

Hall doors open for Burlison, Moran, Tipton

The newest additions to the USBWA's Hall of Fame are Frank Burlison of the Long Beach Press-Telegram, Malcolm Moran of USA Today and Jerry Tipton of the Lexington Herald-Leader.

The USBWA Hall of Fame was established in 1988 to honor members – past and present – who have made significant contributions to the organization and are recognized for their achievements in sports journalism. To be eligible for consideration, an individual must have 20 years of service in the profession.

Burlison has been covering college basketball for nearly 30 years for the Press-Telegram, Orange County Register and FoxSports.net. He is back with the Press-Telegram for his second stint there and also writes college basketball and recruiting analysis for Scout.com (formerly TheInsiders.com).

Sports Illustrated listed him in its 1992-93 preview as one of the country's "10 most influential members of the media." His annual "Best of the West" feature on rising high school players is one of the most popular at his paper.

Burlison is a member of the Wooden Award selection committee and was an original member of the McDonald's



Frank Burlison



Malcolm Moran



Jerry Tipton

All-America Game selection committee and was the first reporter to cover the Nike summer camps.

Moran was president of the USBWA in 1988-89, when the organization formalized its awards for women and held its first nationally-televised presentation of the player of the year awards for men and women during the NCAA Final Four in Seattle.

He currently is the national college basketball reporter

for USA Today and has reported on the sport for four newspapers over the past 30 years – Newsday in 1974, the New York Times (1979-98), Chicago Tribune (1998-2000) and USA Today (2000-present).

Moran negotiated pool access for reporters to the 1988 men's Olympic Trials after ABA/USA, the forerunner to USA Basketball, had announced the unprecedented step of closing the men's team trials to the media. Moran has covered 26 NCAA tournaments, three men's and women's Olympics and the 2002 World Championships for men. A 1975 graduate of Fordham, he was named Media Man of the Year by the National Invitation Tournament in 2003.

Tipton is in his 23rd consecutive season on the Kentucky beat. He has covered two NCAA championship teams and numerous Final Four squads.

He worked for the Huntington (W. Va.) Herald-Dispatch for eight years before coming to the Lexington Herald in 1981. He covered both UK football and basketball until 1987, when the beat was split.

Tipton has been named Kentucky Sportswriter of the Year and is a Herald-Leader Excellence Award winner.

There's still time to boost USBWA enrollment figures

Ouch.

Maybe you remember reading about the USBWA's membership drive here last November.

I thought we could boost our membership substantially, simply by putting out fliers at conference media days and each of us making a point of inviting three people to join.

I'm here to tell you our membership has actually *declined* from about 700 to 660 – though we added some members, we lost some non-renewing members.

So let's try that again.

It's never too late for new members to join us, and our gatherings at the men's and women's Final Four are good opportunities to introduce new colleagues to the group.

Our dues remain a bargain at \$40.

At the risk of sounding like a Home Shopping Network pitch, for that low, low price you get not only our valuable directory of members and college basketball contacts and a subscription to the *Basketball Times* but also a new benefit, the Marriott Athletic MVP card, which entitles you to preferred rates of up to 50 percent off the rack rate. (That's right – your paper's savings for a single night could cover the cost of expensing your membership.)

Now, obviously, I am preaching to the choir here, because this newsletter is distributed to members. But let's take another stab at this.

We are facing some budget issues, largely because of a decline in corporate contributions tied to the end of our deal with CBS, which used to broadcast a program during the Final Four highlighting some of our award winners.

One of the solutions we don't want to resort to is a dramatic increase in our dues – say, up to as much \$75-\$100. This would be prohibitive for many of our members whose employers don't allow

expensing of dues, or would balk at such an increase.

Let's keep in mind that as an organization tied to college basketball, many of our members come from smaller papers in college towns, not fat-cat papers in pro cities.

So at the next game you cover, look around and check with just one person: "Are you a member? Did you ever join? Are you sure you renewed?"

All anyone has to do is type in www.usbwa.com and they'll be directed to our site.

On the red bar, click "Join Us."

President's Column

By **ROBYN NORWOOD**
 Los Angeles Times



St. Louis putting best Arch forward for Final Four

The NCAA Final Four returns to St. Louis this year after a 27-year hiatus, but the venue that writers will find in April is a far cry from the one the media had to deal with in 1978, when Kentucky, behind a 41-point scoring performance by Jack Givens, defeated Duke for the national championship.

Working conditions were less than ideal for the press in 1978 at The Checkerdome, an ancient arena built in the 1920s that many referred to as “the old barn.”

The press area was located in a dank and not-very-well lighted tunnel that snaked its way down through the bowels of The Checkerdome.

Space was tight and post-game interviews were conducted where writers sometimes had to peer around giant columns just to see coaches and players respond to questions.

The number of media members covering in 1978 was vastly smaller compared to today. I served as the local media coordinator working with NCAA media boss Dave Cawood back then and recall less than 500 credentials total

Executive Director

BY JOE MITCH
MVC



being issued.

Today, that number is more than double and, fortunately, domes like the one in St. Louis have ample space to handle a growing contingent of media.

Current NCAA media consultant Bill Hancock and local media coordinator Mike Kern of the Missouri Valley Conference have configured media areas that should please writers covering this year’s Final Four.

The interview room and working press area are close to one another and are just a short distance from the court. Locker rooms for all four teams are located on the same side of the building with easy access for writers sitting at courtside.

Writers will also find a different St. Louis than the one that last hosted a Final Four in 1978.

Whereas activity was pretty much confined to areas around the arena and team hotels in 1978, this year’s Final Four has the entire St. Louis community and region involved.

From the outset, the St. Louis Local Organizing Committee has set as its goal to create a Final Four atmosphere that uniquely represents St. Louis.

Downtown St. Louis is expected to come alive with planned activities for fans when they’re not attending the games.

Concerts are scheduled, party tents are being set up, a “Taste of St. Louis” is planned featuring several dozen top restaurants and there will be a “March to the Arch” where

3,000 people are expected to bounce basketballs down a major street to the Arch.

The media will like the fact that the headquarters hotel – the Renaissance Grand – is located across from the main media entrance to Dome. The other two media hotels – the Adams Mark and Embassy Suites – are within blocks of the Dome. A press shuttle also will run throughout the weekend between the Dome and all the hotels, including the coaches’ headquarters at the Millenium Hotel in downtown St. Louis.

Nightlife will be just a few blocks away at Laclede’s Landing, an entertainment district on the riverfront with a number of restaurants and clubs to choose from. Washington Ave., which runs in front of the Dome and the Renaissance Grand, has recently been redeveloped and offers several new eateries and nightspots. Shuttles will also be available to provide transportation to St. Louis’ famous neighborhoods such as Soulard and The Hill, known for its many Italian restaurants.

Transportation around the city will also be available via a light rail system, Metrolink, which has been called one of the best mass transit systems in the country and links the airport to the Dome and the downtown hotels.

St. Louis is going all out to put its best foot forward to provide for a memorable experience for fans, teams and the media, with hopes that the city won’t have to wait another 27 years for the next NCAA Final Four.

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USBWA Membership Application Form

If you have not yet renewed your membership to the U.S. Basketball Writers Association now is the time to act. For your \$40 membership fee you will receive the most complete directory in college basketball and you will also get all 12 issues of *Basketball Times* and, as well, you will be eligible to enter our Best Writing Contest.

Send a check for \$40 and let the USBWA make your job of covering college basketball easier.

Title _____

Newspaper/Publication/ College _____

Address _____

City _____ STATE _____ Zip _____

Home Address _____

City _____ STATE _____ Zip _____

Office Telephone _____ Home Telephone _____

Fax _____ Email Address _____

**c/o Missouri Valley Conference
1818 Chouteau Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103**

On an icy day in Memphis, a reason to be thankful

Earlier this year, I was reminded of how fortunate I am to write about college basketball for a living.

I was in Memphis, covering the trial of Alabama booster Logan Young, who was accused of paying a high school football coach \$150,000 for one of his players. It was a depressing case that brought out the very worst elements of college athletics.

I was supposed to fly home to Atlanta on a Friday night after court, but thanks to Mother Nature, I could not get back because of an ice storm in Georgia. So basically I was stuck in Memphis until the trial resumed on Monday.

Then came the phone call that we all cherish. My desk was just elated to find out that I was stuck in Memphis. Why? Because the Atlanta Hawks were going to play the Grizzlies the next night at the FedEx Forum. Our Hawks beat writer couldn't get to Memphis because of the ice and, since I was stuck, I would be pressed into service.

Oh boy. In this, my 29th season as a working scribe, I was about to cover my third professional basketball game.

I will say this. From a pure media relations standpoint some of our college sports-information departments could learn a thing or two from the NBA.

The Grizzlies media-relations folks knew I was a rookie when it came to their sport and went out of their way to make sure I got the lay of the land once I entered their building. The Hawks media relations guy, Arthur Triche, had made a phone call to make sure things went smoothly for me.

Did you know that when you cover an NBA game, the league actually puts out a sheet of paper telling you exactly who is NOT playing and why? They don't treat injuries as a matter of national security or hide behind the silly HIPPA regulations.

Did you know that in the NBA, not only are the locker rooms open after the game, they are actually open BEFORE the game? If you're working on an early story, you can

actually talk to a player right before a game without upsetting his delicate train of thought. My word, if any college basketball writer tried such a thing he would be arrested or shot-probably both.

Did you know that in the NBA they still put the media at courtside? Sure, you have the Jack Nicholson wannabees on one side of the floor, but they still leave room for the writers. Obviously, they think it's important.

Then, just when I start thinking that this NBA deal isn't all that bad, the game begins.

Yes, we do have our media issues to deal with in college basketball. Access, it seems, is shrinking by the day. We are losing courtside seats to the high rollers as colleges become more corporate in their outlook.

But when it comes to the game-just the game-it ain't even close.

What I saw at the FedEx Forum was a group of professional athletes playing the game because it is what they do for a living. They play hard. Most of them seem to have some pride in their work.

But there is no passion. None.

Compare any NBA game, playoff or otherwise, to Kansas-Kentucky at Rupp Arena or Duke-Carolina at

Cameron Indoor Stadium. You can't. There is no comparison.

What I saw on this Saturday night in Memphis was a combination of WWE Smackdown and the Ringling Brothers Circus. It was entertaining, sure, but to me, competitive athletics has to be about more than just entertainment.

An NBA game might be an enjoyable way to spend an evening. But Duke-Carolina at Cameron fulfills something much deeper in one's soul. Just minutes before tipoff at the game on Feb. 9, I looked down press row as the writers climbed over the table and found their small workspace. The Cameron Crazies, as always, were hanging over them, doing what they do best.

And the writers were smiling. Why? Because they knew they were again part of something special, something unique. It is something the NBA finals, even in its best years of Bird and Magic, could never duplicate.

So let's continue to fight the good fight when it comes to having the resources and the access to do our jobs effectively. But let us not forget, even in our frustration, how special our game really is. As March Madness approaches, let's enjoy ourselves.

Vice President

By **TONY BARNHART**
Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Conference-by-conference press-row updates: The Sequel

Just when you thought it was safe, here come more results from our "Where is Press Row?" poll. Or, "How to Fill Up a Second Vice President's Column."

ACC: Clemson, Duke, Florida State, Miami, NC State, Virginia and Virginia Tech (floor); North Carolina and Maryland (end zone stands); Wake Forest (end zone floor and stands); Georgia Tech (corner seating in stands).

SEC: Alabama, Arkansas, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, LSU, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, South Carolina, Tennessee (floor); Vanderbilt (stands); Kentucky (floor, plus additional mid-level in lower and upper deck).

A-10: According to A-10 media coordinator Ray Cella, "Most have at least some on the floor. GW, St. Bonaventure and Richmond have some in the end zone, UMass has some in the first row, as do Temple and St. Joseph's."

Missouri Valley: Creighton, Drake, Illinois State, Indiana State, Northern Iowa, Southern Illinois, Southwest Missouri and Wichita State (floor); Bradley (in stands); Evansville (upper press box).

Sun Belt: According to Sun Belt media coordinator Rob Broussard, "Nine of our 11 schools have media on traditional press row. North Texas and New Orleans have a designated section for media at mid-court (first few rows of stands).

Southern Conference: All courtside floor.

Ohio Valley: All courtside floor.

C-USA: All courtside floor, Louisville (wraps around courtside corner to end zone basket).

Mountain West: Air Force (floor, overflow in hockey press box); BYU (first, second row behind team benches);

Colorado State (floor, overflow about 15 rows up n ear corner of court on baseline); New Mexico (first, second row across from team benches); San Diego State (first, second row behind team benches); UNLV (three home and two visitor on scorer's table, others in auxiliary press box); Utah (auxiliary press box, 30 rows up); Wyoming (first row behind team benches).

That's it for now. Now what? Now, let's talk.

I will come up with some sort of final results poll for our meeting at the Final Four. It probably will look like this: most of the BCS leagues (save for the SEC) have discovered the wonder of selling courtside seats to big-cigar donors while finding a spot for us in the end zone or in the stands. Not everyone is doing this. At least, not yet.

What I would like to propose is for USBWA to come up with either a statement, or a Press Row committee, or Press Row/Operations liaison, to help schools understand

our needs and help work with us. I would like to be proactive with this, especially while the situation seems to be fluid in many leagues.

Also, (cue dramatic music), we all know and expect this to be an issue with the NCAA and Final Four eventually. So far, so good. But we keep holding our breath for that day when we get stuck who knows where. I'm not sure the NCAA quite knows what to do with us, and that might be helping us, as well as the recent Detroit-Indy incident with fans and players mixing it up. We serve as a nice buffer for that.

In any case, let's talk about this at the USBWA meeting in St. Louis on April 4. If you can't make it to the meeting, please feel free to send me your thoughts, comments or ideas at tomshatel@cox.net.

My thanks to all the conference SIDs for their help in this poll.

Vice President

By **TOM SHATEL**
Omaha World-Herald



Dykstra named USBWA's Most Courageous

Western Washington's Grant Dykstra, USBWA's Most Courageous Award winner for 2005, transformed himself into a college basketball player despite having a right arm that is several inches shorter than his left and not having full use of his right hand.

Dykstra's right arm was mangled in a grain auger when he was 2 and required 16 surgeries over the next 10 years and hours of physical therapy. He taught himself to be left-handed and learned to dribble with both hands.

Dykstra is the leading scorer on Western Washington Division II nationally-ranked team this season with a 17.8 average and is third in rebounding (5.7 per game). He led the Vikings in scoring last season and was team MVP.

Dykstra was born in a basketball family. His father, Glen, was one of the best high school players in his county's history. His brother, Greg, and sister, Shannon, were all-state players in high school. It was Dykstra's goal to play basketball while growing up and hastened his recovery.

"Basketball helped him rehab faster and more completely," said his father. "Having a cast on his hand never stopped him from having a basketball in his hand."



Western Washington's Grant Dykstra

Kirschner takes Katha Quinn Award

Katha Quinn Award winner Steve Kirschner, the North Carolina sports information director, is widely known for his efforts to help the media cover one of the nation's most high-profile programs.

Kirschner, who is in his 16th year at North Carolina and in his fifth as director of communications, is held in particularly high regard for his actions during the hiring and forceout of Matt Doherty, the hiring of Roy Williams and the handling of Dean Smith's retirement. He has been particularly effective making Williams and the UNC players accessible to the media and quickly opening the locker rooms after games, especially after 9 p.m. games. . .

The Dean Dome is now wireless, thanks to Kirschner's efforts, and a new seating arrangement for the media was not put into place until Kirschner felt comfortable with the plan and signed off on it.

Kirschner also was an effective leader last year in helping to stave off efforts to eliminate institutional media guides and is credited with leading the charge for the ACC to withdraw its proposal to the NCAA to ban the guides.

'Oscar' to be presented during April 1 breakfast



The U. S. Basketball Writers Association's Oscar Robertson Trophy, awarded annually to the national college basketball player of the year, will be presented during the NCAA Final Four weekend at a breakfast April 1 at the Missouri Athletic Club in downtown St. Louis.

The Robertson Trophy, named after whom many consider the greatest college basketball player ever, is selected in voting by USBWA members. Established in 1959, it is the nation's oldest college basketball player of the year award.

Robertson was a three-time player of the year from 1958-1960 at Cincinnati and was the first player in NCAA history to lead the nation in scoring three straight seasons. He later went on to play 14 seasons in the NBA, was selected to 12 NBA all-star teams and played on the 1971 NBA world championship team with the Milwaukee Bucks.

This year, the Oscar Robertson Trophy has taken on an entirely new look.

World-renowned St. Louis sculptor Harry Weber, who

sculpted several Cardinal Hall of Fame bronze statues at Busch Stadium, was commissioned to produce a bronze sculpture of Robertson in his famous spread-eagle pose while jumping for a rebound. A replica of the statue will be awarded to the player of the year at the breakfast.

This year's breakfast will also be the first of a yearly event to present the player of the year trophy during the NCAA Final Four in the host city where the national championship tournament is held.

In addition to the Oscar Robertson Trophy, the Henry Iba Award will be presented to the national college coach of the year. The Iba Award is named after the legendary Oklahoma A&M and U. S. Olympic team coach who led A&M to national championships in 1945 and 1946.

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the National Kidney Foundation, Oscar Robertson's charity of choice. Oscar donated a kidney seven years ago to his daughter who was suffering from a kidney disease and needed a transplant to save her life.

Player of the Year Finalists

The USBWA has announced the following finalists for consideration for the Oscar Robertson Trophy, given to the national player of the year:

Andrew Bogut, soph., C, Utah; Dee Brown, jr., G, Illinois; Travis Diener, sr., G, Marquette; Ike Diogu, jr., F, Arizona State; Francisco Garcia, jr., F, Louisville; Joey Graham, sr., F, Oklahoma State; Luther Head, sr., G, Illinois; Sean May, jr., F-C, North Carolina; Rashad McCants, jr., G-F, North Carolina; Chris Paul, soph., G, Wake Forest; J.J. Redick, jr., F-G, Duke; Wayne Simien, sr., F, Kansas; Hakim Warrick, sr., F, Syracuse; Deron Williams, jr., G, Illinois; Shelden Williams, jr., F-C, Duke.

Last season's winner was Jameer Nelson of Saint Joseph's.

Final Four Schedule of Events

St. Louis

Thursday, March 31

9:30 a.m., Journalism Seminar America's Center
8:30 p.m., Past Presidents Dinner, Charlie Gitto's Restaurant

Friday, April 1

7:30 a.m., Board Breakfast Meeting with NCAA Basketball Committee Renaissance Grand Hotel
8 a.m. Player and Coach of the Year Announcement, Missouri Athletic Club

Monday, April 4

9 a.m. Annual Awards Breakfast and Business Meeting, Renaissance Grand Hotel

Journalism Seminar

"Full Court Press," a USBWA-sponsored sports-writing seminar and scholarship program, will be held in conjunction with the Final Four.

Aspiring sports-writers will attend a seminar on March 31. They will be addressed by a panel comprised of Mike DeCourcy of the Sporting News, Jim O'Connell of the Associated Press, Robyn Norwood of the Los Angeles Times, Malcolm Moran and Steve Wieberg of USA Today and Vahe Gregorian of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Former Post-Dispatch sports-writer Dave Dorr will moderate.

Participants, who have a chance to earn a \$1,000 scholarship, will cover open practices for the Final Four teams, the NABC college all-star games, the "March to the Arch" and the national-championship game.