

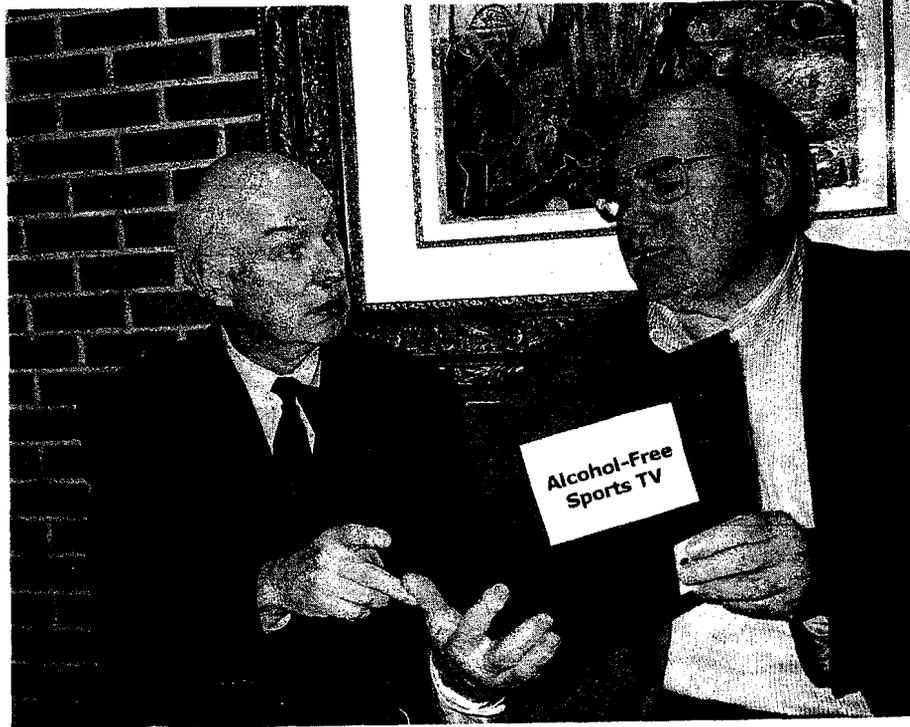


# MICAP RECAP

NOVEMBER 30, 2004

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## Alcohol-Free Sports TV Campaign gains momentum: 227 schools signed up as CSPI launches new effort



When the Washington-based Center for Science in the Public Interest launched its Alcohol-Free Sports TV campaign earlier this year, critics described the effort as an example of David vs. Goliath, but with few observers willing to bet against the giant liquor industry.

After all, television has been the medium of choice for brewers ever since they discovered in the 1970s that sports fans represented the ideal demographic for their target audience. And with an industry that spends some \$2 billion a year in measured and unmeasured media advertising, that represents enormous clout.

But now, after less than a year, 227 schools across America have signed up, as CSPI prepares for a renewed effort in the New Year.

Those concerned with alcohol problems prevention have been pleasantly surprised at CSPI's success, while the alcohol industry is busy plotting strategy to combat this latest challenge.

*Kane's Beverage Week*, the alcohol industry's leading newsletter, reports that the Alcohol-Free Sports TV campaign represents "potentially the biggest threat to bev/al marketing since Mothers Against Drunk Driving burst on the scene" in the 1980s.

MICAP became one of the early supporters of the CSPI campaign, as we reported in the April 15 issue of this newsletter. At that time, we reported that University of Michigan Athletic Director Bill Martin was supportive, but that we could get no response from either the president or athletic director at Michigan State University.

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With the continuing binge drinking at tailgate parties in connection with MSU football games this fall, as we reported in our *MICAP RECAP* on October 15, we were hopeful that continuing efforts would result in not only UM, but MSU as well agreeing to sign up for the campaign.

But now as we approach the end of 2004, neither MSU nor UM has come through to sign the Alcohol-Free TV pledge. So far, the only Michigan colleges to sign up have been Wayne State, Adrian College and Calvin College.

The good news is that CSPI has made a special effort to target Michigan State and the University of Michigan with a two-day visit to the state by Jay Hedlund, CSPI's campaign manager. He is shown on the front page of this newsletter with MICAP Acting Executive Director Tom Woods reporting on his success in meeting with administration officials at MSU and UM.

In his visit here November 16 and 17, Jay was able to provide background and perspective on the campaign and address problems which might stand in the way of Michigan's two largest universities agreeing to ban alcohol advertising from sporting events.

We are hopeful that the University of Michigan will eventually come through, but Michigan State has been more difficult, since MSU already has Labatt Blue and Smirnoff Ice as sponsors for football and basketball broadcasts.

On a philosophical basis, there is a widespread agreement that alcohol and sports represent a relationship that feeds the alcohol mentality that has resulted in binge drinking and other alcohol-related problems.

The sticking point is money, particularly with Michigan State where a multi-million dollar expansion of Spartan Stadium is under way. Alcohol advertising revenues are replaceable, but trying to convince the powers that be is no easy task.

The encouraging part of all this is that the only objections to signing up for Alcohol-Free Sports TV appear to be economic. At MSU the provost for undergraduate students and the vice president for student affairs are both very supportive and will continue to work to get MSU on board.

Since the Spartan Stadium expansion includes the addition of luxury boxes, the issue of serving alcoholic beverages to lessees represented another problem. Would MSU deny "full beverage service" to those who paid \$50,000 or more a year for the school's six home football games, even though alcohol is not allowed in the stadium's general seating areas?

MSU has been debating this issue, and Jay was able to share with MSU officials the experience of the University of Oklahoma, where a similar situation existed. When OU's athletic department got the big bucks for luxury suites, it was with the understanding that alcoholic drinks would be part of the package.

Unfortunately, the Athletic Department neglected to run this by OU's president, and when he discovered this clause in the arrangement just before opening kickoff the first game of the season, he instructed the Athletic Department to explain to luxury box holders that their "full beverage service" would include Coke or Pepsi, but nothing stronger.

In this visit, Jay Hedlund was able to answer many questions and raise the awareness of school officials, who will continue to work on this project. In future issues of this newsletter, we will be reporting on our progress.

**YOUNG SMOKERS . . .** face a greater risk of heart attacks, according to a new study.

According to the report, male smokers between the ages of 35 and 39 were almost five times as likely to have a nonfatal heart attack as were non-smokers. The risk for a heart attack was even greater among women who smoked, rising more than fivefold.

A research team led by Dr. Markku Mahonen of the KTL National Public Health Institute in Helsinki, Finland, collected World Health Organization data on 18,762 heart attacks in men and 4,047 in women from 21 countries. The subjects were 35 to 64 years old, according to the report in the August issue of the journal *Tobacco Control*.

Mahonen's group found that the highest rate of smoking, 65 percent, was in Beijing.

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## “Take me out to the brawl game”

Over and over again, newscasts and sports programs have played the tapes of the brawl that erupted in the closing minutes of an NBA contest between the Detroit Pistons and the Indiana Pacers at the Palace of Auburn Hills.

It started innocently enough, with the pushing and shoving that is common among very large professional basketball players, but when a tipsy courtside fan hit Ron Artest with a beer, the melee erupted. Artest thundered into the stands, leaping over a table, a railing and seats until he found someone he could punch out, even though he had no idea who the culprit was. Other players followed as the punching, grabbing and yanking continued, finally ending in a shower of beer and popcorn that was dumped on the Pacers as they left the game through the tunnel to their dressing room.

NBA commissioner David Stern assessed player suspensions and fines amounting to more than \$11 million. And, in the aftermath of the now-famous basketbrawl, reporters, editors and sports fans have continued to share their views on the incident.

As officials reviewed tapes of the incident, the

Oakland County Prosecutor identified the fan that started it all as John Green, who happened to be a former neighbor. As it turned out, not only should Green not have tossed his beer on Artest, he shouldn't have been drinking at all, since he was on probation for his third DWI conviction. The court had ordered him to abstain from alcohol as a condition of his probation.

Joseph Neall of West Bloomfield was typical in his comment, “Ban the beer and watch the hooligans disappear.”

*Detroit News* columnist Laura Berman agreed. “You could argue convincingly that beer is the real villain. Without beer flowing in the stands, no drunken fans would have lost control.”

*Chicago Tribune* sports columnist Rick Morrissey chimed in, “We have liquored-up idiots on one side and angry, pampered athletes on the other. In essence, we're being asked to choose between bubonic plague and Ebola. What can we do about the Pistons-Pacers brawl? Well, we can demand a ban on the sale of alcohol at sporting events, but that's not going to happen. You might have noticed that beer compa-

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nies advertise a lot in stadiums and on television. Busch Stadium is not about to become a green-tea-only facility.”

Mitch Albom, columnist for the *Detroit Free Press* reflected on the NBA’s response, “Maybe the league should notice that the beverages being tossed were distinctly amber and pungent, as in beer. The hypocrisy of selling alcohol all night, then complaining when people behave like drunks, is beyond comment. Who says you have to sell booze at sporting events? Show me one law. Show me one mandate. David Stern, the NBA commissioner, can get high and mighty, but he surrenders credibility when he wags one hand at drunken behavior and hugs the beer companies’ money with the other.”

Was alcohol really the problem?

Not according to a Piston spokesman. In a story under the headline “Pistons say alcohol isn’t the problem,” Palace Sports president Tom Wilson said, “It was a passionate, emotional game against a chief rival in the Indiana Pacers.” In other words, blame the excitement, not the beer.

Besides, Wilson explained, safeguards are already in place. For instance, the Palace cuts off alcohol sales after the third quarter, although there is no limit on how many beers a person can purchase at last call. And, Wilson added that safeguards are taken so as not to continue to serve inebriated fans.

Whatever the sales of beer were at the game, David Powell of Lake Orion told *Detroit News* reporter Ted Kulfan that the crowd seemed to be more-hard drinking than usual. “They do need to control the drinking a little more. I don’t know how much of an effect the drinking had on the brawl, but it gave people a reason to get loose.”

Powell, who attended the game with his 13-year-old daughter, said, “It was unfortunate because so many kids were there that evening.”

*The Wall Street Journal* reported that after the NBA fined and suspended players who were involved in the Pistons-Pacers brawl, the league went one-on-one with advertisers to prevent the bad blood from spreading to its business partners. According to the report, there was good news that the NBA’s strong ties with sponsors and advertisers, and solid reputation as a

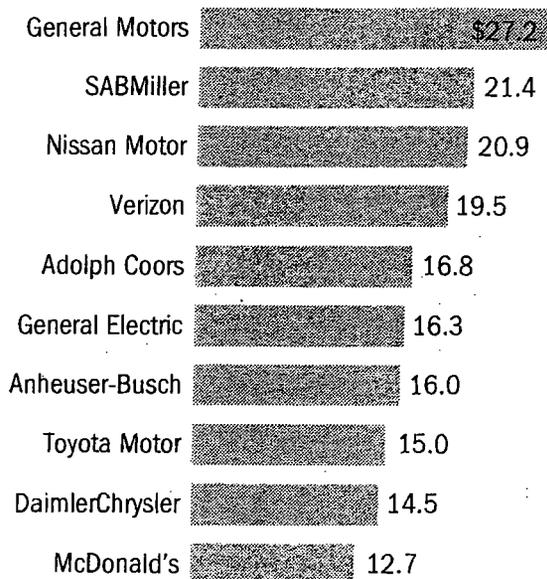
partner, helped minimize the fallout. Handing down some of the longest suspensions in league history—nine players, 143 games and more than \$11 million in lost salaries—David Stern demonstrated that he would not let the crisis escalate. “We’re on notice,” Stern told reporters. “We’ve really got here the beginning of our work, not the end of it.”

And yes, the NBA’s long-standing sponsors were indeed understanding. Tony Ponturo, Anheuser-Busch’s vice president for sports marketing, said that while “no sponsor can condone the irresponsible actions of these individuals, we are pleased to see that the NBA has taken action.” Ponturo said his company “will continue to support the league.”

You bet they will, along with the other beer sponsors.

## To the Hoop

The top advertisers on NBA broadcasts January through August 2004. Spending in millions



Source: TNS Media Intelligence/CMR

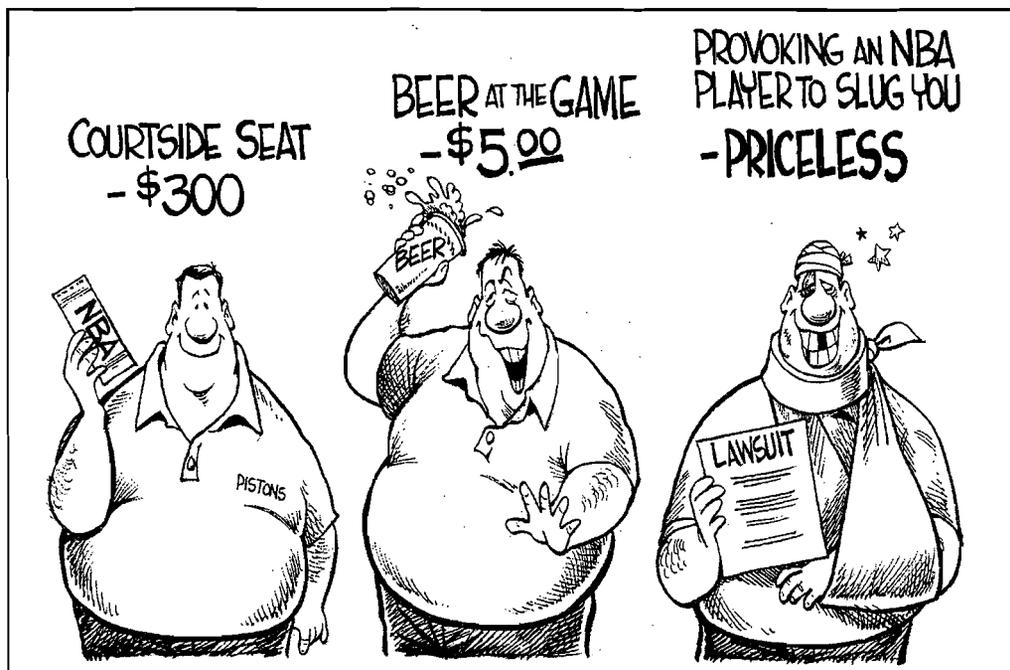
Among major sponsors of the National Basketball Association, General Motors leads the pack, spending \$27.2 million during the first eight months of 2004. But not far behind is Miller Beer at \$21.4

million, and when you add the NBA beer sponsors together, this comes to a \$54.2 million investment.

Long ago brewers discovered that those who attend baseball, football and basketball games represent an enormous potential for beer sales, not only at the games but also in bars, taverns and take-out stores.

Notice how beer ads relate sporting events to drinking beer. The ads may show fans either at the game or in front of a TV at a sports bar and the more exciting the event, the more beer is consumed and the greater the fun.

As Gary Varvel, cartoonist for the *Indianapolis Star*, put it, the experience can really be "Priceless."



**A DOUBLE STANDARD . . .** for alcohol and other drugs? Of course there is, and the latest example of this phenomenon can be found in the experience of two prominent professional athletes.

When Baltimore Ravens football star Jamal Lewis pleaded guilty last month to drug trafficking, the National Football League suspended him for two games, but when Atlanta Braves shortstop Rafael Furcal was convicted of his second drunk driving charge last month, he was allowed to continue playing until his team was eliminated by the Houston Astros in the playoffs.

Not only is there a double standard in professional sports for alcohol and other drugs, the courts tend to be particularly sympathetic to

millionaire pro athletes. Both offenses carried a prison term and for ordinary citizens the jail time would begin following determination of guilt.

Furcal was allowed to continue to play and remain on the Braves payroll until Atlanta lost a fifth and final game to Houston October 11. His prison sentence began the following day. Lewis continues to play for the Ravens, and will not begin to serve his prison sentence until the NFL season is over.

Furcal is lucky that he abused alcohol, not "drugs." Stung by recent accusations of steroid use, baseball now tests all players twice per season for steroids and so-called drugs of abuse: marijuana, cocaine, LSD, heroin and Ecstasy. First-time steroid users must submit to a treatment program, while multiple violators get fines

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and suspensions. For most other drugs, the penalties begin with the first offense.

So, if Furcal had received his second positive test for steroids—instead of his second drunken-driving arrest—he could not have suited up for the playoffs. And he would have faced a fine of up to \$10,000 from the league. What if he had used cocaine? Suspension and fine. Ecstasy? Ditto.

And for drunken driving? No league penalties—of any kind. You might respond that an alcohol-related problem, unlike drug use, doesn't directly affect a player's performance. So it's legitimate for the league to interdict drugs and leave issues of alcohol to the courts.

This argument ignores the obvious fact that alcohol is itself a "drug" that can influence effectiveness on the field, as a host of recovering athlete-alcoholics will testify. It also ignores the huge symbolic dimension of sports, which President Bush underlined in his State of the Union address in January.

"Athletics play such an important role in our society," Bush said. "But, unfortunately, some in professional sports are not setting much of an example." He went on to condemn athletes' steroid use, which "sends the wrong message" to American youth: "that performance is more important than character."

Fair enough.

However, by turning the other way when players drive while drunk, the sporting world sends an even worse message: This isn't a real crime.

The seriousness of drunk driving is underscored by the fact that last year, 17,013 persons were killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Those convicted for the first time of DWI may be treated more leniently by the courts, but a secondtime offender deserves jail time, not necessarily to be served only at the convenience of the drunk driver.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Michigan Interfaith Council on Alcohol Problems seeks to:*

1. Broaden the awareness of the religious community, public officials and the Michigan Public to the destructive consequences of alcohol, other drugs, tobacco and gambling, and offer positive solutions.
2. Educate the Michigan Public for responsible controls in the areas of alcohol, other drugs, tobacco and gambling, and
3. Alert and mobilize supporters to any public policy changes related to MICAP's mission.