



Joe Turco of NET Television Named 2006-07 AVCA Grant Burger Media AwardSM Recipient

LEXINGTON, Ky. – The American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) is proud to announce that Joe Turco, Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) Television Executive Producer of Sports, has been selected as recipient of the 2006-07 AVCA Grant Burger Media AwardSM.

The AVCA expanded the media award’s scope in 2004-05 by having a finalist in four different categories: broadcast, print, web and sports information/athletic communications. Further, the finalist for the sports information/athletic communications category came from region winners from each of the NCAA divisions.

AVCA Grant Burger Media Award Finalists

<u>Category</u>	<u>Finalist</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Broadcast	Joe Turco	NET Television
Print	Jim Whymer	<i>Port Huron Times Herald</i>
Web	Jenell Patton	www.eivavolleyball.com
Sports Info	Ira Thor	New Jersey City University

As Executive Producer for Sports at NET, Turco has been instrumental in promoting and expanding television coverage of volleyball not only on the local level but also nationwide. Turco initially had to sell the idea, both internally with management of NET as well as externally with potential sponsors, that women’s volleyball would draw a strong audience on public television. He initiated a viewer feedback program to build his argument that volleyball would sell, helping secure sponsors and ensure approval in providing broadcast coverage of Nebraska volleyball from NET management. Turco later established a partnership with College Sports Television (CSTV) to carry NET volleyball broadcasts nationally, helping to give the sport a nationwide audience.

Following that initial season, Turco has been integrally involved in building the huge fan base in Nebraska that helped contribute to the record-breaking crowds this past December in the NCAA Semifinals and Finals in Omaha. He created programming during volleyball broadcasts to help educate viewers about the game and about the participating players. “Coaches Corner” was established to help explain the sport to new fans, giving them a better understanding of the rules of the game, including officials’ calls, play calling by the setter and the newly-enacted role of the libero. He also began to profile players during broadcasts to give television audiences the chance to get to know the players, creating a personal affiliation with the team and helping create a fan base.

“Joe has sacrificed himself working extremely long hours in the past ten years gathering strong support from his production personnel,” NET co-worker and former Nebraska volleyball player Shandi Pettine Peterson said in her nomination letter. “NET has become nationally known for its volleyball coverage, and its partnership with CSTV has raised awareness of and further advanced the sport.”

Turco has been with NET for over 21 years. He began his current post as Executive Producer for Sports in 2001.

“On behalf of the NET Sports team, I want to thank the AVCA for this very special award,” said Turco, upon learning of his honor. “NET Sports is proud to continue to provide live coverage of Nebraska volleyball to an ever-growing statewide audience. I also want to thank Coach John Cook, NU Athletics and CSTV, for partnering with NET to help showcase women’s volleyball to a national audience. I am honored by this award, thank you AVCA!”

(more)

ADD 1 – AVCA Grand Burger Media Award

Jim Whymer

Whymer, the sports editor for the *Port Huron Times Herald* (Port Huron, Mich.), has led his staff in providing consistent, innovative high quality coverage of volleyball for nearly three decades. His team has given volleyball an equal amount of high school sports coverage, including features that appear regularly on the front page of the paper. Some of the *Times Herald's* work includes a preseason summary of all of the area high school teams, headlines and articles throughout the season, state and local volleyball standings, and an "All-Area" volleyball team selection at season's end. Whymer and his staff also created and published an extensive media guide for the Marysville High School girls' volleyball team. Beyond high school coverage, the *Times Herald* sports department also gives exposure to the local community college team, as well as other volleyball events in and around the Port Huron area.

"Volleyball interest and level of play has dramatically increased and the *Port Huron Times Herald* sports department deserves recognition for their efforts in making this happen," wrote John Knuth, Marysville High School head coach, in his nomination of Whymer. "There is no better candidate who has improved a sport from the grassroots level than Jim Whymer and the *Port Huron Times Herald* sports department."

Jenell Patton

Patton is the sports information contact for the Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (EIVA), one of the three conferences for men's NCAA Division I-II volleyball. Patton single-handedly created the new league Web site from scratch, www.eivavolleyball.com, which debuted during the 2007 season. The site features up-to-date conference headlines, standings, statistics, and match calendar. Other features on the home page include a rolling scoreboard, fan poll, and list of upcoming matches.

"This is Jenell's third year as our EIVA sports information director and she continues to do a fabulous job," said Ivan Marquez, EIVA Commissioner. "Her attention to detail and constant improvements benefit not only the EIVA, but the entire collegiate men's volleyball community."

Ira Thor

Thor is the sports information director for New Jersey City University, an NCAA Division III school in Jersey City, N.J. Thor is responsible for all aspects of media relations for the University's 15-team athletics program, including both men's and women's volleyball. His promotion of the sport does not stop with his teams, however. Thor is active in the promotion of both the New Jersey Athletic Conference (women), and the North East Collegiate Volleyball Association (NECVA) (men) to which New Jersey City belong. He is the primary sports information contact for NECVA, and was instrumental in the redesign of the NECVA Web site, which debuted near the end of the 2007 season. He has focused heavily on expanding the Gothic Knights' internet presence, developing their athletics website, increasing media exposure, expanding publicity efforts to additional news outlets, improving statistic and other athletic-related software, and conducting research while overhauling the athletic department's historical records. Through his passion for the game, Thor continues to find ways to promote his teams, conferences and the sport for both men's and women's volleyball on the Division III level.

A list of the NCAA SID Region Honorees for the AVCA Grand Burger Media AwardSM is listed below.

NCAA Division I Sports Information Director Region Honorees

Central Region	Shamus McKnight	University of Nebraska
East Region	Stephen Gorchov	Hofstra University
Mideast Region	Diane Nordstrom	University of Wisconsin
Midwest Region	Brandie Davidson	Texas Christian University
Northeast Region	Brad Bower	George Washington University
Pacific Region	Amy Hughes	UCLA
South Region	Mike Vietti	University of Florida
West Region	Scott Pettett	University of Utah

ADD 2 – AVCA Grand Burger Media Award

NCAA Division II Women’s Sports Information Director Region Honorees

Atlantic Region	Al Weston	Lock Haven University
Great Lakes Region	Rob Bentley	Ferris State University
North Central Region	Jon Martin	North Central Conference
Northeast Region	Tim Camp	New Jersey Institute of Technology
Pacific Region	Jonathan Gordon	Central Washington University
South Region	Bill Turnage	Florida Southern University
South Central Region	Rob McCutcheon	University of Central Missouri
Southwest Region	Peter Yazvac	University of Nebraska at Kearney

NCAA Division III Women’s Sports Information Director Region Honorees

Central Region	Nick Povalitis	Washington University in St. Louis
Great Lakes Region	Ryan Maurer	Wittenberg University
Mid-Atlantic Region	Ira Thor	New Jersey City University
Midwest Region	Tom Fick	University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
New England Region	Mindy Brauer	MIT
New York Region	Jeff Bernstein	New York University
South Region	Justin Parker	Trinity University (Texas)
West Region	Will Darity	University of La Verne

NCAA Division I-II Men’s Sports Information Director Region Honorees

EIVA	Jen Armson	Penn State University
MIVA	D.C. Koehl	The Ohio State University/ Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association
MPSF	Stacey Shackelford	University of California, Irvine

NCAA Division III Men’s Sports Information Director Region Honorees

EIVA	Joel Cookson	Juniata College
NECVA	Scott Stoner	Stevens Institute of Technology/ North Eastern Collegiate Volleyball Association
MIVA	Brian Gibboney	Milwaukee School of Engineering

About AVCA Grant Burger Media Award

The AVCA Grant Burger Media Award is an honor intended to recognize members of the media who have been involved in the advancement of the sport of volleyball, whether it be through consistent coverage in all mediums (sports information, print, broadcasting and web content), production of volleyball-specific publications or extensive radio and/or television exposure. It is named in honor of Grant Burger, former Director of Sports Information and Associate Director of the AVCA (1988-92), whose hard work, innovative mind, knowledge and enthusiasm took the areas of media relations and publications at the AVCA to a higher level and increased awareness of the sport of volleyball nationwide.