

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Wednesday, November 12, 2003

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Coaching Legends Help Launch “Alcohol-Free Sports TV” Effort *71 Percent of Americans Want Colleges to Dump Beer Ads*

WASHINGTON—Former University of North Carolina head basketball coach Dean Smith and former University of Nebraska head football coach (and current U.S. Representative) Tom Osborne (R-NE) today helped launch a nationwide campaign to rid televised college sports of alcohol advertising. Smith, Osborne, and the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) today said they would call on colleges and universities, athletic conferences, and the NCAA to stop taking money from alcohol advertisers.

New polling data released by CSPI today suggests an overwhelming majority of Americans think colleges are wrong to take advertising money from beer companies while trying to discourage underage and binge drinking on campus.

“College officials say they want to deter underage and binge drinking, and stop the riots that disrupt campus communities and blot schools’ reputations,” said George A. Hacker, director of CSPI’s alcohol policies project. “But too often, they’re complicit with beer marketers in pitching beer to their students and young fans. That totally undercuts their responsibilities to the health and safety of their students.”

According to the poll, seven in 10 Americans say beer companies that advertise on sports know that their ads appeal to underage persons. Two-thirds believe beer companies use sports to reach and advertise to persons under the legal drinking age.

84 percent of those surveyed think that beer advertising on college games is not in the best interests of higher education. Three-fourths say it is wrong for colleges to take money from beer companies. And 71 percent support a ban on all alcohol ads on televised college games.

Sports fans are clearly a major target audience for the beer and alcohol industry. 60 percent of all television alcohol advertising is spent on sports programming. Alcohol producers spent close to \$600 million on sports programming in 2002. Of that, approximately \$58 million was spent on college sports programs—about 6,251 ads—according to the Center on Alcohol Marketing and

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Youth (CAMY). Fully 87 percent of the combined ad budgets for Anheuser Busch's Bud and Bud Lite beer is spent on sports programming.

A September report from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recommended that alcohol companies refrain from marketing practices which have underage appeal. The NAS further recommended that colleges and universities ban alcohol advertising and promotion on campus—a move which the NAS said would help schools demonstrate their commitment to discouraging alcohol use among students. And according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), nearly a third (31 percent) of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and six percent met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the past 12 months.

Also according to NIAAA, 1,400 college students each year die from alcohol-related injuries, including motor vehicle crashes. More than 70,000 students are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape, and alcohol-related teen violence and delinquency cost an estimated \$29 billion annually.

“If aspirin were the leading cause of death on college campuses, do you think chancellors, presidents, and trustees would allow aspirin commercials on basketball and football telecasts? They wouldn't, not for a minute,” Dean Smith said.

In 1999, Catherine Bath lost her son Raheem, who died after a binge drinking episode at Duke University. She said that corporate greed fuels the alcohol industry's visibility on campuses and on the airwaves—and she says that college presidents need to end the marriage between beer ads and sports.

“Colleges need to divorce themselves from alcohol industry sponsorship,” Bath said. “Nothing will change until the leaders of our great universities take a firm stand and refuse to send such a blatantly mixed message to their own students.”

The Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV is asking college officials to sign a pledge indicating that the school will prohibit alcohol advertising on locally produced sports programming, and that the school will work within its athletic conference and within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to eliminate all alcohol advertising from televised college sports.

More than 80 national, state, and local groups have joined CSPI in launching the Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV.