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Colleges are reaching their limit on alcohol

By Steve Wieberg, USA TODAY

There'll be no oversized trucks, buses or RVs allowed outside the historic Yale Bowl on Saturday. No drinking games. Pack up your coolers, grills and buffet tables by halftime of the 122nd Harvard-Yale game, please, and head into the stadium ... or head home.



Fresno State students drain their beers during a tailgate party outside the team's Nov. 10 game against Boise State.

By Robert Hanashiro, USA TODAY

The rules for one of the most famous — and socially celebrated — rivalries in college football have changed, at least outside the stadium.

Yale's new tailgating restrictions are designed to discourage binge drinking and associated unruliness, issues reverberating not only through college stadiums and arenas but entire campuses nationwide. "I'm sure there'll be a different vibe. ... It certainly seems like it'll put a damper on some of the social aspects of the game," Yale senior history major Nick Baumann says.

CAMPUS DRINKING

Colleges and universities are turning up the heat in their fight against alcohol abuse. USA TODAY explores the fight on several fronts:

- Athletics:** [Slowing the flow at stadiums](#)
- Marketing:** [Cutting commercial ties](#)

Tradition has taken a number of tweaks.

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lower-profile, lower-division institutions, college athletics is wrestling with its longstanding relationship with alcohol.

A USA TODAY survey of the 119 schools in the NCAA's major football-playing Division I-A found that nearly half (54) allow the sale of alcohol — through public concessions, in private suites or both — at one or more playing venues. Eighty-five of those schools have designated tailgating areas, and barely one in 10 keeps those zones alcohol-free. (**Related item:** [College responses to USA TODAY survey](#))

But No. 1-ranked USC, drawing a record 90,000-plus spectators a game at home in the Los Angeles Coliseum, cut off alcohol sales there this season.

Studies highlight problem

Amid reams of research on alcohol use on college campuses are two studies focusing on sports:

- Fans were more likely than non-fans to binge drink and have alcohol-related problems, from missing class or falling behind in schoolwork to vandalism and sexual violence, the Harvard School of Public Health found in 2002. It questioned nearly 12,000 students; about 30% said they were sports fans.

More than half of the fans (53%) engaged in binge drinking, compared with 38% of the non-fans. The study also found that schools with larger proportions of fans were more likely to have high rates of binge drinking on their campuses.

Among the study's conclusions: "The results ... suggest that the link between sports and alcohol is an important one for colleges to consider in their efforts to decrease binge drinking and the harm that it produces. ... Athletic administrators and officials should take the findings of the present study into account when considering the role of alcohol in athletic budgets."

- Researchers for Virginia Tech's College Alcohol Abuse Prevention Center, armed with handheld breathalyzers, fanned out before four Tech football games two years ago and found that 86% of 275 tested tailgaters had consumed alcohol. About 46% had blood-alcohol levels of 0.08 or higher, the state's legal standard for intoxication.

Among the pregame tailgaters who intended to drive after the game, a

Miami (Fla.) ended a sponsorship arrangement with Coors two years ago, and university president Donna Shalala says the school is phasing out another with locally headquartered Bacardi. Florida, Ohio State and Kentucky no longer allow alcohol advertising on any TV and radio broadcasts they control.

The moves reflect larger alarm. The National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimated in March that alcohol consumption accounted for more than 1,700 deaths among college-age students in 2001, the most recent year for which such figures are available.

"That's how many planes crashing?" says Henry Wechsler, a social psychologist and researcher at Harvard's School of Public Health who co-authored the study. "Indeed, if these were airplanes crashing, we'd hear a lot about it. We don't because they occur one at a time or two at a time."

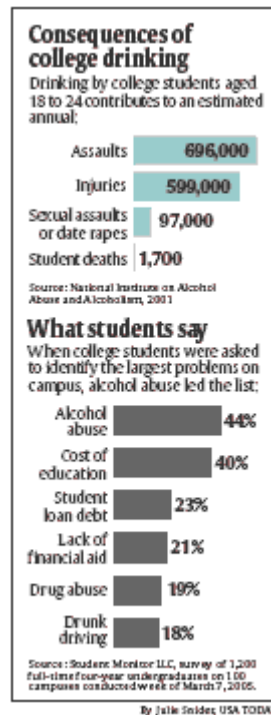
Colleges are trying to address drinking-to-excess rates that, despite increased national attention, haven't budged since the 1990s. Harvard's ongoing College Alcohol Study found that two in five college students admitted binge drinking, defined as consuming five or more drinks in one sitting for males, four or more for females, in 2001. That was nearly identical to rates reported in 1993, 1997 and 1999. That, the study found, has led to an increase in such problems as missing class, falling behind in schoolwork and having unprotected sex.

Students themselves register concern. In a Student Monitor LLC survey of 1,200 full-time, four-year undergraduates on 100 campuses in March, alcohol abuse was most commonly identified as one of the largest problems on campuses today — more so (by 44%) than the cost of tuition (40%).

Kentucky's athletics department adopted its no-alcohol ad policy in the wake of a November 1998 accident in which a truck driven by football player Jason Watts overturned, killing a 19-year-old teammate and a 21-year-old Eastern Kentucky

third were legally intoxicated and another 13% were at risk of being cited for driving under the influence (with blood-alcohol levels between 0.05 and 0.08).

"That's a very serious concern if you consider the number of football games on the weekend, pro and college," says Steven Clarke, the Center's director. "Locally, there's beginning to be some tailgating at high school games. It's really just a matter of time before that behavior also increases. Then we're going to be in a real crisis."



student who was a friend of then-Kentucky quarterback Tim Couch. All three were intoxicated, authorities said.

His college career ended, Watts pleaded guilty to two counts of reckless homicide and served 3½ months of a 10-year jail sentence before being granted early release.

Yale needed no such tragedy to address the environment around its football stadium. By one account, tailgating traces its roots to the New Haven, Conn., school, to 1904 and the game-day arrival of legions of fans by train. Their walk from the station to the stadium left them hungry and thirsty, and somebody came up with the idea of toting picnic hampers of food and liquid refreshment.

In particular, The Game vs. Harvard has become as much about socializing — over beer, cocktails and fancy spreads of food — as it is about football. Yale's toughened new policy is simply an "attempt to promote an enjoyable, civil and safe tailgating experience," it says. Harvard similarly tightened restrictions when it hosted The Game last year, banning kegs and keg parties.

Tie-ins are money-makers

It was inevitable that the search for an effective response to campus drinking would spill into the athletics arena. Alcohol consumption has long been a companion to sports, be it in the stands, the parking lots outside or sports bars around town. For college football, especially, tailgating is part of the game.

But that's hardly alcohol's only entry point into intercollegiate athletics. Among the more than four dozen Division I-A schools allowing alcohol sales

are 18 that permit public sales at facilities on campus, USA TODAY's survey found. Sixty-four I-A schools, or well more than half, allow alcohol advertising at athletic events, in stadium or arena signage or in game programs.

In an era of tight athletics budgets, a number of programs draw on high-dollar alcohol sponsorships. Missouri is getting \$490,000 from Anheuser-Busch this year, not counting \$75,000 it splits with Illinois from the brewer's sponsorship of their annual Busch Braggin' Rights basketball game in St. Louis. Wisconsin gets \$450,000 from Miller and Busch. Colorado receives \$392,000 from Coors.

Those and a majority of other schools allow alcohol ads during radio broadcasts of their games. And conferences, which largely control regular-season television rights, allow them on those broadcasts.

The NCAA has long banned alcohol sales and on-site advertising at the 88 championships it runs in 23 different sports, and its Executive Committee recommended in August that individual schools



By Steven E. Frischling, Bloomberg News

A Yale police officer breaks up a keg-filled student tailgate party during the team's Nov. 5 game against Brown.

follow its lead during the regular season. But the association gives beer, malt-beverage and wine advertisers access to postseason TV and radio broadcasts. The university presidents and chancellors who sit on the Executive Committee opted not to remove alcohol from that equation — most notably during the signature Division I men's basketball tournament.

Harvard's Wechsler was disappointed by the NCAA's action. "They ought to put their money where their mouth is, away from the beer industry," he says. "I see statements about increased sensitivity. I'm not sure about actions ... not where the pocketbook is concerned."

Inconsistent message

For most schools, and for the NCAA, pressure to toughen alcohol policies arises from escalating campus-wide concern about student drinking and efforts to moderate it. Sports can send a conspicuous signal.

Various approaches

A sampling of schools where alcohol-and-athletics issues have simmered in recent years:

- **Hawaii** — Efforts to ban alcohol from Aloha Stadium have had mixed results. The stadium authority will hold a public hearing as early as next month on a compromise plan to bar alcohol from the parking lots next season. Beer, wine and mixed drinks still would be sold inside the stadium; a vending contract runs through 2011.

- **Ohio State** — It began prohibiting alcohol ads on local game broadcasts and TV coaches' shows two years ago. The school also bans alcohol advertising in stadium or arena signage and game programs.

- **St. Cloud (Minn.) State** — The NCAA Division II school (in everything but hockey) banned alcohol from tailgating on Oct. 14. That conforms to a no-alcohol policy on the rest of the campus.

- **North Dakota State** — Coinciding with a move into the NCAA's Division I-AA last year, it allowed alcohol for the first time in two designated tailgating areas outside the Fargodome. No alcohol is sold in the Fargodome.

- **Kansas** — As part of a plan to

"Community leaders are trying to deal with this issue as it relates to underage drinking and binge drinking and drinking responsibly," Florida athletics director Jeremy Foley says. "To make that a priority, an initiative, and then there's the athletic association — one of the more high-profile entities on the campus if not the highest-profile — advertising alcohol, that's an inconsistent message."

During a campaign by school President Bernie Machen to change the drinking culture on the Gainesville, Fla., campus, Foley banned alcohol advertising from radio and TV sports programming this year. The school's \$64 million athletics budget dwarfs the \$200,000 a year the move is estimated to cost, "but \$200,000 is \$200,000," he says.

"That's four endowed scholarships a year. That's not insignificant dollars whether you have a \$15 million budget or a \$60 million budget."

At Miami, Shalala says of the loss of the Coors and Bacardi sponsorships, "We lose some money, but we do the right thing."

She also has eliminated beer-hawking in the stands at home football games in Miami's city-owned Orange Bowl and says she's working with Mayor Manny Diaz to eliminate sales altogether when the Hurricanes are playing there.

Decisions left to schools

It was three years ago when Steve Angelucci, a vice president with Lexington, Ky.-based Host Communications, says he first sensed a growing

boost football attendance, it opted four years ago to allow alcohol consumption for three hours before each home game in the parking lots and grassy areas around Memorial Stadium.

- **Michigan State** — It relaxed its no-alcohol policy in expanded Spartan Stadium in October, allowing beer and wine sales for two hours until kickoff — but not during games — in new luxury suites.

- **Arkansas-Little Rock** — The school is pushing for alcohol sales at the Stephens Center, its new on-campus basketball arena, asking the state's Alcohol Beverage Control board for a liquor permit despite resistance from the agency's executive director.

sensitivity to alcohol tie-ins. Many schools fold their sponsorship and advertising rights, with TV and radio rights, into multimedia agreements with media and marketing firms such as Host, Missouri-based Learfield Communications and North Carolina-based ISP Sports. The firms, in turn, seek and secure the sponsors and advertisers.

"If you had 10 new schools going out for bid today," Angelucci says, "I think as many as half would say, 'We don't want any alcoholic advertising or sponsorship presence sold.' "

If there's movement, however, there's not yet a movement. Only two of seven schools affiliated with Host — Kentucky and Michigan — impose such a ban, Angelucci says. Greg Brown, a senior vice president at Learfield, says all but perhaps two of its 22 major-college clients accept alcohol ads.

Schools are left to decide for themselves. While setting policy for championships (except in football) and recommending guidelines for individual institutions, the NCAA has shied away from imposing across-the-board restrictions on advertising, sponsorships and sales at events.

"I would personally wonder how one justifies the sale of alcohol in an on-campus venue," says University of Hartford President Walter Harrison, who heads the Executive Committee. But he says, "We just felt that was something better left to institutions, that the NCAA is not really in a position to dictate." He points to antitrust concerns: "Perhaps it's not even legal."

Pressure for change comes from advocacy groups such as the Washington-based Center for Science in the Public Interest, which complains that college sports telecasts are increasingly delivering young viewers to beer makers. The center is enlisting schools to sign a pledge to prohibit alcohol advertising on local sports programming and work within their conferences and the NCAA to eliminate alcohol ads from all college sports on TV.

CSPI counts 246 institutions that have signed the pledge, although the message that it sends is mixed. They include just five of the 65 members of the six most powerful conferences in I-A (Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pacific-10 and Southeastern). Those five schools: Baylor, Florida, Minnesota, Northwestern and Ohio State.

In Washington, former football coach and current Congressman Tom Osborne, R-Neb., has gotten nowhere with three House measures in the last three years that would have eliminated or discouraged alcohol ads during radio and TV broadcasts of college games.

Beer industry representatives argue that those campaigns are mis-targeted. The NCAA says Nielsen statistics show 88% of the TV audience for Division I men's basketball games and 90% of the audience for women's games are over the age of 21. "We feel in trying to reach the adult consumer, 21-plus, that it's very appropriate," says Tony Ponturo, vice president for global media and sports marketing at Anheuser-Busch.



By Robert Hanashiro, USA TODAY
Students line up mixed drinks next to open beer cans at a Fresno State tailgate party.

Even from officials working to curb college drinking, there are arguments that complete bans on stadium sales or advertising aren't necessary.

Drew Hunter works with the Inter-Association Task Force on Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Issues, a coalition of 21 organizations addressing college alcohol and drug issues. "Different campuses have different cultures," he says. "You have to have some flexibility to work within the culture that's there. ... It's important for a campus to have a consistent philosophy of how they want to address these issues. If they choose to do marketing, only do it in a way that does not add to drunkenness through promotions and things of that nature."

That's the thought behind the "drink responsibly" taglines to most alcohol ads.

Wisconsin's solution

Wisconsin's sponsorships by Miller and Anheuser-Busch — each brewer accounting for about half the \$450,000 total — reflect the gray that shades the issue. Officials at the Madison school weighed national attitudes and whether to maintain the agreements before renewing them this summer.

The advertising they entail is concentrated in radio broadcasts and in football coach Barry Alvarez's Sunday TV show.

There's no alcohol advertising in Camp Randall Stadium, and Miller and Busch can't use the Wisconsin logo in posters or other point-of-purchase promotions.

But Wisconsin is ... well, a beer-drinking state. Shutting out Busch and especially Milwaukee-headquartered Miller, associate athletics director Vince Sweeney says, "could be read the wrong way at a time when universities are pointed at as not being in touch with the populace.

"It's such a complex issue. You have so many different people trying to attack it from so many different ways. I am in no way critical of the people who are saying 'ban this' or 'ban that' because I think their hearts are in the right place.

"They're trying to make things better."

Scott Boeck and Ellen Horrow contributed to this report

Colleges respond about alcohol policies

The questions

- Does your athletic department have a policy concerning alcohol at athletic events?
- Does your institution allow alcoholic beverages to be sold at athletic events?
- Does your institution allow alcoholic beverages to be advertised at athletic events?
- Does your institution designate an area for tailgating?
- Does your institution have a pass out policy prohibiting ticket holders who leave athletic venues from re-entering?
- Does your institution provide training to athletic facility personnel for dealing with alcohol-related incidents?

Schools' responses

Allow Ad Tailgate Pass-out

Conference	Response	Policy?	sales?	signage?	area?	restrict?	Training?
ACC	Yes	100%	17%	17%	58%	75%	92%
	No	0%	83%	83%	42%	25%	8%
Big 12	Yes	100%	42%	25%	58%	50%	92%
	No	0%	58%	75%	42%	50%	8%
Big East	Yes	100%	75%	75%	75%	75%	88%
	No	0%	25%	25%	25%	25%	13%
Big Ten	Yes	100%	36%	0%	55%	64%	91%
	No	0%	64%	100%	45%	36%	9%
C-USA	Yes	100%	33%	50%	92%	58%	67%
	No	0%	67%	50%	8%	42%	33%
Independent	Yes	75%	25%	0%	50%	75%	75%
	No	25%	75%	100%	50%	25%	25%
Mid-American	Yes	100%	33%	17%	83%	25%	92%
	No	0%	67%	83%	17%	75%	8%
Mountain West	Yes	100%	33%	56%	78%	44%	78%
	No	0%	67%	44%	22%	56%	22%
Pacific-10	Yes	90%	10%	20%	70%	50%	90%
	No	10%	90%	80%	30%	50%	10%
Southeastern	Yes	100%	0%	0%	42%	92%	83%
	No	0%	100%	100%	58%	8%	17%
Sun Belt	Yes	88%	38%	75%	100%	50%	63%
	No	13%	63%	25%	0%	50%	38%
Western Athletic	Yes	78%	44%	78%	100%	67%	89%
	No	22%	56%	22%	0%	33%	11%
All schools	Yes	96%	31%	33%	71%	60%	84%
	No	4%	69%	67%	29%	40%	16%

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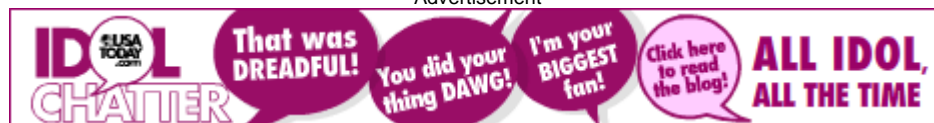
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