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Your *Inside Scoop* (TM)

THANKSGIVING TRIBUTE TO MEL GREENBERG

Those of us who cover women's basketball year after year, follow our local teams and our conferences, believe we are dialed in to the coaches and the players we report on.

And then there's Mel.

We vote in our polls every week between November and March. And we do it because of Mel. We tell the stories of talented, athletic women, giving them recognition, substance and precious space in our newspapers.

And Mel did it first.

Philadelphia Inquirer sports writing legend Mel Greenberg is being inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in a few months, and the irony is this: who would know about the accomplishments of so many of the women and the coaches already honored if it weren't for Mel?

Would there even be a Hall of Fame if it weren't for Mel making his substantial contribution to the "Fame" end of the deal?

Greenberg will be inducted as part of a six-member class that also includes Georgia coach Andy Landers, former Tennessee stars Bridget Gordon and Daedra Charles-Furlow, former Texas star Andrea Lloyd Curry, and former Louisiana Tech star Pam Kelly Flowers. Mel's written about them all.

"I don't know anyone who contributed any more to women's basketball than Mel Greenberg," said Van Chancellor, coach of the WNBA Houston Comets, who has known Greenberg since Chancellor's days as the head coach at the University of Mississippi. "There were time when nobody wanted to publish results and scores, and Mel was out there doing it. Mel has been a great ambassador for the game."

Mel has been more than ambassador. He's been a fan, a friend, a historian and an advocate of the women's game. A tireless, passionate, and always verbose advocate who made his case for the merits of women's basketball long before the weekly sports

magazines wanted to do season previews or ESPN wanted to televise a bracket full of tournament games every spring.

Mel Greenberg had a claim to “Fame” long before his induction. He is best known as the journalist who started the national women’s basketball poll back on November of 1976 that eventually evolved into the Associated Press Top 25 poll. The poll helped to vault women’s basketball into the media consciousness, giving sports editors a crucial hook, a quantifiable reason to pay attention.

He was the first to give the women’s game national coverage, developing an affinity for the style, the talent, the athleticism of the women’s game in its developing stages, assuming the assignment for the Inquirer just as the Immaculata women’s team was beginning a run of national dominance.

Nearly three decades and 25 NCAA Tournaments later, Mel is the only member of the media to attend every one.

Mel has been honored plenty for all he’s done for women’s basketball. The Women’s Basketball Coaches Association named their annual media award for him. But this one is undeniably special.

Mel has covered every induction ceremony since the Hall opened in 1999. And it’s time for him to put down the notebook and step onto the stage.

“They said they’re willing to give me as much time as Geno (Auriemma) got for his speech last year (12 minutes),” Greenberg said. And anybody who knows Mel, knows that’s going to be the toughest part of the day for a man who has talked his way into a sport’s history book.

Mel Greenberg’s place in the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame is an honor, and as Olympian, college legend, Temple coach and Philadelphia native Dawn Staley puts it, “a tribute that is well overdue!”

Exclusive to REAL SPORTS

By Michelle Smith

Publisher’s Note: Mel Greenberg has been a long-time contributor to REAL SPORTS. As a phenomenal ambassador for all who seek to make women’s basketball bigger and better, it has been an honor having Mel part of our team. Congratulations Mel on this honor and thank you for all that you do for women’s hoops.