

Come Selection Sunday, we're only the messenger

Doug Elgin is hot. The Missouri Valley Conference commissioner is peeved over his league only getting one bid to the NCAAs, losing out on Illinois State getting an at large bid.

His anger isn't just directed at the NCAA selection committee, but at the media and bracketologists for not backing Illinois State or at least thinking rationally.

The NCAA Tournament isn't supposed to be a reward for a job well done. Illinois State had a very good season, finishing second to Drake, winning 25 games and taking the Redbirds back to the top of the Valley.

The NCAA Tournament selection committee's charge is to get the best remaining 34 at-large bids. Elgin should know that. He was a member of the committee. This isn't some sort of socialist working group here. As much as the NCAA tends to lean toward that political thinking of every school having a say in the legislation, the tournament is supposed to be about the best teams, outside of the lower-profile conferences getting automatic qualifiers, to compete for the national title.

USBWA President
Andy Katz
espn.com



Elgin hangs his argument on numbers, on how high the Redbirds were on the RPI. That's great. But that doesn't translate into quality wins when none of the Redbirds' wins came against NCAA Tournament teams.

But there is another issue here Elgin takes on and that's the laziness of the national media. He was upset that the media, specifically ESPN, wasn't watching enough

Valley games to get a true picture. That's probably true, although I can tell you that a number of our analysts do watch quite a few games from various leagues, especially Jay Bilas and Fran Fraschilla. I would trust their knowledge on these teams in comparison to plenty of others.

But, let's remember one thing: These are opinions.

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Wieberg chosen for Hall of Fame

Steve Wieberg, a member of *USA Today's* college sports team for more than 25 years, will be inducted into the U.S. Basketball Writer's Association Hall of Fame during the Final Four weekend.

Wieberg becomes the 50th member of the USBWA Hall of Fame, first established in 1988 to honor members for their achievements in sports journalism and contributions to the USBWA.

Wieberg, 53, joined *USA Today* as a member of its startup staff in 1982 and became responsible for coverage of college football and basketball and the rule-making NCAA in 1983. He has covered every Final Four and 15 national-championship football games since then, as well as six Summer and Winter Olympics.

He also has covered such non-sports stories as

the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Okla., tornado devastation in Kansas and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Wieberg served as president of the USBWA in 1996-97. He is a member of the national advisory board for the John Wooden Award and has been a member of selection panels for college football's Heisman Trophy and Davey O'Brien, Doak Walker and Biletnikoff awards.

He has won USBWA awards for best investigative/enterprise reporting (1996, 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007), best spot news story (2003 and best feature writing (2003). He also has won Associated Press Sports Editors awards for best news story (1982), best investigative reporting (1986, 1998 and 2004), best enterprise reporting (1991) and best



Steve Wieberg project reporting (2006) and FWA awards for best enterprise writing (1999, 2001 and 2005).

Wieberg was named one of the 10 most powerful people in college sports by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in October 2007. He was selected by *College Sports* magazine as one of the 50 most influential people in college sports in 1995 and 1996

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LSUS's Porter named Most Courageous

Josh Porter, a walking miracle and LSU-Shreveport All-American, will accept the U.S. Basketball Writers Association's Most Courageous Award during the Final Four weekend, about 18 months after nearly being paralyzed by an on-court collision.

Porter's C5 vertebrae was fractured in three places and the C4 and C5 vertebrae in his spinal cord were separated Nov. 28, 2006. His collision with a teammate in a game against Southwest Assemblies of God University was so hard, the plastic facemask he wore to protect a broken nose shot across the court upon impact. Porter lay motionless on the court for several minutes before being stabilized and transported to an area hospital for treatment.

In layman's terms, Porter's neck was broken. Porter was informed that

99.9 percent of those with a C5 fracture end up as paraplegics, quadriplegics or deceased.

Josh Porter was the point-one percent.

"I've seen several spinal cord injuries at LSU," said Porter's neurosurgeon, Dr. Anil Nanda, "and this is probably only the third time I've seen something like this."

Porter was back on the court nearly a year after a two-hour surgery that fused his vertebrae back together. Only later did Porter learn how terribly close he came to becoming a quadriplegic and possibly dying. He walked out of LSU Health Sciences Center a few days after the operation.

"I think he is the most courageous young man in college basketball right now," said Porter's coach, Chad McDowell. "He is the epitome of a man of courage and a leader. Josh



Josh Porter

is supposed to be paralyzed, if not for a higher power."

Porter was medically cleared to play last Sept. 7. "Now I can finally fly like an eagle again," Porter proclaimed at the time.

Porter not only returned to the court within a year of the injury, he came back as his old All-American self, averaging 22.8 ppg (fourth nationally) and

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Larry Donald is missed but not forgotten

Joe Mitch Executive Director USBWA



The NCAA Final Four is always a great time for writers and USBWA members to reacquire themselves with those they haven't seen or heard from since the last Final Four.

This is my 32nd consecutive NCAA Final Four, and for me the best part of the event is seeing those I normally don't cross paths with during the season but rather only exchange e-mails with or talk to on the phone.

And each year since 2000, the one person I think about and miss seeing the most at the Final Four is former USBWA president Larry Donald.

Larry was a fixture at the Final Four and especially the media hospitality room, where he loved to tell stories and usually was the last person to leave before the room was closed down for the evening.

I remember his contagious laugh and the twinkle in his eye when he talked about the coaches and players he wrote about for *Basketball Times*. Larry was founder, editor and to many the man most identifiable with *Basketball Times*.

Larry, while taking his daily morning walk near his home in Pinehurst, N.C., collapsed on the sidewalk in the fall of 2000 and died of an apparent heart attack.

Gone was the man who cared as much about the USBWA as any person I've been around in my 28 years with the association.

Originally from Deshler, Ohio, Larry loved three things unquestionably: watching basketball, playing golf and writing about both. He was a member of the USBWA Hall of Fame; a winner of the Basketball Hall of Fame's Curt Gowdy Award, the highest award the Hall confers on the media short of induction; the winner of over 20

USBWA writing awards; and a veteran of more than 25 Final Fours.

Larry recently was called "the father of us all," by longtime friend and colleague Bob Ryan of the *Boston Globe*. Indeed, with his own distinguished work and that of some of America's finest writers past and present – Ryan, Charlie Pierce, John Feinstein, to name a few – Larry was able to create publications that catered to a loyal, dedicated following.

When Larry passed away, the visitors, friends, and associates who extended sympathies read like a modern-day *Who's Who* of basketball. Among the coaches who attended his funeral was North Carolina's Dean Smith.

It is with Larry's good humor, his passion for writing and his wonderful gift for story-telling that the USBWA is able to we continue the vision Larry laid out in 30-plus years of dedication to the sports-journalism profession and love of the game.

The USBWA dedicated in Larry's memory the two \$1,000 journalism scholarships for students participating in the sports writing seminars at this year's NCAA men's and women's Final Fours in San Antonio and Tampa, respectively.

The scholarships are a lasting memory of a man who dedicated his life and career to helping others pursue his dream of becoming a sportswriter.

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
- Marriott Athletic VIP Card
- voting for All-America team and player and coach of year
- seven issues of *Basketball Times*;
- access to USBWA website (usbwa.com)
- eligibility for Best Writing Contest, with cash prizes

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

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Selection committee right to keep tournament field at 65

Remember the commotion in the summer of 2006 about the potential expansion of the NCAA Tournament. Stories were written. Commentators pontificated. Ideas were tossed about.

It was awful. It was good. It was necessary. It wasn't.

There was just one small problem with all the noise. There was never any substance behind any of it. It was a non-starter for the only people that really mattered – the NCAA basketball committee.

What started at the end of a dull NABC press conference at the 2006 Final Four took on a life of its own, as stories, real and imagined, often do these days.

When Syracuse coach Jim Boheim brought up the idea of an expanded tournament that day in Indianapolis, it was his thought. He had his reasons.

But, given that the NCAA Tournament is an unqualified success as is and practically every team gets a second chance anyway (through its conference tournament), was there really any need for more teams? In fact, for the purists, the only change would be to get rid of the "opening round" (aka play-in game).

Sixty-four teams work. It worked in 1985. It works now.

Greg Shaheen runs the day-to-day operations of the tournament as the NCAA's senior vice president, basketball and business strategies. He heard all the noise. He was there when, as a courtesy, the committee met that

VP - Dick Jerardi
Philadelphia
Daily News



spring with members of the NABC board to listen to their concerns. He was there that summer when the committee showed no interest in making any changes.

"What we're trying to do in general is examine everything about the championship," Shaheen said. "We're always revisiting everything. We look at literally thousands of potential changes every year. (Expansion) certainly could come up again at some point in time, but there's no activity on it."

And there is not likely to be any activity on it anytime soon. And why should there be?

The format works. Everybody understands it. The public loves it. The players dream about being in it.

And, even if there were a good reason to expand (which there isn't), there would be serious logistical issues, such as the Masters.

"There are issues where you have to look at different scheduling challenges," Shaheen said. "We'd have to be mindful of broadcast considerations relative to other programming that our broadcast partner would have. The week after the Final Four is the Masters. CBS covers that. That's certainly a factor."

More teams would mean another weekend. CBS has that great three-weekend window. It works. They like what they are getting in the 11-year, \$6 billion contract.

The NCAA Tournament is that most American of concepts. Win and keep playing. Win six games and you get to stand on a stage late on a Monday night in April, drowned in confetti after cutting down nets and listening to that song.

This is a good thing. The committee knows it. That is why the commotion died down quickly.

With your input, we'll try to fix the problems along press row

It's April, and that means change at the USBWA. New officers come on board and new district reps are also welcomed into the fold.

But old challenges still lurk about, and we media types find ourselves fighting the same battles. It's about courtside seating. It's about access to players and coaches. It's about whether practice is open or closed. It's about wireless Internet that works.

We've all been there. We all get frustrated. We all manage to cope.

The USBWA board has been at the forefront for years trying to make things better for all media, whether you're a member or not. That won't change under Dick Jerardi's stewardship. He will fight the good fight on our behalf, carrying on the battle that Andy Katz did before him.

I will be at Dick's side as his first vice president the next 12 months to help him in our organization's cause. A year from now, I'll be the one taking the bullet, so I am preparing my flak jacket now.

We've managed to work a lot closer with the NCAA over the last few years, and that needs to continue. With Greg Shaheen and David Worlock as our friends, we have been able to accomplish much. We are still seated courtside throughout the tournament. We have a much easier process when it comes to getting credentialed. We have even reached a reasonable agreement regarding the wireless issue at the tournament.

My concerns are with the conferences and individual schools. Seating issues. Communications issues. Access issues. Those are the things I'd like to see worked out.

But first, we need to identify the problems before we can attempt to solve them. If you are having problems on your beat, let us know about it. It doesn't matter if you're covering Duke or Duquesne. North Carolina or North Dakota State. UAB or USC. Tell us what's going on and let's see if we can help get matters resolved.

Whether it's sitting with boosters or students, having no power at your seat, being shut out at practice or being

VP Steve Carp
Las Vegas
Review Journal



forced to pay for parking, please tell us.

We probably won't be 100 percent. But we won't go 0-fer, either. Some reasonable dialogue with the sports-information directors and conference-information folks can do a lot of good. Believe it or not, they actually want us to be happy. And we want to be happy ourselves.

Feel free to e-mail me at scarp@reviewjournal.com over the next couple of months. I'll compile a list of grievances and suggestions, and when the CoSIDA convention is held in Tampa this summer, we'll try and address the issues with the SIDs and come to some resolutions.

Hey, it's worth a shot, right?

Katz: We're only the messenger

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The only opinion that matters is the collective vote of the selection committee. The committee can be criticized for not putting in Illinois State or Arizona State, but ultimately it is a vote. There are 10 votes, unless a member has a vested interest in a school or conference, so the democracy here should be taken seriously. If Illinois State or Arizona State didn't garner enough votes for an at-large candidacy, then there's nothing more to do than realize you lost and move on to the next season.

Elgin is passionate about his league. He should be. But there also has to be a sense of reality, too. Commissioners from Conference USA and the Atlantic 10 haven't been complaining that their schools, whether it's this season in the case of CUSA or in previous years with the A-10, didn't win enough games or at the right time to

garner a bid.

Our influence in the public at times can be measured. Sure, we have a voice on television, on radio and on the Internet. But the influence in the committee room is probably negligible.

We are just covering the tournament, and the expectation that we do more is simply misguided.

The tournament has become one of the best sporting events in the country. The process of selecting the teams still needs to be tweaked, but the transparency that has been slowly coming is improving the situation. Putting a camera in the room and hearing all the discussions on each team wouldn't be fair to the individuals on the committee. But lashing out at the system because a team didn't prove itself against enough quality competition seems it bit off.

USBWA names All-America and all-district teams

DISTRICT I

Player of the Year – A.J. Price, Connecticut
 Coach of the Year – Jim Calhoun, Connecticut
 All-District Team
 Jeff Adrien, Connecticut
 Joe Alexander, West Virginia
 Marqus Blakely, Vermont
 Pat Calathes, St. Joseph's
 Dionte Christmas, Temple
 Will Daniels, Rhode Island
 Gary Forbes, Massachusetts
 A.J. Price, Connecticut
 Scottie Reynolds, Villanova
 Tyrese Rice, Boston College
 Sam Young, Pittsburgh

DISTRICT II

Player of the Year – Jason Thompson, Rider
 Coach of the Year – Steve Donahue, Cornell
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Antoine Agudio, Hofstra
 Bryant Dunston, Fordham
 Charron Fisher, Niagara
 Jonny Flynn, Syracuse
 Donte Greene, Syracuse
 Roy Hibbert, Georgetown
 Brian Laing, Seton Hall
 Jason Thompson, Rider
 Edwin Ubiles, Siena
 Ryan Wittman, Cornell

DISTRICT III

Player of the Year – Tyler Hansbrough, North Carolina
 Coach of the Year – Mike Krzyzewski, Duke
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Stephen Curry, Davidson
 Wayne Ellington, North Carolina
 James Gist, Maryland

Davis named Coach of the Year; Hansbrough leads All-Americans

First-year Drake coach Keno Davis was named the winner of the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award by the USA. Davis, 36, engineered Drake to a surprise regular season MVC championship, its first since 1971, and the school's first-ever MVC tournament championship.

North Carolina forward Tyler Hansbrough headlined the USBWA All-America team, and Kansas State was selected the USBWA freshman of the year.

Hansbrough, a 6-foot-9 junior from Poplar Bluff, Mo., earned a spot on the team for the second straight season. Hansbrough led the Tar Heels to the ACC regular-season and tournament championships and a No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA Tournament. He is among the five first-team selections, who are also the five finalists for the Oscar Robertson Trophy, awarded by the USBWA to the national player of the year.

After earning USBWA national freshman of the year honors in 2006, Hansbrough has now earned back-to-back USBWA first-team All-America honors. The ACC player of the year has averaged 23.0 points and

10.4 rebounds to help UNC to a 32-2 record entering the NCAA tournament. He is the seventh North Carolina's player to earn USBWA All-America honors at least twice and the first since Michael Jordan.

Beasley, a 6-10 forward, was named player of the year by the Big 12 Conference. He led the nation in rebounding during the regular season with a 12.5 average and was third in scoring at 26.5.

First Team

D.J. Augustin, G, Texas, So.
 Michael Beasley, F, Kansas State, Fr.
 Chris Douglas-Roberts, G, Memphis, Jr.
 Tyler Hansbrough, F, North Carolina, Jr.
 Kevin Love, C, UCLA, Fr.

Second Team

Shan Foster, G/F, Vanderbilt, Sr.
 Luke Harangody, F, Notre Dame, So.
 Chris Lofton, G, Tennessee, Sr.
 A.J. Price, G, Connecticut, Jr.
 D.J. White, F, Indiana, Sr.

Cliff Hammonds, Clemson
 Tyler Hansbrough, North Carolina
 Kyle Hines, UNC Greensboro
 DeMarcus Nelson, Duke
 Sean Singletary, Virginia
 Kyle Singler, Duke
 Greivis Vasquez, Maryland

DISTRICT IV

Player of the Year – Chris Douglas-Roberts, Memphis
 Coach of the Year – Bruce Pearl, Tennessee
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Ramel Bradley, Kentucky
 Stephen Curry, Davidson
 Chris Douglas-Roberts, Mem-

phis
 Shan Foster, Vanderbilt
 Jamont Gordon, Mississippi State
 Richard Hendrix, Alabama
 Chris Lofton, Tennessee
 David Padgett, Louisville
 Tyler Smith, Tennessee
 Robert Vaden, UAB

DISTRICT V

Player of the Year – Luke Harangody, Notre Dame
 Coach of the Year – Matt Painter, Purdue
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Brian Butch, Wisconsin
 James Butler, Ohio State

Eric Gordon, Indiana
 Mike Green, Butler
 Luke Harangody, Notre Dame
 Robbie Hummel, Purdue
 Dominic James, Marquette
 Raymar Morgan, Michigan State
 Drew Neitzel, Michigan State
 D.J. White, Indiana

DISTRICT VI

Player of the Year – Michael Beasley, Kansas State
 Coach of the Year – Keno Davis, Drake
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Darrell Arthur, Kansas
 Michael Beasley, Kansas

State
 Mario Chalmers, Kansas
 Adam Emmenecker, Drake
 Blake Griffin, Oklahoma
 Darnell Jackson, Kansas
 Aleks Maric, Nebraska
 Brandon Rush, Kansas
 Bill Walker, Kansas State
 Josh Young, Drake

DISTRICT VII

Player of the Year – D.J. Augustin, Texas
 Coach of the Year – Scott Drew, Baylor
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 A.J. Abrams, Texas
 D.J. Augustin, Texas

Stefon Jackson, UTEP
 Damion James, Texas
 Curtis Jerrells, Baylor
 Bo McCalebb, New Orleans
 Rod McKiver, Houston
 Marcus Thornton, LSU
 Alan Voskuil, Texas Tech
 Sonny Weems, Arkansas

DISTRICT VIII

Player of the Year – J.R. Giddens, New Mexico
 Coach of the Year – Lon Kruger, UNLV
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Wink Adams, UNLV
 Jaycee Carroll, Utah State
 Lee Cummard, BYU
 Brandon Ewing, Wyoming
 J.R. Giddens, New Mexico
 Justin Hawkins, New Mexico State
 Marcelus Kemp, Nevada
 Reggie Larry, Boise State
 Trent Plaisted, BYU
 Carlos Taylor, Montana State

DISTRICT IX

Player of the Year – Kevin Love, UCLA
 Coach of the Year – Herb Sendek, Arizona State
 ALL-DISTRICT TEAM
 Ryan Anderson, California
 Jerryd Bayless, Arizona
 Jon Brockman, Washington
 Darren Collison, UCLA
 James Harden, Arizona State
 Maarty Leunen, Oregon
 Brook Lopez, Stanford
 Kevin Love, UCLA
 O.J. Mayo, USC
 Kyle Weaver, Washington State

Wieberg

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and the recipient of the College Sports Information Directors of America's Jake Wade Memorial Award in 1998.

Before he began working for USA Today, Wieberg was a sports reporter and Sunday sports editor at the *Springfield (Mo.) News-Leader* from 1991-92, covering the St. Louis Cardinals baseball and football and University of Missouri football and basketball. He also worked for five years as a news and sports reporter at the *Mexico (Mo.) Ledger*, covering city government, other local news and sports and University of Missouri football and basketball.

The Martinsburg, Mo., native and University of Missouri graduate resides in Lawson, Mo., with his wife Paula and has three children, Michael (a senior at Truman State University), Eric (a senior at Kansas) and Katie (a sophomore at Missouri). Wieberg's outside interests include coaching youth baseball.



Josh Porter made a courageous comeback.

Josh Porter

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leading the Pilots to a school-record 29 victories and a No. 2 ranking in the national NAIA poll. Porter posted his 1,000th career point while scoring a career-high 40 points in a 90-52 victory over Spring Hill College.

"He could have come back and had a little fun," McDowell said. "But to come back when everyone says you were supposed to be paralyzed, it takes courage."

Porter also was his same old self off the court, McDowell said.

"I'm telling you, the young man is so worthy," McDowell said. "He takes every opportunity to take speaking engagements to tell young people that there's more to life than basketball. He has spoken at several elementary schools by himself. He speaks at Rotary Clubs. He speaks at churches.

"Josh makes his rounds before every game, hugging professors, people from the community, his friends. White. Black.

Asian. Female. Male. Old. Young. He'll be over there shaking hands with a guy who has 50,000 tattoos, and then he'll be over there with a 72-year-old white professor that taught him sociology. People bake cookies for him. They just love him."

In the highest testament that a father can give, McDowell said Porter will come to his house and his 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son will lay their heads in Porter's lap while watching a movie with him.

The Pilots have a 58-7 record since Porter transferred from Stephen F. Austin in 2005.

He was an NAIA All-American during the 2005-06 season. He was this season's Gulf Coast Athletic Coast player of the year.

Porter will receive the Most Courageous Award at the USBWA College Basketball Awards breakfast held in conjunction with the NCAA Final Four in San Antonio on Monday, April 4, at Sunset Station starting at 8 a.m.