STATEMENT OF DEAN SMITH
FORMER HEAD BASKETBALL COACH
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SUPPORTING AN END TO BEER ADS ON COLLEGE SPORTS BROADCASTS

April 1, 2005
St. Louis, Missouri

I am encouraged that the NCAA Division I Board of Directors has moved to conduct a thorough review of alcohol policies, including alcohol advertising policies. That review is long overdue, and I urge the Board to eliminate beer ads on television in the NCAA Tournament, as well as Division I conferences games in football and basketball. College presidents, who best understand how alcohol affects their schools, are the ones who can – and should – make this happen.

Refusing alcohol ads during college games would help the NCAA avoid a vast audience of young people from age ten to twenty-one learning on television that assumes beer is not much different than Coca-Cola. The advertisers say you will feel better about yourself and attract the best dating partners by having beer. Nowhere do the advertisements indicate that a bottle of beer is no different than one glass of wine or an airplane bottle of distilled spirits. Each has the same ethonal content.

For whatever reason, the NCAA prohibits ads for distilled spirits, but allows ads for beer. What sense does that make when beer is the beverage of choice and the chief beverage of devastation among college students? Presenting beer as acceptable and different from other kinds of alcohol is not true and it is dangerous.

In little more than a year, more than 20% of NCAA schools have signed the College Commitment, pledging to work for an end to beer ads on college telecasts. Some of our greatest college coaches, including John Wooden, Joe Paterno, Rene Portland, Jim Calhoun, Grant Teaff, Rep. Tom Osborne, and others also publicly support this effort. Coaches know first hand that alcohol and college sports do not belong together.

We have made progress, but really need the Division I schools, which appear on television more often, to take a stand. Surely, beer ads can be replaced by other advertising. If the money is not as great, as least the NCAA may be saving young lives!

Ask yourself this question: 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? Currently, the NCAA appears to exercise a double standard in allowing beer commercials on TV during Division I athletic events, but prohibits beer sales at the athletic events. Certainly, the NCAA would not bar the sale of aspirin at the NCAA Tournament arenas as they do beer sales!

I urge the NCAA presidents on the Division I Board of Directors to review the organization’s alcohol advertising policies and adopt a ban on all alcohol ads – including beer.