



Cleveland writer Lesmerises claims beat reporter award

Doug Lesmerises of the Cleveland Plain Dealer has won the inaugural FWAA Beat Reporter of the Year Award for his coverage of the Ohio State football team.

The FWAA announced last January it would accept nominations for the best college beat reporter in the country as a part of its annual Best Writing Contest, which otherwise is composed of four individual categories of Best Column, Best Enterprise, Best Game and Best Column.

The FWAA's Beat Reporter of the Year award is based on a comprehensive look at a way a person covers the beat and encompasses all the aforementioned categories.

Malcolm Moran, the inaugural John S. and James L. Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society, headed a committee that judged the nominations. Moran serves as director of the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism, housed in the College of Communications at Penn State University. He is a former sports reporter for the *Newsday*, *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune* and *USA Today* and also an FWAA Board Member,

Moran, who reviewed beat writing samples of all those nominated, presented two excerpts from the nominations on Lesmerises.

"No other staffer covers OSU full-time to help him, often forcing him to leave four recorders scattered at interviews to make sure he does not miss anything. Despite going toe-to-toe with local pa-

Doug Lesmerises

Cleveland Plain Dealer

Age: 38

School: Northwestern, 1995

Background: Despite leaving his laptop at the football facility his first week on the job, Doug Lesmerises has been allowed to cover Ohio State football for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* since 2005. He is the husband of Katie and the father of Kyra, 7, and Daria, 4, and is trying to hold off on getting a dog though the kids ask about it every day. People sometimes yell at him for his Top 25 voting and often mispronounce his last name, which in French means "the wild berries." Before joining the *Plain Dealer*, he worked for the *Wilmington (Del.) News Journal* and *The Times of Northwest Indiana*. His career highlights include running in the Sausage Race at a Milwaukee Brewers game, getting soaked in a rainstorm walking back from the fan march to Jim Tressel's driveway and accidentally using the women's restroom in the Kentucky Derby press box.



pers that staff as many as six writers for an OSU game, Lesmerises' passion for his job shines through in his writing. ... As far as finding a writer who churns out more unique content on such a restricted

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President's column



**TOMMY
HICKS**

One of the most satisfying awards of which the FWA is involved is the Discover Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award. Each year, our organization honors an individual or team who has demonstrated courage on and/or off the field. FWA past president George Schroeder, a columnist with the Eugene Register-Guard, has been deeply involved with the award in recent seasons and has devoted considerable time to the award's success. He has been, along with member Gene Wojciechowski, who originated the idea of the Courage Award, a strong supporter.

George Schroeder believes in the Courage Award.

He doesn't just recognize courage; he displays it as well.

Many who are FWA members and friends of George have followed the difficult, yet inspiring story of George's young son Christopher, who received a heart transplant shortly after his birth and has bravely undergone numerous health-related treatments for essentially all of his young life. Recently, in another chapter of Christopher's story, George donated one of his kidneys to Christopher.

Initial indications are the transplant was a success, and father and son are recovering from the surgery.

Please keep Christopher, George and the entire Schroeder family in your thoughts as they continue to move toward the day when Christopher goes home from the hospital a healthy little boy.

And when you read or hear of the Courage Award, perhaps by way of an announcement of a new candidate for the award or announcement of this year's winner, remember Christopher and his dad George, who would qualify

as Courage Award candidates themselves.

- In other FWA matters, we will take part in an on-site visit for the proposed media set-up for this year's BCS national championship game at New Orleans' Superdome in the coming days. The All-State Sugar Bowl's John Sudsbury will conduct the tour. If you have any questions or issues concerning the set-up for this season's game you wish me to pass along, please send me an email at thixx25@aol.com and I will do so.

- The FWA and USBWA continue to communicate with Marriott officials in hopes of providing the FWA membership the VIP rates it was offered by Marriott in recent years. There is the possibility other hotel chains may receive consideration if they are willing to provide discounted rates to FWA members.

- The recent action by South Carolina head coach Steve Spurrier against The State newspaper's Ron Morris made national news. It also caught the attention of the FWA. Although Morris is not an FWA member, several members suggested the organization make note of Spurrier's actions. In turn, a letter was written and sent to South Carolina athletics director Eric Hyman criticizing Spurrier's actions and calling for Hyman to take steps to make ensure access to each day's news flow -- for all reporters - - not be hindered.

- This year's Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award will once again be presented at the site of the BCS national championship game. Announcement of the winner will take place on Dec. 15, but a reception for the winner is scheduled on the evening of Jan. 8 in New Orleans, the night before the national championship game is played in the Superdome.

- In recent weeks, several members have noted changes taking place at some schools in regard to receiving credentials. Some schools now do not send game credentials along with the parking pass for individual games and in some cases access to the press box on game day, or receiving one's credential at the media entrance, is not allowed until three

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New schedule announced for voting, presentation of Eddie Robinson Award

The selection schedule for the winner of the FWAA's Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award, sponsored by the Fiesta Bowl, will undergo a change of dates in 2011.

The Fiesta Bowl and FWAA will announce four-to-five finalists on Monday Dec. 5 in New York City before the National Football Foundation Annual Awards Dinner. FWAA first vice-president Lenn Robbins of the *New York Post* will announce the finalists. The announcement will be streamed live by XOS Digital via xosdigital.com.

On the same day, the FWAA will launch voting by its membership. The voting period will last a week. At the

conclusion of the voting, the Fiesta Bowl and FWAA will announce the winner of the 2011 Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Award on Dec. 15 from Scottsdale, Arizona.

The FWAA and Fiesta Bowl will host a presentation reception on Sunday Jan. 8 at the site of the Bowl Championship Series title game in New Orleans.. The winning coach will be honored and receive the Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year Trophy from Eddie Robinson Jr., the late coach's son, FWAA president Tommy Hicks of the *Mobile Press-Register* and Chairman of the Board Duane Woods and Executive Director Robert Shelton of the Fiesta Bowl.

Minnesota's Bobby Bell, 1962 Outland winner, to get trophy at January banquet in Omaha

Bobby Bell, former University of Minnesota and Kansas City Chiefs star, will receive the Outland Trophy on January 12, 2012 in Omaha, Nebraska during the annual Outland Trophy Presentation banquet sponsored by the Greater Omaha Sports Committee.

On that date, the 2011 winner of the Outland Trophy, as selected by the FWAA, will be given his trophy as well. The FWAA will announce three finalists for the 2011 Outland Trophy on November 21. The 2011 winner will be announced Dec. 8 on ESPN during The Home Depot College Football Awards. The FWAA has named the Outland Trophy winner since the 1946 season, making it the third oldest award in college football behind the

Heisman and Maxwell.

Bell, who won the Outland in 1962, did not receive a trophy because the FWAA only gave plaques to the winners in those days and didn't start awarding an actual trophy until 1988. For 15 years, the Downtown Rotary Club of Omaha has been giving trophies to those who won the award before 1988.

Bell, 71, already has been inducted into the College Football (1991) and Pro Football (1983) Halls of Fame. He played for the Kansas City Chiefs when they defeated the Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl IV. Bell was an All-America at Minnesota as a 6-4, 217-pound defensive tackle under Coach Murray Warmath.

President's column (continued)

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hours or another designated time prior to kickoff.

This has been an issue for some, especially for night games, when reporting or commenting on other games and results of the day or preparing early columns, notebooks, blogs, features or other work is required. If such a procedure has created issues for you, send a note to me (thixx25@aol.com), Steve Richardson (tigerfwaa@aol.com) or Ron Higgins (Higgr@aol.com) with specific information regarding the school, times and any other pertinent information. We'll try to put together a

list and see what, if anything, might be done.

- To those who responded to an item in the previous column about serving as a representative at a possible media orientation session, if requested, at schools near your location, thank you and you have not been forgotten. I am waiting to get a list of names and areas, as well as visiting with SIDs and others regarding the idea to gauge interest in setting up such a program through the FWAA.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me or Steve Richardson.

Bob Markus recalls career in new book

(Ed. Note: A 1955 graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Bob Markus, after a short stint at *The Moline* (Illinois) *Dispatch*, spent 36 years as a sports writer and columnist for *The Chicago Tribune*. He now lives in Fort Lauderdale with his wife of 48 years, Leslie. They have two daughters, Cathy and Trish, and a son, Mike. Here is an excerpt from his new 585-page book: "I'll Play These: From Ecstasy to Angst, A Sports Writer's Journey.")

Bob will be glad to sell the book (payment by check) and provide free shipping. Soft cover book sells for \$24.00. Just call him (954-525-4165) or email him (bobmarkus34@gmail.com).

One afternoon in late September 1959, I was sitting in the Jug, a bar located across the street from *The Moline Dispatch*, watching a National League playoff game between the Milwaukee Braves and Los Angeles Dodgers.

I was not drinking alone, because in those days newspaper guys used to routinely stop off at the designated watering hole to toss back a few while rehashing the day's highlights. Nobody drank iced tea and nobody had ever even heard of Perrier water.

I was in a rather melancholy mood to begin with, because this would be one of my last times to drink with people I had come to know and respect over the previous five years.

A week earlier, I had driven up to Dubuque, Iowa, and had interviewed for the job of assistant sports editor. The sports editor, Terry Bledsoe, hired me on the spot, and I went back to *The Dispatch* and gave my two weeks' notice.

Now, as I nursed a gin and tonic and watched the ball game, I heard my name being called. There was a telephone call for me. The caller was Terry Bledsoe, who told me, in brief, that a friend of his had just gotten out of the army, and Bledsoe had given him the job he had already promised me.

I was more stunned than angry, and a little bit panicky. I was out of a job for the first time since leaving the University of Missouri five years earlier. I called home and told my parents, and when they asked me what I planned to do, I said I'd probably go to San Francisco, a city I loved, and drive a cab until something opened up on a newspaper out there.

That's when my father said to me, "Would you consider a job at the *Chicago Tribune*?" Sure I would, but I'd tried that once, during my senior year in college. In fact, I had tried all four Chicago newspapers and had batted 0 for 4.

At *The Tribune*, sports editor Arch Ward had walked me out to the sports copy desk and, like an Arab sheik

surveying his domain, made a sweeping gesture with his hand. Seated around the rim of the copy desk, he pointed out, were a former sports editor of the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, a former sports editor of a paper in Lincoln, Nebraska, and several other imports from various papers around the Midwest. I got the message--go out and get some experience.

The other three sports editors had the same message in more or less the same words. Although I really wasn't interested in working in radio, I even had an interview with Jack Brickhouse, already famous and soon to become legendary television voice of the Chicago Cubs and White Sox.

This meeting had been arranged, I was told, by a lawyer named Ernie Feldman, a good friend, supposedly, of Brickhouse's and a business acquaintance of my father. Brickhouse had patiently listened to me, asked a few questions, and then personally passed me over to Arch Ward. Before he left me in Ward's office, he said, "Be sure to say hello to Ernie Feldman and his beautiful wife."

Although I had no idea who Ernie Feldman was, I assured Brickhouse that I would do that. Several years later, when I was still a young sports writer at *The Tribune*, I met Brickhouse at a party and reminded him of how we'd met. I went off to refill my drink glass and when I returned, Brickhouse said to me, "You know, I've been thinking about what you told me and one thing has me puzzled: Who the hell is Ernie Feldman?"

Plain Dealer's Lesmerises named top beat reporter

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beat, you would be hard pressed to find a better candidate than Lesmerises."

From a separate nomination: "He is a work horse who feeds the PD web site constantly with alerts and video and also has innovative angles for his newspaper coverage. He goes the extra mile every day as a one-man content machine. ... He breaks his share of stories -- more than his share, actually. Year in and year out, you cover the same stories the same way. But he goes out of his way to break the mold and give his readers a different viewpoint and better coverage."

Here are links to some of Lesmerises' stories:

Main: <http://bit.ly/TresselResigns>

Analysis: <http://bit.ly/ProtectingPryor>

Feature: <http://bit.ly/BryantBrowning>

News: <http://bit.ly/PryorQuits>