



Mark Blaudschun, Steve Wieberg take 2012 FWAA beat writer awards

Long-time FWAA members Mark Blaudschun and Steve Wieberg have been named co-winners of the 2012 Beat Reporter of the Year Award for their coverage of college sports during the last three decades.

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 categories of coverage over a period of time.

Blaudschun, 64, received the coveted Bert McGrane Award in 2007, the FWAA's Hall of Fame. He retired from *The Boston Globe* last summer after 25 years of service but has continued to cover sports through his highly popular web site *AJerseyGuy.com*.

Wieberg, 58, is a member of the United States Basketball Writer's Hall of Fame. He retired from *USA Today* last summer after a 30-year run and is now freelancing. Both have won awards in the past in the FWAA Best Writing Contest.

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.

"In an unprecedented era of inflated rights fees and conference affiliation madness, no one has tracked the



Steve Wieberg (left) and Mark Blaudschun

developments more successfully than Mark," Moran said. "That is because a long time ago, decision makers learned two things about him. First, you can trust him without hesitation. And second, never dare him to discover the site of your secret meeting, because he'll be waiting outside when your car pulls up to the door."

Moran added about Wieberg: "There are very few reporters that have created a franchise. Steve's aggressive, thoughtful, and most of all fair coverage of the college athletics industry has been required reading since

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First vice president Chris Dufresne's column



**CHRIS
DUFRESNE**

We all know coaches are control freaks, but some belong in a control-freak circus side show.

USC and UCLA coaches Lane Kiffin and Jim Mora have extended a cross-town rivalry to new lows in the battle for information-suppression supremacy.

The irony is that UCLA and USC are two of the few schools remaining that open practices to the media. The problem is that neither coach wants beat writers to report what they see.

This is sort of counter to everything we were taught in Journalism\Twitter\Facebook 101.

Mora, in his first year at UCLA, recently kicked the media (and his own sports information department!) out of a practice because a cameraman set his equipment up in the wrong place.

Mora called the SID staff "incompetent" but said everyone would be welcomed back the next day so as long as they didn't bring their eyes, ears, pencils or dignity.

USC made national news in September (besides losing to Stanford) when it issued a two-week practice ban for *Daily News* beat reporter Scott Wolf and also pulled his credential for the Sept. 15 game against Cal.

Wolf was accused of violating policy by reporting that kicker Andre Heidari had undergone knee surgery. Um, no he didn't. Wolf obtained the information independently and not at practice.

Wolf was reinstated only after editors from the *Los Angeles Times*, *Orange County Register* and *Daily News* had a summit with USC AD Pat Haden.

The *Times* then issued its own policy.

It would not allow beat writers Gary Klein (USC) or Chris Foster (UCLA) to attend practice if they could not report what they see inside the gates.

There has to be a better way — and maybe there will be. Pac 12 Commissioner Larry Scott said he will meet with his athletic directors in October to discuss an NFL-type injury policy for his conference. The Atlantic Coast Conference already has such a policy.

There is no over-arching governing body in college football, so action must be taken at the local level.

It is ridiculous, for example, that Oregon Coach Chip Kelly should refuse to acknowledge injuries even exist.

"But Coach, your left tackle seems to be missing his left leg!"

Here's hoping the myopic, paranoid actions by a few Pac 12 coaches can lead to some sort of common-sense resolution.

There is no convincing evidence that enacting by-laws that would make North Korea proud can make-or-break a team's bowl chance.

There is evidence to the contrary.

Oregon State Coach Mike Riley's practices are open to the media AND the public. What you see is what you get.

On Sept. 22, Oregon State came to UCLA and defeated Mora's Secret Society in the Rose Bowl. Riley then took the entire team out for hamburgers.

Even Alabama's Nick Saban, not exactly the most media-friendly coach, issues a weekly injury report.

This has prevented the need to walk out of post-practice interviews after 28 seconds (Lane Kiffin: Sept. 19) should some heathen ask for an injury update.

Bottom line: reporters covering teams should not be banned for reporting what any USC student could tweet in Matt Barkley's history class.

"Just saw R star QB in walking boot. I WUD list VERRRRY doubtful 4 Utah."

Should that kid have his campus privileges revoked?

Nope, and neither should we.

Bohls reflects on father's service and new Armed Forces Merit Award



KIRK
BOHLS

Leon Bohls rarely talked about the war, and he wasn't even in harm's way for the most part.

Many of those who have served our country kept their emotions, their doubts, their fears to themselves long after their time in the military, and my father was like that. Some suffered in silence, and some have had trouble dealing with what they saw or what they had to do to survive. But all understood the sacrifice that was necessary in time of war, the ultimate sacrifice in far too many cases.

My father hadn't been on the front line, and he didn't fly bomber missions. But he worked on many of those planes that did in World War II and lost friends in that conflict during his time with the Army's 99th Bomber Group on bases in North Africa and Italy.

So it's with special pleasure that I was privileged to serve on an FWAA panel that has selected the recipients for the inaugural Armed Forces Merit Award for their devotion to country. The goal for the award is "to honor an individual and/or a group within the realm of the sport of football that has created, developed and/or produced a program that provides care, concern and support for past or present members of the United States armed forces and/or their families or a player, coach, administrator or staff member who has served in the military.

My father played football for three seasons on the freshman and B-teams for the University of Texas from 1931 to 1933 and helped prepare a varsity led by Ernie Koy and Harrison Stafford. He'd been a star running back and kick returner for the Taylor Ducks, where he earned the nickname "Leaky" for the way he leaked through defensive tacklers.

I have very few keepsakes from my father, but I still have the khaki Army laundry bag he used during the war and think of him often whenever I use it to deliver my dry cleaning. I also have the small, grainy picture of a 30-something Leon Bohls as he stood in front of the Roman coliseum, one of the few items that my dad kept from the war.

Until my three brothers and I found the 13 Bronze Stars he earned that he privately kept in the chest of drawers in his bedroom and never spoke of. But that

was my dad.

He did keep a diary of his days overseas, but the entries in his journal were succinct and offered few details.

"Christmas, 1943.

Mission ... no bombs dropped. Rain, wind and snow"

"December 29, 1943

Two Wellingtons blew up taking off on runway"

"January 9, 1944

New B-17G arrived, assigned to crew"

"January 13, 1944

First of twelve consecutive missions"

"January 24, 1944

Raid to Safir, Bulgaria; into Romania; Lt Hoover lost; 2nd Bomb Group lost 6 planes"

Leon Bohls understood sacrifice and commitment and devotion to country and community. And he lived his life that way for 94 years as the proud son of a cotton farmer in Taylor, Texas. My dad was in many ways emotionally detached until later in his life, stoic and old-fashioned, stubborn and disciplined but giving and grateful for a life well lived.

He did keep much of the mail he received overseas, including a letter my grandfather wrote to my dad in Italy on the eve of the war's end on May 11, 1945. It offered a snapshot of ordinary life back home, a lifestyle that he and his fellow servicemen protected.

My dad's brother Alvin and his wife Ruth had delivered another baby boy. My grandfather said the baby chicks were doing fine for the most part although a few hadn't survived. The bluebonnets were still blooming on the roadsides, and the sweet corn was tasseling. Rev. Krueger had given another excellent sermon Sunday past.

"If this nasty war would only be over," my grandfather wrote, "the boys that are over there two or more years surely should come back and let the British and Canadians do a little more; not only the yanks. May the dear Lord protect and save and keep you in his gracious care and bring you home.

Love, Mom & Dad

P.S. "Ate our first peaches today on the tree up front."

Once he returned home, safe from the dangers of war, Leon Bohls knew to give back and did his entire life as he delivered a message of service and responsibility.

Leon Bohls didn't get that letter until he returned home from overseas. Once he came home, he served his family and community with distinction as well as he did his country. He led the local Boy Scout troop and

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Beat writer award (continued)

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USA Today was launched 30 years ago. Steve's understanding of complex issues gave him the ability to identify the next controversy when most reporters are still trying to figure out the last one."

Blaudschun grew up in New Jersey, but graduated in 1970 from the University of Miami and took his first full-time job back north. He worked for the *Rockland Journal News*, just outside New York City, covering high school sports for \$125 a week.

Two years later he returned to New Jersey, accepting a job at the *Passaic Herald News*. He went from covering high schools to covering the New York Giants and New York Knicks. He switched from Passaic to the *Trenton Times*, but still was a New Jersey guy covering the New York City teams. Blaudschun left New Jersey in 1982 to cover Southwest Conference football for *The Dallas Morning News*.

Blaudschun went to the *Boston Globe* in 1987 and covered the New England Patriots for several years before beginning a more than two-decade stint of covering college football in 1990. Mark was president of the FWAA in 1999.

Wieberg, a University of Missouri School of Journalism graduate, had been a part of the *USA Today* since

its start up in 1982. He was the paper's top writer in covering the NCAA and was the primary reporter for many years in its basketball and football coverage. Through 2012, he had covered every Final since 1983 and had been a fixture at many Olympics.

Before *USA Today*, Wieberg was a sports reporter and Sunday sports editor at the *Springfield (Mo.) News-Leader* from 1981-82, and before that worked five years at the *Mexico (Mo.) Ledger*.

Steve served as president of the USBWA in 1996-97. Besides winning his FWAA Awards, he also has been a multi-time winner in the USBWA's contest and in the Associated Press Sports Editors contest. In October 2007, he was named by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as one of the "10 Most Powerful People in College Sports." In 1995 and 1996, Wieberg was selected by *College Sports Magazine* as one of the "50 Most Influential People in College Sports."

"Mark and Steve have been staples of the college sports writing community for a long time and brought an excellence to the table in several areas," said FWAA Executive Director Steve Richardson. "Both are excellent reporters and have shown great expertise in other areas such as enterprise, game story and columns over the years."

2012 FWAA KEY AWARD DATES

Mon., Nov. 5: All-America Defense ballots to members

Sun., Nov. 11: All-America Defense selection call

Mon., Nov. 12: All-America Offense/Special Teams ballots to members

Mon., Nov. 12: Merit Award winner announced

Thu., Nov. 15: Bronko Nagurski Trophy finalists announced

Sun., Nov. 18: All-America Offense/Special Teams selection call

Mon., Nov. 19: Outland Trophy finalists announced (ESPN/Dallas)

Mon., Dec. 3: Eddie Robinson Coach of Year finalists announced (Dallas)

Mon., Dec. 3: Bronko Nagurski Trophy winner announced (Charlotte, N.C.)

Thu., Dec. 6: Outland Trophy winner announced on ESPN (Orlando, Fla.)

Thu., Dec. 13: Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year winner announced (Dallas, Scottsdale, Arizona)

Fri., Dec. 14: FWAA All-America Team announced (Dallas, Texas)

Wed., Dec. 19: Courage Award winner announced (Dallas, Texas)

Sun., Jan. 6 Eddie Robinson Coach of Year Trophy Reception/Presentation (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)

Mon., Jan. 7: FWAA Freshman All-America Team announced (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)

Mon., Jan. 7: Discover Orange Bowl Courage Award winner on field presentation (Miami Gardens, Fla.)

Tue., Jan. 8: Grantland Rice National Championship Trophy announcement (Fort Lauderdale, Fla.)

Thurs., Jan. 10—Outland Trophy Banquet Presentation, Omaha, Neb.

Bohls (continued)

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was president of the Little League and the local school board, the church vestry and probably several other organizations I didn't even know about. But it began with service to his country, and it is in that grateful spirit, that we honor those like him with the Armed Forces Merit Award.