



e-Zine June 2007

Your *Inside Scoop* (TM)

FOUNDER of FIRST WOMEN'S BASKETBALL POLL INDUCTED

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. -- Mel Greenberg was the only inductee in the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2007, held earlier this month, to have attended every induction since the Hall of Fame's 1999 inception.

Greenberg, a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer, has been covering women's basketball for 32 of his 37 years at the paper. One of the only non-local reporters to make the yearly trip to Knoxville for the induction, he recounts how Jody Conradt, former women's basketball coach at Texas and president of the Board of the Directors for the Hall of Fame, told him after last year's induction to "bring a tux next year."

Greenberg brought the tux, and was thrilled to be the first reporter inducted into the Hall of Fame.

"The weekend was quite amazing, actually," Greenberg said, "especially to be on the other side of it as an inductee after covering the previous eight as a journalist.

"Because of the span of eras of this particular group, I felt like I was looking back at almost an entire retrospective of my coverage over the years."

His most famous accomplishment is that, in 1976, he started the first women's basketball nation ranking, which turned into today's Associated Press poll. In those pre-internet days, Greenberg called every coach personally on Sunday nights to get their votes and tallied them together to have the poll out by Wednesdays.

Improved technology enabled the release time to move to Tuesday several years later.

"Starting the poll was a two-part challenge," Greenberg recalled. "First, there was the mechanical part of it, -- namely setting up the way to get information to the voters, getting the votes back, and then producing a top 20, as it was back then, in an age before internet, emails, cell phones, and computers.

"More important, though, was setting up a system of information gathering, because that helped set the stage to build national coverage, especially when the Associated Press came along two years later before the start of the '78-79 season to carry the poll."

Georgia women's basketball coach Andy Landers was one of Greenberg's voters back in the early days of the poll.

"Mel should've been in before now," Greenberg's fellow inductee said. "Mel was the first media person that put a lot of things on his own back and just ran with it, and advanced our game in a way that we couldn't have done it. He should have been in it a long time ago."

Greenberg and Landers were joined in the class by former Tennessee stars Daedra Charles-Furlough and Bridgette Gordon, former Texas star Andrea Lloyd Curry, and former Louisiana Tech Pamela Kelly Flowers. It was a close induction class, since Charles-Furlough and Gordon played together on a Tennessee team that was joined as one of the era's elite women's basketball teams by Lloyd Curry's Texas team. Kelly Flowers played before the other players in the class, and they looked up to her when they played. Landers' Georgia team was a conference rival for Tennessee, and he recruited many of his fellow inductees.

And Greenberg, of course, covered all of them.

He wrote for the Inquirer when it had space to devote to women's basketball and other media like his blog, WomHoops Guru, and REAL SPORTS, an online women's sports magazine that's existed since 1997 when it didn't.

Greenberg has been REAL SPORTS' principal women's basketball contributor.

Currently he makes the road trip to the NCAA Final Four every year, and attends as many local women's basketball games as he can. These include Philadelphia schools like Temple, La Salle, and Drexel, but he travels to games at Rutgers, UConn, and other big games around the country. For the WNBA, Greenberg regularly covers the Washington Mystics, Connecticut Sun, and New York Liberty, as well as every all-star game and championship.

"Nobody can ever question his passion or his love for women's basketball," Lloyd Curry said. "It's nice that he's being honored and it's fun to be around him because he's so excited. Mel is Mel. He's here for what he's done for women's basketball and he's done a lot."

Exclusive to REAL SPORTS

By Erin Semagin Damio, and Acacia O'Connor