

Student journalists won't play Joe Vandal's game

This editorial was published in the Argonaut, the University of Idaho student newspaper.

Via Lewiston Tribune

You won't see the Argonaut at football practice.

Earlier this month, a spokesperson for Vandal Athletics sent out an email notifying media that football practices would be closed to the media. But these new rules didn't apply to everyone.

Previously, Vandal Athletics had allowed members of the media to attend and observe certain practices as long as the appropriate spokesperson was notified 24 hours in advance. This was not a universal policy for higher-education athletics.

Now, media as a whole are only invited to the last 10 minutes of specific practices and to any news conferences.

Instead of blanketing the new rules and regulations for media to every news organization, Vandal Athletics decided to pick and choose whom it would allow at practice. Specific reporters from the Argonaut and the Lewiston Tribune were notified they were still allowed to attend one football practice a week.

The call to the Argonaut stated that as an organization we have shown our ability to follow media policies and would therefore be granted access.

Vandal Athletics has selected out the members of the media who they feel don't deserve access to practice. But it should place the same rules on all media, not discriminate between them.

Because of this, the Argonaut will not be attending football practices - even though permission has been granted to us - until other members of the media are allowed. The Lewiston Tribune has also decided not to attend practices.

The selective favoritism of media is unacceptable. As a news organization, the Argonaut will stand with the Lewiston Tribune and its other media partners, including those banned from practice.

The decision by Vandal Athletics came after a Moscow-Pullman Daily News reporter wrote a column explaining how University of Idaho football coach Paul Petrino allegedly threatened the reporter at practice for printing negative coverage of the team.

Following the alleged incident, Petrino and UI Athletic Director Rob Spear held a press conference denying the allegations.

This incident may or may not be the determining factor in deciding which news organizations are allowed at practice. The reasoning behind the decision is unclear.

Although the Argonaut's staff is made up of UI students, we are not accountable to the institution. As an independent student newspaper it is our right to decide what to cover and how to cover it.

The opportunity to observe practice has been helpful in our past coverage of football. We recognize this isn't an opportunity that every university provides. It is, however, one that we hope will return.

In the meantime, we will continue to cover football. We will just cover it differently.

This editorial was published in the Post, the student newspaper at Ohio University.

The score of Thursday night's regular season opener doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things. The real loser is the University of Idaho athletics department.

The university's football program is embattled, to put it lightly. The Vandals might soon lose their status as a football-only member of the Sun Belt Conference.

Last month, coach Paul Petrino returned almost \$400 worth of clothing some of his players stole from a university bookstore. The bookstore declined to file charges.

Perhaps most concerning for us, though, is the team's new media policy.

Following Petrino's alleged tirade against a local news reporter who, as Petrino said at the time, produced negative coverage of the team, the Vandals are only allowing pre-approved reporters attend their practices, besides those specifically designated otherwise.

Journalists working at Idaho's independent student newspaper, The Argonaut, and the Lewiston Tribune heard from the Vandals, who said they could attend practice.

It's unclear if Petrino's alleged encounter, which he and Idaho Athletic Director Rob Spear later denied took place, spurred the change on media rules.

Regardless, the policy appears to be a dubious, knee-jerk reaction to the Idaho coach's apparent inability to deal with local media.

We applaud the Tribune and Argonaut for deciding against attending further practices while the policy remains in place.

We stand with the affected reporters and urge Idaho Athletics to rescind this discriminatory practice.

