

Mel Greenberg marks 50 years since starting women's basketball poll

BY DOUG FEINBERG
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

When Mel Greenberg's boss approached him a half century ago about starting the women's basketball poll, he balked.

The Philadelphia Inquirer sports writer didn't think he'd be able to pull together the information needed to deliver a legitimate poll. Women's games were almost never aired on national television in 1976 and the internet wouldn't come along for another few decades, making scores and other statistics challenging to gather.

But as generations of sports fans now know, Greenberg found a way. The season of women's college basketball that began this week marks the 50th anniversary of a poll that has helped shape the sport and draw lasting attention to women's athletics.

"It's amazing how far down the line we are and what it is," the now 78-year-old Greenberg said in a phone interview.

FINDING SUPPORT FOR THE POLL

Back in 1976, Greenberg knew that for the poll to work, he'd need the blessing of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women, which ran women's college sports before the NCAA took over in 1982.



Wade Payne / AP photo

FILE - Philadelphia Inquirer sportswriter Mel Greenberg looks at a display honoring him during a tour of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, Friday, June 8, 2007, in Knoxville, Tenn.

That didn't come right away.

After he first reached out to them, they sent him a position paper that included a line that said: "Women should not get involved in newspaper games and things like polls because it will lead to the evils of men's athletics."

Months later Greenberg circled back to them after talking to a bunch of coaches. The organization said they "were encouraged by what you're doing."

That's all he needed to get the poll off the ground. He set up a

network of coaches across the country who would call in their votes every Sunday night.

"It's a testament to Mel wanting to bring some excitement and attention to the game," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said. "I still remember being asked to be on the voting pool of coaches that would get a phone call from Mel. It meant a lot. We were all fighting for a little bit of recognition and we weren't getting much of it from many sources. God bless Mel as he was one of the few who wanted to give it to

you."

The coaches expected the long late night calls from Greenberg, who is affectionally know as the "Guru" around the sport.

"The only way to find out what was going on in the country was talk to Mel on Sunday night," Greenberg recalled Hall of Fame coach Pat Summitt telling him years ago.

THE POLL WAS A 'BIG DEAL'

The first poll was published in the Philadelphia Inquirer in November 1976 and two years later The Associated Press started distributing it around the country.

"It was a big deal," said former Old Dominion coach Marianne Stanley, who led the team when it was a national power from 1977-87. "I don't know that any of us understood the magnitude of this thing starting in a cohesive way to acknowledge the teams and programs that were really the best teams in the country."

Coaches voted in the poll until it shifted to journalists before the 1994-95 season and The AP took over running it.

"I couldn't have gotten the AP poll started without him," said former AP Sports Writer Chuck Schoffner, who took over running the poll. "He knew the writers covering the sport and had most of their contact

information so he really helped me getting going on that."

Greenberg was still active in the poll, voting until he retired from the Inquirer in 2010. Fifteen years later he still updates his vast poll database every Monday when the new Top 25 comes out.

"When I first started doing it I wasn't keeping the data. It got done and then off to the next one," he recalled. "(N.C. State coach) Kay Yow called me a few weeks in and hit me over the head with a virtual plywood board and said you got to keep the records, you're going to be our history."

And that he is, recalling stories from his 50 years covering the sport.

Greenberg still goes to games, having been to thousands of them over his career, sometimes taking in three or four in a single day. He has been to every NCAA Final Four since the first one in 1982.

"Mel was at the very foundation of women's basketball, promoting it as a sport before anyone else in the media gave it much thought," said South Carolina coach Dawn Staley. "His work first in Philly and then nationally was integral to how media outlets came to understand the quality and value of women's basketball. All these years later, it's impressive to see him still singing the praises of the sport he poured his heart and soul into."

College basketball opens a new season with an influx of international talent

BY AARON BEARD
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

DURHAM, N.C. — Dame Sarr was playing in Spain's top professional league in the spring when he plotted a course once forbidden by NCAA rules.

He was going to play college basketball at Duke.

"I always felt like this was my dream school," the Italian wing said. "And when I got the opportunity to come here, for me it was a no-brainer."

Now the Blue Devils freshman is part of the influx of international players — many having played professionally, notably in Europe — entering the sport this year. That wave arrives in the first months of the revenue-sharing era, with schools able to directly pay athletes after a judge approved the \$2.8 billion House antitrust settlement in July.

That meant the door was ajar for international prospects to come to the U.S. and play more — and make much more money — than developing through, say, the junior ranks of a European club.

"Players get offers 10 times higher than in Europe," international sports agent Misko Raznatovic said in a recent email to The Associated Press, "so it is a very easy decision ... for the players and their families."

And for college coaches, that's triggered a gold rush for basketball talent.

"Literally we're going to be playing against professional players this year," said Duke's Jon Scheyer, who added Sarr after losing all five starters from a Final Four team. "So that's a different thing."

"Again, when you see the rules of eligibility, the way it used to be, that's out the window. So you might as well look for anybody in Europe and try to get them to come over."

WIDE REACH

In a look at 247Sports' national recruiting classes, 13 schools with top-20 classes brought in at least one prospect



Wade Payne / AP photo

Duke guard Dame Sarr, right, battles for the ball with Tennessee guard Ja'Kobi Gillespie (0) during the second half of an NCAA college basketball exhibition game Sunday, Oct. 26, 2025, in Knoxville, Tenn.

from outside the U.S., a list that includes the sixth-ranked Blue Devils, No. 9 Kentucky, No. 13 Arizona, No. 18 Tennessee, No. 19 Kansas and No. 25 North Carolina. That's more than the previous two years combined (seven in 2024, four in 2023).

"The best players in the NBA are European players now," said Illinois coach Brad Underwood, whose 17th-ranked Fighting Illini brought in 6-foot-9 forward David Mirkovic from Montenegro and 6-2 guard Mihailo Petrovic from Serbia. "We're following a trend."

Sarr, a 6-8 wing, started for Duke and had eight points in Tuesday's win against Texas. At Arizona, 6-7 forward Ivan Kharchenkov — who first joined Bayern Munich's senior team in 2022 at age 16 — had 12 points and 10 rebounds as a starter in Monday's takedown of third-ranked and reigning national champion Florida.

The reach goes beyond schools atop the recruiting leaderboard.

The No. 2 prospect in 247Sports' international list is Virginia Tech's Neoklis Advalas, a 6-foot-9 Greek guard who had eight points and nine assists in his debut against Charleston Southern. No. 11 Louisville (6-11 forward Sananda Fru from Germany) and No. 20 Auburn (6-8 forward Filip Jovic from

Serbia) also started international prospects making college debuts on opening night.

New Virginia coach Ryan Odom started two players from top European pro leagues in 6-9 Belgian forward Thijs De Ridder (played in Spain) and 7-footer Johan Grünloh (Germany), getting a combined 33 points and 17 rebounds in Monday's win against Rider.

"The guys that we have, they've played. They're not typical freshmen," said St. Bonaventure coach Mark Schmidt, who added players from Russia, Italy and Ireland this offseason.

"Over there they've played against men for a number of years. So we're getting guys that are schooled. ... Not that the American isn't well-coached. But just fundamentally, they're so advanced, (more) than the typical 17-year-old high school kid."

MUTUAL BENEFIT

Arizona State coach Bobby Hurley opened his 11th season with two new international starters in 7-1 center Massamba Diop (Senegal) and 6-11 forward Andrija Grbovic (Montenegro) against Southern Utah. He saw some of that as a response to economics of players moving through the transfer portal.

"It was very expensive for American players," Hurley said.



Ian Maule / AP photo

Arizona forwards Ivan Kharchenkov (8) and Tobe Awaka (30) contest for a rebound against Florida center Micah Handlogten, second from left, during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game, Monday, Nov. 3, 2025, in Las Vegas.

"And international players are very happy making a significant bump from when they were in Europe. ... We felt like getting those guys that have played a couple of years professionally could make an impact."

Raznatovic, whose clients include three-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic, sees a benefit, too, from the European side.

He pointed to a "lack of the possibilities" for younger players to develop there behind older talent on senior teams in top leagues. Instead, they can get

valuable minutes in U.S. college basketball — with the money only making it more enticing.

Scheyer said European leagues will make it tougher for U.S. college teams to poach talent, noting "they see what's happening." But Raznatovic said he has "encouraged" young players to take advantage of the college route.

"European basketball needs to survive two to three years, and after that those guys will return in the age of 23, 24, absolutely ready to play," Raznatovic said in his email to the AP. "Majority of them will not go to NBA and will return to European leagues."

"So, European teams will get them back very shaped, (which) would not happen if they stay in Europe, where they would most likely (have) wasted talent and at the age of 23, 24 would be players for minor leagues."



LEGAL NOTICE

Notice of Environmental Assessment
and Public Hearing

PUBLIC INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PROPOSED EXTENSION OF KY 3005, RING ROAD, FROM THE WESTERN KENTUCKY PARKWAY TO US 31W, WITH A NEW I-65 INTERCHANGE IN HARDIN COUNTY

ITEM NO. 04-00198.00



In accordance with 23 CFR 771.119, The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are offering review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and updated project information regarding the proposed extension of KY 3005 Ring Road Hardin County, south of Elizabethtown. This is in partial fulfillment of National Environmental Policy Act requirements.

The Project would be about 2.0 miles in length, extending from the existing KY 3005 interchange with the WKP, east with a new at-grade intersection with KY 1136, a new interchange with I-65 and a new intersection with US 31W.

The purpose of this notice is to present the preferred alternative for review and to solicit comments on the project. Feedback from anyone having an interest in this project is encouraged to visit the project website by clicking on this hyperlink (<https://bit.ly/KY3005>), copying the link to your browser, or using your phone's camera on the QR code below to review the approved EA, and provide comments through the "Public Input" link.

Hard copies of the EA report are available for review at the following locations:

- Hardin County Public Library, 100 Jim Owen Drive, Elizabethtown, KY 42701
- KYTC District 4 Office, 634 E. Dixie Avenue, Elizabethtown, KY 42701

A Public Hearing is scheduled for the Environmental Assessment on November 18, 2025, from 5:30-7:30 at the Hardin County Extension Office located at 111 Opportunity Way in Elizabethtown, KY. Materials will be available for review and representatives of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and their partners will be available to answer questions. A court reporter will be present to receive official verbal statements.

Written statements may also be sent to Joseph Ferguson at Kentucky Department of Highways, District 4
634 E. Dixie Avenue, Elizabethtown, KY 42701

The comment period for this document will end at the close of business on December 3, 2025.

If you are unable to access these materials via the internet or at the locations defined above or have any additional questions you may contact Joseph Ferguson at 502 764-0721 to schedule an appointment to review in person. All comment forms and written statements will be included in the official project record. In accordance with the "Americans with Disabilities Act," if you have a disability for which the Transportation Cabinet needs to provide accommodations, or if you require public information meeting materials in a language other than English, please notify us of your requirements. This request does not have to be in writing.

Vessels Roofing

"The oldest roofing company in Hardin County!"

- Flashing Chimneys
- Skylites
- Dormers
- Gutters & Guards
- Vinyl Siding
- Soffit Work
- And More

Specializing In Residential Roofing Projects

270-737-7464

www.vesselsroofing.com

2025 Readers' Choice Winner

BBB A+ Rating



Bailey's Masonry, Inc.

BRICK • BLOCK • CHIMNEY CLEANING/INSPECTIONS

1331 Battle Training Road, Elizabethtown

270-765-0969

Fully Licensed & Insured - Bonded

Billy J. Bailey, Owner - info@baileysmasonry.com

Commercial - Industrial - Residential

TUCK POINTING • FOUNDATION REPAIRS • REPAIRING OF FIREPLACES AND CHIMNEYS

NAHB National Association of Home Builders

BBB A+ Rating

LFHBA

FREE ESTIMATES

Since 1980