

IN PLAY

Play fair. It's the philosophy of choice for players on the football field. But off the Astroturf, fairness is a whole new ballgame — especially for female sports reporters.

This season, James Madison U., a Division I-AA football school in Har-

risburg, Va., changed its post-football game interview policy to provide equal access to all reporters after the previous policy was contested by the campus newspaper's sports department.

In the past, reporters could interview team coaches in a stadium classroom or head for the locker rooms to conduct player interviews. That is, if the reporters were men.

Women reporters were forced to wait outside the locker room in a hallway to conduct interviews. Now the locker room is closed to all reporters, but at least two players from each team are brought to the classroom for interviews.

No professional female sports writers currently cover the JMU football team, but in the past, women have served as sports writers and editors of the campus

newspaper and yearbook, sports director of the campus radio station and anchors on the campus TV sports show.

JMU sports information director Gary Michael said that although having women cover the football team would be new to the university, females have covered the men's basketball team in the past.

"Generally, in those cases, we've tried to go out of our way to make sure the [female reporters] are accommodated," he says. "But

again, if they say, 'Hey, we should have the same [access] as everyone else,' that's true."

JMU is only one of many schools that has recently changed its locker room policy to provide equal access to all reporters.

Another school changing its stance is the U. of Notre Dame, where locker rooms were called "open" unless female reporters showed up to cover a game, in which case all reporters were turned away.

Last year, however, Notre Dame closed its locker room to all reporters and opted for an interview tent.

Notre Dame sports information director John Heisler says that the university changed the policy in part because a writer and a sports editor from the school's newspaper and news magazine were women.

"I think it's generally worked well," he says. "We've had a number of women cov-

ering our teams. The university has not been amenable to letting [women] into the locker room. This is a conservative place."

For some schools, player privacy is the underlying reason for a closed locker room.

"Sometimes athletes have been banged up. They've been hurt. They're crying because it's the last game of the season, or there's been a loss," says Ed Carpenter, sports information director for Boston U., which has a long-standing closed locker room policy for all sports.

The College of William & Mary has not allowed any reporters into the locker room for any sport since 1989, when current sports information director Jean Elliott came on board.

"Being a female, it was easier for me," Elliott says. "We had a woman sports-writer from [the student newspaper], and we had a woman filing from the AP. It was time."

And when it comes to the players? Many have no problem with sportswriters — male or female — conducting interviews in the locker room.

"As far as women go, the only thing I'd appreciate is an announcement that a female is coming into the room so that I can cover

myself," says JMU strong safety David Lee. "While I understand gender equity, I wouldn't want to be walking around [naked]. That's just courtesy."

■ Alison Boyce, *The Breeze*, James Madison U.

Locked Out

again, if they say, 'Hey, we should have the same [access] as everyone else,' that's true."

JMU is only one of many schools that has recently changed its locker room policy to provide equal access to all reporters.

Another school changing its stance is the U. of Notre Dame, where locker rooms were called "open" unless female reporters showed up to cover a game, in which case all reporters were turned away.

Last year, however, Notre Dame closed its locker room to all reporters and opted for an interview tent.

Notre Dame sports information director John Heisler says that the university changed the policy in part because a writer and a sports editor from the school's newspaper and news magazine were women.

"I think it's generally worked well," he says. "We've had a number of women cov-

ering our teams. The university has not been amenable to letting [women] into the locker room. This is a conservative place."

For some schools, player privacy is the underlying reason for a closed locker room.

"Sometimes athletes have been banged up. They've been hurt. They're crying because it's the last game of the season, or there's been a loss," says Ed Carpenter, sports information director for Boston U., which has a long-standing closed locker room policy for all sports.

The College of William & Mary has not allowed any reporters into the locker room for any sport since 1989, when current sports information director Jean Elliott came on board.

"Being a female, it was easier for me," Elliott says. "We had a woman sports-writer from [the student newspaper], and we had a woman filing from the AP. It was time."

And when it comes to the players? Many have no problem with sportswriters — male or female — conducting interviews in the locker room.

"As far as women go, the only thing I'd appreciate is an announcement that a female is coming into the room so that I can cover



Nathan Erlin, *The Guardian*, U. of California, San Diego

BIODEBATABLE

Remember when Mom said, "Eat your broccoli — it's good for you," and the issue was buried? Well, it's been dug up and dusted off — gotta watch out for those pesticides.

Finding foods that won't stab you in the back has become a complicated matter of reading labels and sorting fact from hype.

One labeling ploy is the word "organic." Retailers sell food under this label and pass it off as being all-natural and much

better for you than normal food. But what exactly is organic?

Rich Howley, store manager of Fresh Fields, a Chicago supermarket specializing in "good-for-you foods," says organic foods are much healthier because they are grown in a pesticide-free environment.

"People like myself, who were raised in the '70s eating McDonald's every day, hear how all this stuff is bad for you now," Howley says. "I want to feed my children healthy, good-for-you food instead."

U. of Nebraska, Lincoln, freshman Kelly Bergman says she prefers to eat foods labeled organic. "It's nice to know what you're putting in your body," she reasons.

"It makes you feel better; it really does. You know everything you're eating is pure."

But is it really?

Gina Ellwanger, a UNL sophomore nursing major, says the label "organic" is misleading. She says she began buying food labeled organic because she fell for the idea that it was pesticide-free and healthier than nonorganic food. Then she took a nutrition class and learned otherwise.

Produce grown in "pesticide-free" fields may not be pesticide-free, she says, because pesticides from other fields may blow over and contaminate it.

"They use the word organic and people think, 'Oh my God, this is sooo good for me,'" she says. "In the true organic sense, it's not better for you. It's expensive. It's just hype."

The dictionary definition of organic is any chemical compound containing carbon, which includes every living and formerly living organism. Labeling food organic is about as informative as labeling food "edible."

Finding a true definition for organic seems complicated, yes? Well, you're not alone. The debate has even traveled to Capitol Hill.

Congress recently organized the National Organic Standards Program to work on defining organic and establishing certification procedures for organic foods.

Connie Crunkleton, information director for Agricultural Marketing Service in Rockville, Md., a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, says the current definition of organic depends on which group you're talking to.

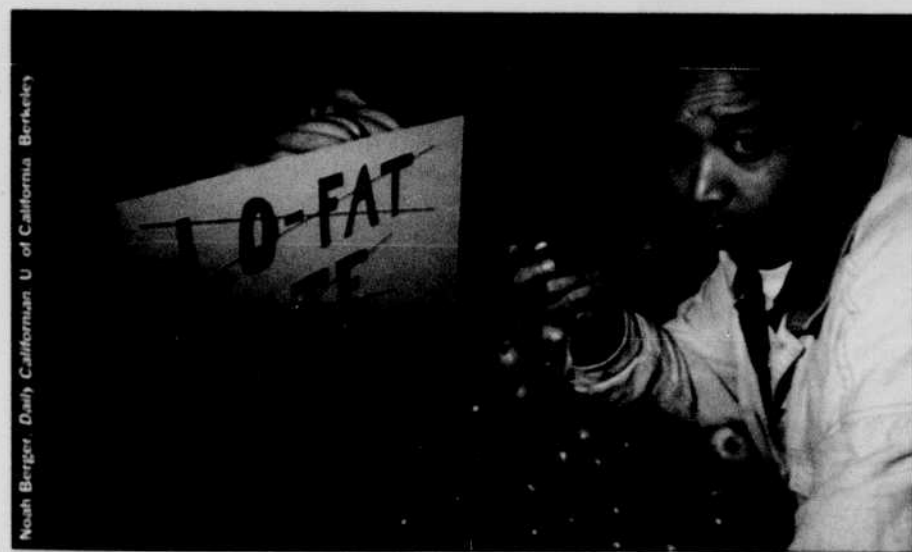
"People are not sure of what they're getting," she says. "There are different definitions for different people."

With no national standard, Crunkleton says, each state has its own policies for certifying a food as organic. And with no standard definition, producers aren't allowed to make any specific health claims. Organic foods, even if they're grown without pesticides, may be preserved with sugar or loaded with fat. So in the end, they may be no better than foods without a fancy label.

Maybe we should have just listened to Mom.

■ Paula Lavigne, *The Daily Nebraskan*, U. of Nebraska, Lincoln

You Say Tomato...



Noah Berger, *Daily Californian*, U. of California, Berkeley