

News

NCAA Alcohol Ads Still High-Profile, Study Claims

CSPI examines beer commercials during big games

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Despite the National Collegiate Athletic Association's claim that it has the most "conservative and restrictive approach" with regard to alcohol advertising of any sporting organization, an analysis by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest reveals otherwise.

CSPI said it looked at advertising during the three 2008 NCAA "Final Four" basketball games and the 2008-2009 college football Bowl Championship Series. Results showed a higher percentage of beer ads during the "Final Four" games than the BCS.

During the "Final Four," 23 out of 196 ads — 12 percent — were for beer, making it the second most-advertised product. In contrast, during BCS games, just 22 of 380 spots — about six percent — promoted beer, making beer the seventh most-advertised product.

Unlike the NCAA's Final Four and college football's BCS games, the Chick-fil-A Bowl, featuring teams from the Atlantic Coast Conference and Southeastern Conference, prohibits all beer advertisements and in-stadium signs and sponsorships. That prominent game and the Big Ten Network's similar refusal to accept beer ads are the strongest policies, according to CSPI.

"The NCAA lags far behind other organizations when it comes to protecting its young audience from beer ads," said George A. Hacker, director of CSPI's alcohol policies project. "Beer is the most abused drug on college campuses. But the NCAA is selling out students and other young people to beer marketers. If other college sports can eliminate, or at least limit, these ads, there's no reason the NCAA can't."

In a letter to NCAA president Myles Brand, CSPI repeated its longstanding request for the NCAA to eliminate alcohol ads from televised college sports.



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Last summer, hundreds of college coaches, athletic directors and college presidents urged the NCAA to further limit beer advertising during its championship basketball tournament, but the executive committee refused to comply.

CSPI's Campaign for Alcohol-Free Sports TV seeks to reduce youth exposure to beer advertising on televised college sports to limit the promotion of beer consumption, since such exposure is associated with heavier and more frequent drinking among teens.

Since 2005, 372 — more than one-third — NCAA-member colleges and 16 athletic conferences have signed the campaign's pledge to eliminate beer commercials from college sports telecasts.

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