

Officials say ban would create a 'safe environment'

Decision to stop beer sales at Mackay will be made in next two weeks

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News Editor

Last football season, Wolf Pack fans missed parts of games. They waited in line throughout halftime. They handed over thousands of dollars throughout the season all for one thing – a cup of beer.

But with university administration and the athletics department considering a potential ban, these gameday rituals could come to an end.

The University of Nevada, Reno's administration and athletics department have been discussing the ban since February, when they put out a survey to ask people about their gameday experiences. One section of the survey specifically dealt with alcohol and the sale of it in the stadium.

The survey results, which were completed March 1, have not been released as of Monday, athletics director Cary Groth said.

President Milton Glick said they are considering the ban because they want fans to have good experiences when they go to UNR football games. The ban would not include alcohol sales at the Lawlor Events Center, Virginia Street Gym or Pecole Park.

"There are a small number of fans who are becoming intoxicated and ruining the experience for many more fans," Glick said. "We're considering a wide spectrum of ideas to deal with the situation right now. We want it to be a safe environment for fans."

Some students said that they don't agree with banning alcohol sales at games.

"The only reason I'll go to games is if I can have a drink," said Lindy Mitchell, a 22-year-old nursing major. "Of course everyone drinks – it's Nevada. Not everyone who drinks is going to cause problems."

Some ideas that have been suggested are having alcohol-free sections and having harsher penalties for intoxicated people who cause problems at games, university officials said.

Glick said the decision will come within the next two weeks because the university needs to send out subscription forms

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ALCOHOL POLICIES

Current beer policy in Mackay Stadium:

- ▶ People cannot bring alcohol into Mackay Stadium
- ▶ A wristband is required to purchase alcohol
- ▶ One beer can be bought at a time
- ▶ Concession stands stop selling alcohol at the end of halftime

The following universities sell alcohol at their games. City- and state-owned stadiums handle beer sales. On-campus stadium beer sales are handled by the universities.

Conferences:

Atlantic Coast Conference

- ▶ University of Miami plays in the Orange Bowl, which sells beer. Miami will be playing in a new stadium starting this coming season and has not decided whether it will continue to sell beer.

Big 10 Conference

- ▶ University of Minnesota plays in the Metrodome, which is owned by the state. The stadium sells beer.

Big 12 Conference

- ▶ No schools sell alcohol at their games.

Big East Conference

- ▶ University of Cincinnati sells alcohol at their games, which are played in Nippert Stadium, their on-campus stadium.

- ▶ University of Connecticut plays in Rentschler Field, a state-operated stadium. The stadium sells alcohol.

- ▶ University of Louisville plays in Papa John's Stadium, their on-campus stadium.

- ▶ University of Pittsburgh plays at Heinz Field, a city-operated facility.

- ▶ University of South Florida plays at Raymond James Stadium, owned by the Tampa Sports Authority.

Mountain West Conference

- ▶ The University of Nevada, Las Vegas plays at Sam Boyd Stadium, an off-campus facility.

- ▶ San Diego State plays at Qualcomm Stadium, a city-owned facility.

Pac 10 Conference

- ▶ No schools sell alcohol at their games.

Southeastern Conference

- ▶ No schools sell alcohol at their games.

Sunbelt Conference

- ▶ Florida Atlantic University plays at Lockhart Stadium, a city-owned facility.

Western Athletic Conference

- ▶ The University of Nevada plays at Mackay Stadium, an on-campus stadium.

- ▶ The University of Hawaii plays at Aloha Stadium, a state-owned facility.

- ▶ San Jose State University plays at Spartan Stadium, an on-campus stadium.

Mid-Atlantic Conference

- ▶ Kent State University plays in Dix Stadium, an on-campus stadium.

- ▶ Temple University plays in Lincoln Financial Field, a city-owned stadium.

Conference USA

- ▶ Tulane University plays in the Superdome, owned by the Louisiana Stadium and Expo District.

- ▶ Tulsa University plays at Chapman Stadium, an on-campus stadium.

Alcohol

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to season ticket holders.

If a ban were to happen, UNR would join a number of other universities and colleges around the country that don't sell alcohol in their stadiums, like Ohio State University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Most of these colleges don't allow alcohol in their stadiums, but have tailgating areas nearby.

Currently, UNR is only one of 20 Division-I football colleges that sells beer at their games. Six colleges, including UNR, play in university-owned stadiums, while the rest play in stadiums that are owned by the city or state.

"The atmosphere at Nevada games is different than the atmosphere at other stadiums around the country," Groth said. "We are not the only people who have made this decision before."

Other colleges that recently banned the sale of alcohol in their stadiums are the University of Southern California in 2005 and California State University, Fresno in 2006.

USC ended selling alcohol in the Coliseum, where it plays football, to create a family-friendly environment, said Tim Tessalone, USC's sports information director.

Tessalone said while the decision was not popular at first, the university did not meet much opposition from the university community and students.

Fresno State's ban came with "mixed reviews," said Steve Weakland, Fresno State's director of media relations. While some were excited, others disagreed and were disappointed. The ban was enforced by the California State University System.

Weakland said that since the ban, Fresno State has had fewer problems.

"We've just finished our second season, and the difference is significant," he said. "There are less ejections, less problems."

Weakland said the main reason for the ban was because of safety issues, mostly dealing with binge drinking.

Groth pointed out that safety was at the top of UNR's concerns. There were more than 100

incidents at Mackay Stadium last season, many alcohol-related, which did not provide a safe environment for students and fans.

"It's something we need to put an end to and this may be part of the solution," Groth said. "People will continue to drink, but this would help minimize the problems."

Groth said she expects changes to be made whether there is a ban or not, including higher security at gate entrances to the stadium and not allowing people to drink while waiting to go into the stadium.

The Associated Students of the University of Nevada Senate voiced opposition to the ban by passing a resolution stating they didn't support the idea.

Some of the alternate ideas the senate suggested in the resolu-

tion were to increase security at tailgates and entrances, implementing "no-drinking zones," and increasing safe transportation to and from the stadium.

Speaker of the Senate Greg Green said he understands that the university wants to prevent problems, but he doesn't believe that it has to do with the alcohol sold at the games.

"One or two beers during the game isn't going to make you belligerently drunk," Green said. "The problem is that people are getting drunk at pre-game parties or tailgates and then are coming to the game."

Glick agreed people would still continue to get drunk outside of the games, but the university could not prevent people from

drinking outside of the stadium. "What we can do is make sure these people don't get into dangerous incidents inside of the stadium by making sure they don't get into the gates."

Green, who started the Facebook group "Keep Beer at Nevada Football Games," said the university should see if the wristband policy, which people must get to buy beer, and stopping sales at the end of halftime will help minimize problems.

Green pointed out that most of the people who are causing problems are not students – they are fans from the community.

"The students aren't the ones causing the problems," he said. "They don't need to be punished for this."