



Campaign for
**Alcohol-Free
Sports TV**



CURRENT NCAA POLICY ON TELEVISED BEER ADVERTISING IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED

The NCAA's current rules regarding televised beer advertising flout the values of sports and higher education. They defy logic, contradict reason, and conflict with the purposes and noble goals of the organization. Rather than protect young people and promote the core values of sports and learning, they principally advance the interests of beer marketers eager to reach the college demographic.

- **The alcohol advertising guidelines are inconsistent with NCAA general advertising policy.** The NCAA's advertising and promotional standards plainly "exclude those advertisements and advertisers ...that do not appear to be in the best interests of higher education and student-athletes." The Association's standards emphasize that advertisers affiliated with NCAA events *should not* "cause harm to student-athlete health, safety, and welfare; bring discredit to the purposes, values or principles of the NCAA; and negatively impact the best interests of intercollegiate athletics or higher education." Can the NCAA seriously assert that promoting beer drinking, a prominent cause of persistent health, safety, and academic problems in college life, is in the best interests of higher education, sports, or student welfare?
- **NCAA beer-advertising policy is inconsistent with other NCAA alcohol-related policies, as well as the alcohol-related policies of many of its members.** NCAA advertising rules prohibit ads for cigarettes, other tobacco products, organizations promoting gambling, and alcoholic beverages, yet they permit ads for beverages with alcohol content of 6% or less! The NCAA also prohibits on-site alcohol advertising (all of it!) during its tournament events and forbids the sale of all alcoholic beverages. It encourages its members to do likewise. Many members ban alcohol ads and impose tailgating restrictions to discourage binge drinking and alcohol-induced, unruly fan behavior. Pushing beer to a large number of collegians in the TV audience, many of them underage, betrays the intent of the NCAA's overall alcohol policies.
- **Current policy (which generally prohibits alcohol advertising) cynically pretends that beer is tantamount to a non-alcoholic beverage.** In fact, beer is the primary source of binge drinking and intoxication among young people, and the principal source of alcohol-related harm. It makes no more sense to provide beer marketers exclusive advertising rights on NCAA telecasts than it does to advertise any alcoholic beverage. Despite education and prevention efforts targeting students, high-risk alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems occur with alarming regularity in college settings. College administrators recognize the hypocrisy of airing commercials for the very product that causes them, and others on and around the campus, so much distress. Beer ads demean the NCAA, student athletes, college prevention efforts, and help put young people at risk.

- **The NCAA’s time limitation on beer advertising during NCAA telecasts actually allows a higher concentration of beer ads than on all TV.** TNS Media Intelligence advertising data from last year’s (2008) NCAA basketball tournament reveal that two brewers (A-B and SAB-Miller) were among the top eight leading advertisers. The beer *category* was the second largest, behind automobiles, accounting for \$42.8 million. Beer advertising accounted for some 4% of total advertising revenues during the 2003 tournament, compared to 1.7% for all TV programming. Even imposing a supposed restriction on beer ads assumes the inappropriateness of those ads in college sports programming. Some liken the compromise rule to “being just a little bit pregnant.”
- **The NCAA’s assertion that it controls only the advertising that airs during championship games (tip-off to final buzzer) undermines the value and importance of its beer-advertising restrictions.** The NCAA defines a “telecast” to include only the time from tip-off to final game buzzer (rather than the whole program), asserting that it has no control over ads aired during pre- and post-game programming. For viewers, who watch from beginning to end, there’s no distinction between the game telecast and the programming that’s wrapped around it. The hosts are the same, as are the displays of the NCAA and school logos, references to both the NCAA and competing schools, as well as interviews with coaches, NCAA commentators, even players. Of all the advertising prohibited by the NCAA standards, only beer ads appear in the programming on either side of the game. Would the NCAA tolerate ads for distilled spirits or gambling just before tip-off or just after the final buzzer? Does the NCAA have any more control of other kinds of ads?
- **NCAA has contractual authority to disallow all alcohol advertising from its telecasts. Beer advertising would likely be replaced by ads for other products.** Legally, the NCAA has the right to change its agreement with CBS to exclude beer advertising at its discretion. Rather, it chooses to put the interests of beer marketers over those of its members, their students, and its own reputation. Industry data suggest that the NCAA tournament has solid support among advertisers; and demand for advertising time has steadily increased revenues for the CBS television network – up 24% between 2007 and 2008. With 300 different advertisers since 1998, new potential advertisers in the market each season (many vying for the same lucrative, college-basketball demographic), and revenues going up, there is a strong likelihood that replacement advertisers would fill, even in the short run, all – or most – of the gap created by excluding beer advertising.
- **NCAA policy and practice inappropriately cozy up to the beer industry as a leader and resource for “responsibility.”** Incredibly, an NCAA spokesman once defended beer advertising as a means to educate the public and young people about “responsibility.” Newsflash: Brewers are in business to sell beer and make a profit — not to reduce heavy drinking. NCAA’s close relationship with big brewers and industry-oriented “prevention” organizations, relying on them for money and messaging assistance, yields platitudes – not prevention. Vague and perfunctory nods to “responsibility” are no match for the ads, and there’s no evidence that they’re effective to moderate drinking or avoid alcohol problems. The NCAA advertising policy creates a conflict of interest and exposes a chummy relationship with brewers, in particular, Anheuser-Busch, a major funder of its responsibility programs. The beer ads and the NCAA’s cynical delegation of alcohol prevention to big brewers subvert and demean the missions of the organization, of higher education, and of alcohol prevention.