

Sign 'em up; USBWA looking for new members

This is the easiest assignment you'll have all season.

It requires no interviews, no writing, no frustrating computer transmission.

All you have to do is ask three people whose work you appreciate to join the USBWA.

Our membership is about 800, which doesn't put a dent in the number of people who write about college basketball, the core of our membership. A goal of 1,000 is modest, so let's do it.

Don't underestimate how much it means to someone new to the beat or who just doesn't get around to joining to be invited to join by someone so highly regarded (yes, brilliant, good-looking and humble, too) as yourself.

We're trying to be sure forms are displayed at men's and women's conference media days, but here's another way to join. Go to <http://www.sportswriters.net>, click on USBWA, then on "Join Us," in the red bar. There's a downloadable membership form under "About the USBWA."

In fact, you can print it out and just hand it to your new recruits.

Our members include not only newspaper and Internet writers, but people in sports information as well. And the truth is, SIDs are great joiners. It's the ink-stained wretches among us who tend to wonder, "What's in it for me?"

To start with, your \$40 – or better yet, your employer's \$40 – pays your USBWA dues and gets you a one-year subscription to *Basketball Times*, a \$39 value, gratis. (With that imposing columnist lineup and excellent features, I guarantee you'll find more than \$39 worth of story ideas that haven't already been in *Sports Illustrated*.)

Now you're out only \$1, which cannot begin to pay for another chief benefit of membership: The

Meet your new USBWA president

Robyn Norwood is the national college basketball columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

In 18 years at the Times, she also has covered college football, the NHL, Major League Baseball, high school sports and two Olympics, handling the Times' basketball coverage at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

Norwood interned at the Washington bureau of the L.A. Times, the Washington Post, the Orlando Sentinel and the Camden (S.C.) Chronicle-Independent before covering high school sports in the Times' Orange County edition.

Norwood, 40, and her husband, Orange County Register sports columnist Mark Whicker, have one son, Philip, who was born three days before the 2003 Final Four.

President's Column

By **ROBYN NORWOOD**
 Los Angeles Times



USBWA Directory. As the ads say, "Priceless."

When you're suddenly in the middle of a March coaching search and need the beat writer's name, cell number—sometimes even Top 25 coaches' home numbers – you'll find them in the directory, which should be in your workbag year round.

Finally, there's one more major benefit of membership – the Best Writing Contest.

Just ask David Teel, who covers the Atlantic Coast Conference for the Daily Press in Virginia. This isn't scientific, but I'm sure David has made a lot more money on the writing contest than he would have if he put his dues in an index fund every year.

As for John Feinstein's continued victories ... well, I'm sure you're donating your winnings to charity now, right John?

Why do we need more members?

The more members we have, the more \$40 checks we'll get, and the more we'll be able to continue things like the Final Four student journalist's workshop and scholarships.

But really, we need to increase our membership to make sure we remain a strong voice for access and an accurate reflection of the people who write

about college basketball – which brings us to another point, our lagging women's membership.

I think more women – both those covering the men's game and those who write about the women's game – simply need to be asked to join us and made aware we want to combine our voices and concerns.

Speaking of concerns, one large one the last couple of years has been shrinking access to locker rooms – no longer typically a gender issue, we're all getting closed out at some prominent schools – as well as press seating and workspace.

The Associated Press Sports Editors recently asked about issues we face, and I think this is the biggest. So if you all can do me a favor and send e-mails to me at Robyn.Norwood@latimes.com alerting me to concerns at programs around the country, that would be helpful.

As for our SID members, if you could let me know what some of the issues are with shrinking access – is this driven at your school by coaches, cost or space concerns at your school? – I'd appreciate it.

One last thing about membership. Are you sure you paid *your* dues? I found my form in an archeological dig on my desk two months ago.

USBWA picks Jayhawks

A Kansas team returning All-America power forward Wayne Simien and two-time Final Four veterans Aaron Miles and Keith Langford is the nation's No. 1 team, according to the USBWA pre-season poll.

USBWA members also expect a strong showing from the Atlantic Coast Conference, picking Wake Forest to finish second, North Carolina third, Final Four participant Georgia Tech sixth, Duke 11th, Maryland 13th and N.C. State 15th.

Both Wake Forest and North Carolina

return all five starters from last season.

Defending national champion Connecticut, which must rebuild without Emeka Okafor and Ben Gordon, was picked for eighth.

Others picked to finish among the Top 10 are No. 4 Syracuse, No. 5 Illinois, No. 7 Arizona, No. 9 Oklahoma State and No. 10 Michigan State.

Rounding out the Top 20 are No. 12 Kentucky, No. 14 Pitt, No. 16 Louisville, No. 17 Florida, No. 18 Mississippi State, No. 19 Texas and No. 20 Wisconsin.

1. Kansas
2. Wake.Forest
3. North Carolina
4. Syracuse
5. Illinois
6. Georgia Tech
7. Arizona
8. Connecticut
9. Oklahoma State
10. Michigan.State
11. Duke
12. Kentucky
13. Maryland
14. Pittsburgh
15. North Carolina State
16. Louisville
17. Florida
18. Mississippi State
19. Texas
20. Wisconsin

ESPN adds to support; other sponsorships on way

As the USBWA enters its 49th year providing services for college basketball writers and affiliated members nationwide, the organization can thank a host of corporate sponsors through the years that have provided needed funding to help underwrite the costs of doing business.

ESPN has been one of those sponsors for many years, primarily as an advertiser on the back cover of the USBWA annual membership directory and sponsor of an awards brunch at the women's NCAA Final Four.

ESPN is now doing more for the USBWA.

The sports cable network giant, through the efforts of Manager of Communications Josh Krulewitz, will also sponsor the awards breakfast at the men's Final Four.

The Final Four awards program is the biggest event of the year for the USBWA. At both the men's and women's functions, the USBWA presents the player and coach of the year awards and recognizes the USBWA All-America team at the women's breakfast.

During the men's program, the USBWA also honors the Most Courageous and Katha Quinn Service and

Executive Director

BY JOE MITCH
MVC



Inspiration awards and also inducts new members into the organization's Hall of Fame.

ESPN will be provided the opportunity to display a banner at each function, and its logo will be reproduced on a printed program. A representative from ESPN will also be introduced and invited to speak briefly at each function.

"We're proud of our long-time association with the USBWA," said Krulewitz. ESPN will be the primary sponsor of the breakfast. The Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., was a participating sponsor last year and hopefully will return as a sponsor this year.

ESPN's commitment to the USBWA is the first in what is expected to be an impressive list of sponsors for the organization. The USBWA is in negotiations with a major corporation to sponsor a college basketball awards show on national television. The show would feature the Oscar Robertson Player of the Year Trophy, the Henry Iba Coach of the Year Award, the Most Courageous Award and the USBWA men's and women's all-America teams.

The show was an annual fixture on CBS during Final Four weekend for many years until it was dropped last season. Announcement of the show's sponsor and a network to televise the program is expected within weeks.

Also, the USBWA is close to getting a sponsor for the organization's sports-writing seminar. The event would be held at this year's NCAA Final Four in St. Louis and would involve USBWA members speaking to college and high school journalism students about sports-writing as a career.

Students who attend the seminar are given assignments to cover various events at the Final Four and submit stories for judging in a writing contest. Winners of the contest are provided scholarships for their college education.

The seminar was first held in St. Louis in conjunction with the USBWA's Hoop and Quill basketball tournament in November 1999. Later, the event was held annually at Final Four sites, beginning in Minneapolis in 2001. Seminars were held in Atlanta in 2002 and New Orleans in 2003 but were discontinued in 2004 because of lack of funding.

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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 \$35 and let the USBWA make your job of covering college basketball easier.

Title _____

Newspaper/Publication/ College _____

Address _____

City _____ STATE _____ Zip _____

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**c/o Missouri Valley Conference
1818 Chouteau Avenue
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Cremins, Tech re-union one of feel-good stories of year

A lot of good was accomplished last April when Georgia Tech reached the national championship game in San Antonio:

- It confirmed to the country what those of us who cover the ACC have known for a while: That Paul Hewitt, Georgia Tech's 41-year-old coach, is one of the rising stars in this sport.

- The fact that Duke was mere moments away from giving us an All-ACC national championship game reassured the worry warts about the relative health of the conference as a basketball power.

- The fact that Tech could finish tied for third in its league and come ever so close to winning it all proved once again why the NCAA Basketball Tournament is one of the great spectacles in all of organized sport.

But all those accomplishments, as neat as they were, pale in comparison to the real good that was accomplished by Georgia Tech's magical run to San Antonio. For in just a few weeks, Hewitt and Co. were able to heal wounds that had existed in the program for years since the end of the Bobby Cremins era.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say right up front that I cannot be totally objective when it comes to the subject of Bobby Cremins. He built the Georgia Tech program from nothing into a perennial ACC contender. He took the program to its first Final Four. He remains one of the most genuinely decent human beings who walks this earth. Will Rogers didn't know Bobby Cremins, but they are cut from the same cloth.

But Cremins would be the first to admit that when he resigned at Georgia Tech at the end of the 2000 season, it was time to go.

"The program had lost its edge and that was my fault," said Cremins, who lives in Hilton Head, S.C., where has reduced his golf handicap to single digits during the past

four years. "It was time to let somebody else see what they could do."

That somebody else turned out to be Hewitt, and the rest is history. Hewitt got the Yellow Jackets to the Final Four in only his third season and was rewarded with a new six-year contract. With four senior starters returning and a great freshman class arriving this fall, Hewitt appears to be locked in at Georgia Tech for the long haul.

But one of the unintended consequences of the transition at Georgia Tech was that Cremins felt the need to distance himself from the program. If you know Bobby, it was a move totally in character.

"I just thought I needed to stay away and let Paul have his time," said Cremins. "I just didn't want to be seen as a guy hanging around."

Hewitt reached out to Cremins in many ways. They talked on the phone. Hewitt always made it clear that he wanted Bobby to be part of what he was doing at Georgia Tech. But Cremins could never find the comfort level to completely come back.

But when Georgia Tech reached the Final Four, Hewitt knew the moment had arrived to complete the bond between the program he had built and the foundation Cremins

started some 22 years before. Hewitt told Cremins that he had Final Four tickets for him and for anybody who played for him in his 19 seasons in Atlanta. Together, they would hold the ultimate Georgia Tech reunion in San Antonio.

"It was time," said Hewitt. "It was time for Bobby to come home."

"It was an incredible gesture," said Cremins. "But that's Paul. He's just a great guy."

Georgia Tech lost to UConn in the championship game, but after the disappointment of Monday night in Texas began to fade, Hewitt was left with something that was quite meaningful. A Georgia Tech basketball program that was 1-27 in its first two years in the ACC had come full circle. It had completely embraced and found peace with its past while laying the groundwork for what promises to be a prosperous future.

"Seeing all those guys like Dennis Scott in San Antonio was special," said Hewitt. "That's our legacy. It's something that is very important to us at Georgia Tech."

Sometimes the greatest accomplishments in sports go beyond mere winning and losing.

That is the lesson learned from Georgia Tech's memorable trip to San Antonio.

Vice President

By **TONY BARNHART**
Atlanta Journal-Constitution



We can't let them take away our press boxes

Hi there. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is PRESSBX.

Ok, so that's what my license plate says. It beats my last vanity plate, which was "CLWNGLF," which was short for "clown golf." Never mind what my handicap is.

The point is, I love press boxes. Old ones, new ones. Fancy, cramped, tall, medium. Give me a pop machine and a phone, and I'm good to go.

I've always had a strange affection for press boxes. It's not just where we work, it's home. If sports scribes are a frat/sorority, then this is our frat/sorority house. It's where we hang out, trade stories, pull hair, scream into phones and dream of more money and a beach.

There are times when I've sat in the stands at a football game or in the student section at a raucous basketball game. Great stuff. But usually at some point, I'm wishing I was back in the press box. Where my heart belongs.

This goes for press tables and areas for hoops. Absolutely. Yes, even the sterile make-shift rooms in center field at the Final Four Dome.

What's my point? Thanks for asking. Just this: I think we need to look out for our little corners of the world.

Times are changing. Media matters less. Schools are like sports franchises; they like money. They are quickly catching onto this idea of taking away press row and selling it to boosters close enough to trip the opposing guard on a breakaway.

I went to a Dallas Mavericks game not long ago as a spectator at American Airlines Arena, the biggest arena I've ever seen. Large enough to hold every J-School in America. I looked and looked and couldn't find press row.

That scared me (it was in the end zone, very cramped).

Basketball writers have been all sorts of places. Since my peach fuzz days of covering the peach basket, in the late 70's while a student at Mizzou, I've seen it evolve. Kansas' press row used to be halfway up Allen Field House at midcourt. Missouri's was ridiculous – at the very top of the Hearnes Center, a million miles away. And who could forget the press row perch at K-State's old Ahearn Field House, hovering over the sideline?

Elsewhere, I recall covering Missouri games at Michigan State, Ohio State and St. Bonny in the '80s, and sitting in press rows halfway up the bleachers at midcourt. I haven't been everywhere. But it's funny. Back then, nobody complained.

But the trend in the '80s and '90s were press rows, right in front of the action. Now that some places are taking that vantage point away, the gripes are beginning. Don't give it

to us and take it away, right?

That happened at Nebraska last year. Press row at the Devaney Center is back in the upper deck, midcourt, where it was in the '70s and '80s. It's workable. You're close enough to see what's happening and you have a plug for your computer and phone and easy access to interview and work rooms. It's fine.

Here's my suggestion: there will be more and more places like Nebraska moving the press out for corporate seats. Let's stay on top of this. Let's be aggressive. Let's be proactive.

I suggest we start a USBWA sub-committee to take stock of what schools are doing. We can poll SIDs and see where things stand. I volunteer to head the committee. This issue is close to my heart. It's not going away.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please email me at tomshatel@cox.net.

Vice President

By **TOM SHATEL**
Omaha World-Herald



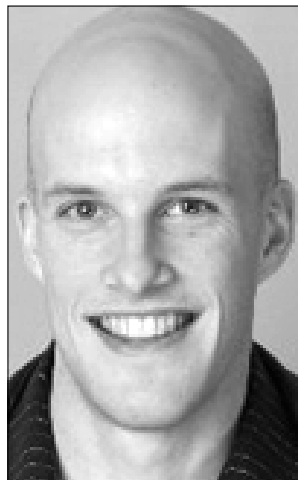
Wahl takes first, third in Best Writing contest

Sports Illustrated's Grant Wahl won a first-place and a third, and Tom Archdeacon of the Dayton Daily News took a pair of seconds in the U.S. Basketball Writers Association's 2004 Best Writing Contest.

Wahl took first place in magazine-length stories and third in moderate-length features. Archdeacon was second in both game stories/spot news and moderate-length features.

Other first-place winners included Ken Davis of the Hartford Courant for columns; Tom Kensler of the Denver Post for game stories/spot news; Bud Withers of the Seattle Times for moderate-length features and Dick Jerardi of the Philadelphia Daily News in enterprise/investigative writing.

Wahl's winning feature was about Roy Williams' return to North Carolina. According to the judge's comments, it was "a compelling look at Roy Williams and the demons that haunted him in his decision to tear himself away from Kansas and return to his North Carolina family. Depth and attention to detail are what lifts this story to the very top. The reader comes to know Williams to the bottom of his soul and why he made the choice that he did." Wahl



Grant Wahl



Tom Archdeacon

finished third in moderate-length features for a story on Gonzaga's Adam Morrison's daily battle with diabetes.

Archdeacon finished second for a game story/spot

news piece on a Dayton victory that brought solace to a mother whose son was brutally murdered and for a moderate-length feature on Saint Joseph's coach Phil Martelli.

Davis' winning column was about a hand-written note from Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim that provided inspiration for a cancer victim. According to the judge, it was "poignantly written with a personal, emotional touch that combines one family's struggle with cancer and elements which are uniquely those of any outstanding column, namely: Opinion, advocacy, commendation, influence."

Kensler's first-place game story/spot news entry was about Will Bynum and Georgia Tech's win over Oklahoma State in the Final Four semifinals. According to the judge, it was "cleanly written with all the important pieces that the reader exactly what happened, not an easy thing to do well under deadline pressures of the NCAA tournament. This effort not only achieves that, but also gives us a glimpse at the birth of a hero and his moment in the spotlight. The writer makes his point early and moves on, which is crucial in the sequential structure for a game story."

Withers won in moderate-length features with a story that recounted the end to UCLA's dynasty. According to the judge, "for those who lived through the cracking of UCLA's mystique, this revival of memories is to be savored. The times, they were a-changin'. This story, extraordinarily well written, draws us in and we revisit Bill Walton's knapsack, the vaunted UCLA press and Bruin defenses that were not only rare, they were stunning."

Jerardi took first place in enterprise/investigative writing with a daily diary of Saint Joseph's remarkable season that came to an end in a 64-62 loss to Oklahoma State in the NCAA Elite Eight. The judge wrote: "There's imagery mixed with atmosphere, raw feeling, electric joy, regret and a sense of meaning in this terrific minute-by-minute account of Saint Joseph's final, fateful day in what was a remarkable, memorable season."

Finishing behind Withers, Archdeacon and Wahl in moderate-length features were Seth Davis of Sports Illustrated for a story on how UCLA coach Ben Howland benefits from John Wooden's wisdom and Lew Freedman of Basketball Times for a piece on Dancin' Harry Larrabee. Finishing behind Kensler and Archdeacon in game stories/spot news were Jason King of the Kansas City Star for a story on the last game at Missouri's Hearn Center, Mike Waters of the Syracuse Post-Standard for a story on Gerry McNamara's 43-point game in the NCAA tournament and Phil Chardis of the Manchester (Conn.) Journal Inquirer for a story on a Connecticut win against Rutgers.

Other place-winners in column-writing were Jerry Karpowicz of the Racine (Wis.) Journal-Times on Southern Miss' decision to move a home game to Green Bay, Rob Daniels of the Greensboro News & Record on the notion that patience is a virtue in the search for a coach, John Clay of the Lexington Herald-Leader on "BasketBowls" and Gene Sapakoff of the Charleston (S.C.) Post and Courier, on the 50th anniversary of Frank Selvy's 100-point game.

Other place-winners in magazine-length features were Mike DeCourcy of The Sporting News on Lawrence Roberts' move from Baylor to Mississippi State, John Akers of Basketball Times on LeMoyne-Owen coach Jerry Johnson, Robyn Norwood of the Los Angeles Times on Rick Majerus and Dean Hockney of The Kokomo Perspective on legend Jim "Goose" Ligon's life of stardom, drugs and jail.

Other place-winners in enterprise/investigative writing were Randy Holtz of the Rocky Mountain News on Colorado State reserve Brian Lohrey, Steve Wieberg of USA Today on the declining talent pool, Dan Wetzel of Yahoo! Sports on the NCAA's selective enforcement of rules infractions and Adam Thompson and Bill Briggs of the Denver Post on sex charges against a popular girls coach.

Plaques and cash prizes will be awarded at the Final Four in St. Louis.

Enterprise/Investigative

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Dick Jerardi | Philadelphia Daily News | "St. Joe's Daily Diary" |
| 2. Randy Holtz | Rocky Mountain News | "No Substitute for Heart" |
| 3. Steve Wieberg | USA Today | "Stars gone pro leave void" |
| 4. Dan Wetzel | Yahoo! Sports | "Does NCAA play favorites" |
| 5. Adam Thompson, | Denver Post | "Sex charges against girls coach" |
| Bill Briggs | | |

Columns

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Ken Davis | Hartford Courant | "Note from Jim Boeheim" |
| 2. Jerry Karpowicz | Racine (Wis.) Journal Times | "Southern Miss calls Green Bay home" |
| 3. Rob Daniels | Greensboro News & Record | "Patience a virtue in coaching search" |
| 4. John Clay | Lexington Herald-Leader | "BasketBowls – future of college hoops?" |
| 5. Gene Sapakoff | Charleston Post and Courier | "50th anniversary of Selvy's 100-pt. game" |

Magazine length feature

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1. Grant Wahl | Sports Illustrated | "Roy Williams' return to North Carolina" |
| 2. Mike DeCourcy | The Sporting News | "Lawrence Roberts learns to smile again" |
| 3. John Akers | Basketball Times | "LeMoyne-Owen's Jerry-atric Wonder" |
| 4. Robyn Norwood | Los Angeles Times | "Profile on Rick Majerus" |
| 5. Dean Hockney | The Kokomo Perspective | "Basketball legend Jim "Goose" Ligon" |

Moderate length feature

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1. Bud Withers | Seattle Times | "Weekend that ended UCLA dynasty" |
| 2. Tom Archdeacon | Dayton Daily News | "The Philly Freak – Phil Martelli" |
| 3. Grant Wahl | Sports Illustrated | "Adam Morrison battles diabetes" |
| 4. Seth Davis | Sports Illustrated | "Breakfast with John Wooden" |
| 5. Lew Freedman | Chicago Tribune | "Dancin' Harry Larrabee keeps coaching" |

Game story/Spot news

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Tom Kensler | Denver Post | "Oklahoma State's semifinal victory" |
| 2. Tom Archdeacon | Dayton Daily News | "Dayton win eases mother's pain" |
| 3. Jason King | Kansas City Star | "Last game at Hearn Center" |
| 4. Mike Waters | Syracuse Post-Standard | "Game of Gerry McNamara's life" |
| 5. Phil Chardis | Manchester Journal Inquirer | "UConn's victory over Rutgers" |