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Staffer chronicles basketball teams on video

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Go to Oakland University's Athletics Center for any basketball game and you'll find common elements. There are the players, coaches and fans, of course. And you'll always see the cheerleaders, dance team and OU's mascot, "The Grizz."

And, then there's George Preisinger.

If you don't know who he is, just look for the guy with the video camera. Preisinger, the associate director of OU's Information Technology Institute, has been attending OU basketball games since he first came to the university in 1979. His involvement in OU athletics grew from being a season-ticket holder to becoming the unofficial basketball videographer.

Since the mid-1980's, Preisinger has spent countless hours producing post-season highlight videos compiled from tapes of every men's and women's game. And for the past five seasons, he's taped the vast majority of the teams' home games himself.

He has done all this work after hours, on his own time, with no reward other than the pleasure of creating personalized stories from behind the lens of his video camera.

"It's volunteer work," Preisinger said. "I don't get paid for taping the games or producing the videos, but doing it brings me a lot of satisfaction. My joy comes from seeing how much the players, parents and other supporters enjoy the videos."

When Preisinger arrived at OU, he was the lone production coordinator, handling slides, filmstrips, ¾" videotape and other old audio/visual materials and equipment. As video technology developed, Preisinger's role and his department grew. Today, he has managerial responsibility for the university's video and distribution services.

"We take care of classroom and faculty video technology support and provide hardware and software support solutions," Preisinger said. "We also maintain a campus-wide video network, which carries audio and video signals throughout the campus. And we maintain a video and DVD library. It certainly is a lot more complex and complicated than it was when I first started working here."

In the early 1980's, the OU Athletic Department had students videotape home basketball games for coaching purposes. The equipment they used was low-end – just a single camera on a tripod in the stands. The resulting footage served its purpose at the time, but a need for higher quality images came after Greg Kampe became the men's coach in 1984.

"When Kampe became coach, he helped start a support group for OU men's basketball called the OU 100," Preisinger said. "At the end of every season, they have a banquet with the coaches, players, their families and other supporters. They asked us to begin presenting footage at the banquets from the season in the form of a season highlight video as well as individual highlight videos for each graduating senior. We went quite a few years with sub-par footage in those videos. It was disappointing to not have the greatest material to work with.

"Eventually, it became too much of a headache for the coaches to find students to videotape the games. That's when I became more directly involved. I was at the games anyway as a fan, and it gave my wife an extra seat."

When Beckie Francis became the women's basketball coach in 1994, she liked Preisinger's video compilations so much she asked him to produce similar videos for her teams' post-season banquets.

"In a typical season, I'll produce about 10 videos total for both teams," Preisinger said. "It's normally a marathon to produce them. It takes a lot of time to select footage to use from all the games. In fact, my wife, Sarah, resigned from her job at National City Bank to help me out. She's my videotape editor. She stays at home logging the best shots for the videos and helping me select the music. We spend as much time as we have to make them – from the time the season ends to the time the banquet begins."

The close involvement the Preisinger's have with the basketball programs have practically made them part of the team.

"The coaches and players treat us as part of their travel group," Preisinger said. "Sarah is almost as involved as I am. She's

become kind of a den mother to the women's team. At last year's Mid-Con Tournament, we had close enough access to the team where we captured some off-court activity on video to document how they spend their time when they're not playing. This year we did the same. And during the Mid-Con final, we used two cameras for the first time to get court-side views as well as overall footage."

Winning the Mid-Con Tournament to advance for the first time to the NCAA Tournament was the season highlight for this year's women's basketball team. The Preisingers traveled to Nashville to document the first-round game against Vanderbilt, but found it a disappointing experience in their role as videographers.

"Because of the NCAA contract with ESPN, they didn't allow us to shoot any video from 30 minutes prior to the game until the conclusion," Preisinger said. "ESPN provided a courtesy tape to us, but it wasn't of the best quality. And from our perspective, it didn't show the things we would normally shoot, such as bench activity and fan activity and reaction. We were still able to capture some images of the team preparing for the game in the lockerroom and open practices. The limitations were disappointing and frustrating. But the story we'll be able to tell through our video is how the team was able to get to the NCAA Tournament and what the experience of being there was like."

Now it's time to compile the footage necessary for the post-season videos. The women's team has experienced its season climax. But the high point for Preisinger won't come until the basketball banquets.

"Being a part of the both the men's and women's teams has been an honor for my wife and myself," Preisinger said. "Now we have a lot of work to do. Our season doesn't end until after the banquets. The highlight of our year is being able to share what we've put together with the players, their families and friends. That's the payoff for us."

SUMMARY

George Preisinger, OU's associate director of Instructional Technology, has been attending OU basketball games since he first came to the university in 1979. His involvement in OU athletics grew from being a season-ticket holder to becoming the unofficial basketball videographer.

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