."

Few do. Only 25 of 120 programs in the NCAA's Bowl Subdivision made more than they spent in 2007-08, the most recent year covered in studies by USA TODAY and the NCAA. Those analyses might undercount some expenses, particularly capital spending, critics say.

Where they were provided, USA TODAY found that the average public school subsidy for athletics was \$8.8 million.

Those are indefensible outlays in these tight times, one analyst says. "To say it's a market (issue) is a cop-out," says Jane Wellman, who heads The Delta Project, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit agency that focuses on higher education spending. "There are choices at every institution about where to put subsidies, and ...

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# Applications being accepted for Volney Meece Scholarship

Applications are now being taken for the Volney Meece Scholarship. The deadline for nominations is Dec. 1. A decision on the 2010 winner will be made by the end of the calendar year by the scholarship committee.

The scholarship is awarded annually by the Football Writers Association of America and named for the late Volney Meece. Meece served 22 years as the FWAA's executive director and was the organization's president in 1971.

Sons or daughters of FWAA members who will be pursuing a college education are eligible for the award. The scholarship is a \$1,000 annual grant for four years while the student is pursuing a degree.

For nominations or inquiries, contact:

Dave Sittler (Tulsa World)

[davesitt@aol.com](mailto:davesitt@aol.com)

918-629-3851.

Sittler's address is:

8314 S. Jamestown

Tulsa, OK 74137

Previous Meece Scholarship winners are: Brett Goering, Topeka, Kan.; Kelly Brooks, Denver, Colo.; James Butz, Schaumburg, Ill.; Sara Barnhart, Atlanta, Ga.; Patrick Davis, Coventry, Conn.; Jacqueline O'Toole, Gaithersburg, Md.; Garrett Holtz, Denver, Colo.; Katie Hersom, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Katie Wieberg, Lawson, Mo.; Kaylynn Monroe, Winter Park, Fla.; Nate Kerkhoff, Overland Park, Kan.; Jack Caywood, Lawrence, Kan.; Haley Dodd, Overland Park, Kan.

## Enterprise (continued)

*(Continued from page 11)*

institutions are allowing more of their subsidies to go to revenue-pursuing activities and away from core academic purposes."

Pointing to Cal, she says, "They approved a student tuition increase of, what, 32%? They're cutting classes. ... I think they're sacrificing quality in the university. And when they're doing that, they shouldn't be subsidizing athletics."

Even before the faculty stirred, Cal's AD says she felt pressure to phase out its annual athletics subsidy. Barbour says she also has leaned on all of Cal's 40-some head and assistant coaches to participate in the systemwide furlough program even though contract employees are exempt. And by late last month, 29 coaches and senior administrators had said they would -- including Tedford, who will accept a 10% reduction in his

\$225,000 base salary.

"I don't think we're exempt from shouldering some of the burden," he says.

Addressing her budget woes, Barbour has left eight athletics staff positions unfilled and eliminated four others and looked hard at travel. And she said she doesn't rule out trimming some of the school's 27 varsity sports.

Nonetheless, she defends her spending decisions.

"We compete for a living," Barbour says. "If we're going to compete on the field on Saturday, we want to have every advantage they have."

# Loose deadline: Brett McMurphy

*Comment by the judge, Gene Duffey: Well researched piece on Leavitt's firing. Answered all the questions. Excellent job obtaining the report and attempting to interview everyone involved.*

**By BRETT McMURPHY**

*AOL FanHouse.com*

TAMPA, Fla. - University of South Florida fired coach Jim Leavitt Friday for striking a player and repeatedly lying to investigators, FanHouse has learned.

USF fired the only coach the Bulls have had in the program's 13-year history following an investigation initiated after a FanHouse report that stated Leavitt grabbed sophomore Joel Miller by the throat and hit the walk-on twice in the face Nov. 21 at halftime of USF's home game with Louisville.

The investigation found that Leavitt "inappropriately grabbed the throat and slapped the face of a student athlete," and that his denials were "consistently uncorroborated by credible witnesses ... [and] contradicted by a number of credible witnesses."

The 33-page investigative report, obtained first by FanHouse, shows Leavitt regularly lied during his interview with the investigator. It shows that Leavitt told Miller that he should "choose his words wisely" because Leavitt was "the most powerful man in the building," an exchange that was reported in FanHouse's initial story.

One player, identified as "Student Athlete C" told investigators that Leavitt "flat out lied" in his denial of the incident and "every word in the FanHouse article is accurate."

The investigative report, conducted by Thomas Gonzalez, found several instances where Leavitt lied to the investigator.

Among them that Leavitt "denied grabbing or slapping [Miller]" during the game.

The findings also indicate "Leavitt was told not to discuss the review with any Student Athlete" ... "nevertheless, he admits having spoken to [Miller] immediately after [Miller's] first interview."

The university announced his firing at a press conference Friday. Leavitt, who was fired for cause, will receive one month's base salary as severance, or roughly \$66,667. Leavitt was in the second year of a seven-year, \$12.6 million contract and was due to make \$800,000 in base salary this season and receive a total compensation of \$1.6 million.

**Brett McMurphy**  
**AOL FanHouse.com**

**Age:** 48

**College:** Oklahoma State

**Background:** McMurphy joined AOL FanHouse in October 2009 as a senior writer and this fall became FanHouse's national college football writer. Previously he was with the *Tampa Tribune* for 22 years, the last 17 reporting on college athletics. He also worked at the *Odessa (Texas) American* from 1985-87. A native of Oklahoma City, McMurphy has won two FWAA awards, including first place for loose deadline in 2008, an APSE award and three FWAA honorable mentions. He also landed a spot on John Walters' coveted Twitter 200 list (where McMurphy's Tweets can be found @Brettmcmurphy). He and his wife, Susan, have a 6-year old daughter, Chesney, who can be heard enthusiastically cheering on the Crimson Tide with her mom each Saturday in the fall.



Running backs coach and former Duke coach Carl Franks was named interim coach.

Despite denials from Leavitt and strength coach Ron McKeefery, the reviewers found that the incident took place as originally reported by FanHouse.

Investigators interviewed 20 student athletes and nine non student-athletes, including USF staff members and David Mitchell, Miller's coach at Tampa's Wharton High School.

According to the investigative report, Miller initially denied having been grabbed by the throat or struck, but provided the names of five other student athletes to investigators. Two of the five athletes had seen the event and described it as, "involving Coach Leavitt grabbing [Miller] by the throat with one hand and 'slapping' or 'striking' [Miller's] face with his other hand."

"Student Athlete H" said he remembered that [Miller] looked "shocked" and definitely was "shook up" after it.

Another student athlete warned of the coach, "When Leavitt's doing his thing, I stay away."

In the report, Leavitt claimed he didn't know Miller

*(Continued on page 14)*

# Loose deadline (continued)

*(Continued from page 13)*

had a "bad first half," nor did he remember Miller's penalty, an illegal block on a punt return. Leavitt said he knelt so he could make eye contact with Miller, but the player did not respond. Leavitt says he shook [Miller's] knees, and asked "what's wrong [Miller], what's wrong?"

The coach then claimed he grabbed [Miller's] shoulder pads and told him he would do better. He denied grabbing his neck and said there was "no way" that his hand could have slipped or that he touched Miller's face.

However, several student athletes described the event much differently.

"Student Athlete B" said Miller was looking up at the coach as Leavitt came quickly toward him. Leavitt then grabbed Miller by his throat and struck Miller's head twice with an open hand.

"Student Athlete B" told investigators that he was certain he had witnessed a crime. He also said he was unable to sleep or eat because of what he had witnessed and categorized it as "an assault." He added he felt betrayed and said he believed Leavitt had violated the program's values and standards.

Miller reported that when he spoke with Leavitt, the coach advised that Miller should "choose his words wisely, because he, Leavitt, was the most powerful person in the building," according to the report.

Miller's position coach, Franks, told investigators that when he spoke to Miller's parents after the Louisville game, they told him they were "concerned" about what had taken place in the locker room.

"Student Athlete C" said Miller was bothered by the incident, asking "Did you see that s---? Did you see what he did to me?"

Mitchell, Miller's former high school coach, told investigators that he spoke to Miller over the phone and Miller described the incident "exactly as it was reported in FanHouse."

Miller's initial reluctance to verify the initial story was due in part to the player's concern for the fate of the team's assistant coaches, according to the report, as well as his own concerns of not being allowed to play. Miller repeated that he "just wanted to play football."

The report characterized Miller as not "a person who would be untruthful. ... He very much seems like the sort of man who would not want the incident to affect the coaching staff or others."

But the incident's impact continued to grow. "Student

Athlete N," who was injured and did not travel to Louisville, learned of the incident following the game and said that the entire team was aware of it.

FanHouse first reported details of the incident Dec. 14. Five witnesses, USF players and staff members, said that Leavitt was upset by a mistake Miller made on special teams during the first half against Louisville, leading the coach to strike Miller.

When reached for comment Dec. 14 by FanHouse, Leavitt would neither confirm nor deny the incident.

"Things that happen or don't happen usually are kept within the team -- whether they happen or don't happen," Leavitt said.

Wednesday, senior wide receiver Colby Erskin, who was not present in the locker room at the time, told FanHouse that Miller told him about the incident and asked for his advice on what he should do, a few days after the Nov. 21 incident.

Erskin also said Leavitt cleaned out his locker and threw his personal effects into a trash bin. Erskin said he believed that Leavitt suspected him of leaking the story to the media and was retaliating against Erskin.

After FanHouse's initial Dec. 14 report, Leavitt told local newspapers that he had never struck a player. Paul Miller, who conducted five interviews with FanHouse and said that "Leavitt crossed the line" by hitting his son, changed his story and told local newspapers Leavitt did not strike his son.

Mitchell, an ordained deacon and Miller's coach at Tampa's Wharton High School, said he stood by his original comments to FanHouse that Joel Miller told him he was grabbed by the neck and hit twice by Leavitt and FanHouse's report was "100 percent accurate" based on what Miller told him.

"I'm not taking back anything I said to you," Mitchell told FanHouse.

Leavitt was 95-47 overall at South Florida and 17-18 in the Big East.

He guided the Bulls to a 27-3 International Bowl victory over Northern Illinois in his final game. The search for a replacement will commence immediately, the school announced