

Sportsmanship

Council Survey: OSU Students

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The Ohio State Sportsmanship Council is a group of students, faculty, and staff members who are committed to making a positive impact on the actions and attitudes of Buckeye fans before, during and after sporting events. The council was active in the 1980s but gradually dissolved as its initial goals were met. In fall 2005, it was reorganized as a student-led initiative to help counteract a fan culture that many saw as growing increasingly rude, irresponsible and, at times, even destructive.

The council has identified several main areas of concern for 2006-07 and has formulated projects to help combat poor sportsmanship as well as build and promote "Buckeye Pride." With the help of contributing student organizations, the council plans to implement a Welcoming Committee on game days, a Sportsmanship Pledge, and a Best Fan in the Land contest this year.

A survey was designed by the Office of Student Affairs Assessment to provide the Sportsmanship Council with a baseline for the projects it has proposed. 3,000 randomly selected students received email invitations to participate in the survey, and the response rate was 10%. Students' responses show both a presence of problematic behavior and perceptions (i.e. normalizing "poor sportsmanship") as well as a desire by students for actions to improve the sporting culture/spectator experience. This newsletter briefly summarizes the findings of the survey. It presents a selection of the data that exhibit some of the overall trends described in the survey.

To find specific trends regarding behavior and perceptions of sportsmanship, the overall student population was broken down into five groups for comparisons. These groups are:

1. Male and Female Students
2. Underclassmen and Upperclassmen
3. Students Living in Residence Halls and Those Living in Campus-Area Rentals
4. Students Who Attended at Least One OSU Football Game and Those Who Attended Only Non-Football OSU Varsity Events
5. Students Who Attended at Least One OSU Football Game and Those Who Did Not Attend OSU Football (including those who attended no sports)

Student Affairs Assessment Report

Summer 2006

The Sportsmanship Council mission is to establish good sportsmanship as a continuing tradition at The Ohio State University. Through the implementation of various programs and initiatives, the university will become a friendly and welcoming environment for all Buckeye fans, as well as for visiting teams and their supporters. With a year-round commitment, efforts will be focused on establishing good sportsmanship as a customary component of all athletic events at Ohio State.

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Overall Findings

OSU VARSITY ATHLETIC EVENT ATTENDANCE

79% students indicated attending at least one OSU varsity sporting event in the past year.

- 73% of students attended at least one home football game.
- 38% of students attended at least one home men's basketball game.
- 25% of students attended at least one home men's ice hockey game.
- 16% of students attended at least one home baseball game.
- 13% of students attended at least one home women's basketball game.

24% of students traveled to locations away from the OSU Campus and outside of Columbus to attend an OSU varsity athletic competition. Most traveled to competitions in states that border Ohio (Indiana, Michigan, etc).

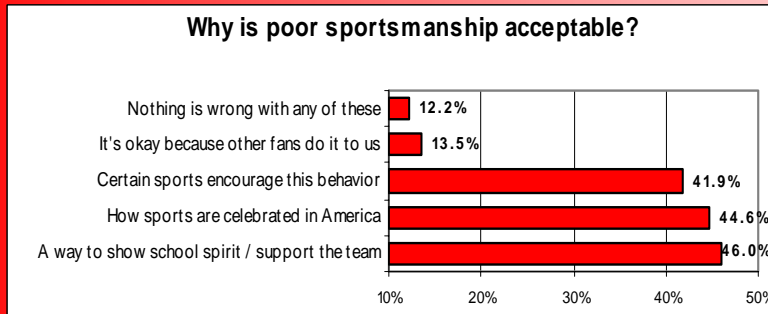
Most OSU students obtain tickets to varsity sporting events by either purchasing season tickets (48%) or purchasing individual tickets (47%) from the OSU Athletic Department.

SPORTSMANSHIP BELIEFS

Nine possible actions that could be perceived as poor sportsmanship were listed in the survey as examples.

1. Taunting athletes or fans of the opposing team
2. Taunting athletes or fans of OSU
3. Swearing or using inappropriate language
4. Public intoxication
5. Wearing clothing that displays images of language that could be offensive (ex. F*** Michigan t-shirts)
6. Threatening athletes or fans of the opposing team
7. Threatening athletes or fans of OSU
8. Acts of violence
9. Destruction of property (ex. setting fires, breaking windows, etc.)

The majority of respondents (62%) ranked OSU students as the group most often involved in acts of poor sportsmanship.



Of the 272 respondents (92%) who reported having witnessed acts of poor sportsmanship, only 27% of respondents indicated that they had done or said something to stop it.

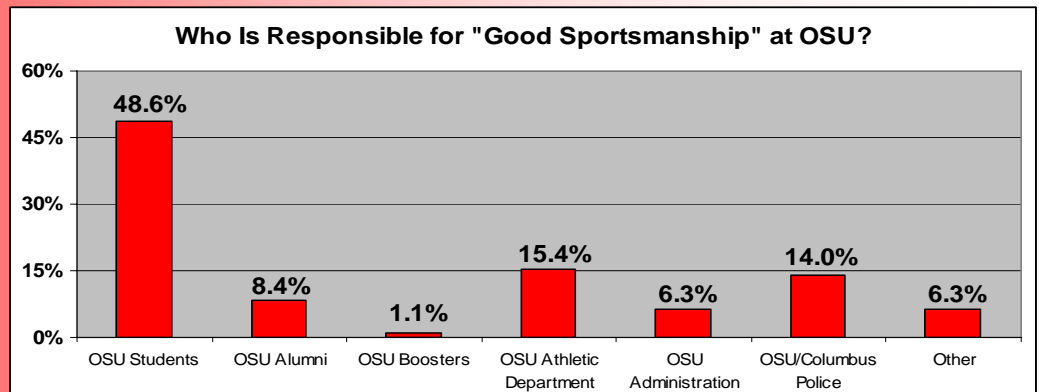
Students who found "poor sportsmanship" acceptable often cited cultural reasons ([See Chart to the Left](#))

A majority of students (59%) believe **alcohol consumption** always or frequently contributed to the acts of poor sportsmanship they witnessed.

Almost half of all respondents believe students should promote displays of good sportsmanship.

The majority of students responded that OSU fans are good sports (79%) who create a welcoming atmosphere for all who attend games (64%) and who represent the university in a positive way (78%).

59% feel that all or most OSU fans take varsity sports and winning too seriously in general.



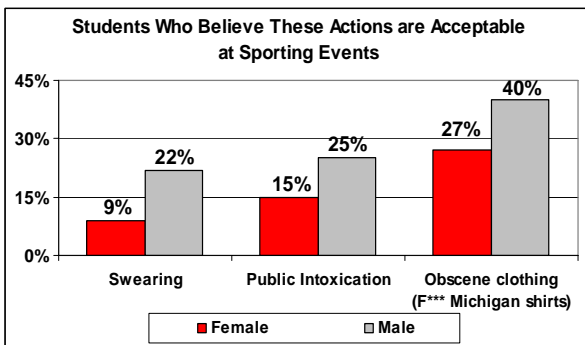
Group Comparisons

Overview of Group Results

There are similarities between all groups in regard to the amount and types of behaviors reportedly witnessed at OSU athletic events, regardless of whether one considers the actions to be poor sportsmanship, poor behavior, both, or neither.

Significant differences exist between groups when students were asked questions regarding the acceptability of these behaviors and individual participation in these behaviors.

- **Males** are more accepting of poor sportsmanship and more likely to participate in acts of poor sportsmanship than females.
- **Upperclassmen (3rd Year undergraduates or higher)** are more accepting of poor sportsmanship and more likely to participate in acts of poor sportsmanship than first year students. There is no significant difference between 2nd year students and upperclassmen.
- **Students living in campus-area rentals** are more accepting of poor sportsmanship and more likely to participate in acts of poor sportsmanship than students living in OSU Residence Halls.
- In general, **students who attended at least one OSU home football game** in the past year were more likely to approve of the examples of poor sportsmanship provided in the survey and to have participated in any of those behaviors than students who attended only non-football OSU varsity sporting events.



Male and Female Students

30% of males responded that certain sports encourage poor sportsmanship, while only **15%** of females shared that belief.

A higher percentage of females (**88%**) than males (**75%**) believed they always or often displayed good sportsmanship.

Male respondents (**17%**) were more likely to believe that a majority of alumni and boosters set a bad example for students through their behavior at OSU athletic events (**6%** of females).

More females (**18%**) than males (**9%**) felt that OSU and Columbus police bore the most responsibility for enforcing good sportsmanship.

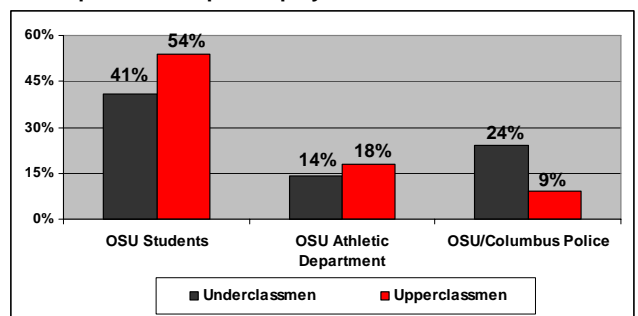
Underclassmen and Upperclassmen

90% of underclassmen viewed taunting opposing fans and players as being an example of poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior compared to only **76%** of upperclassmen

Underclassman are significantly more likely to believe that poor sportsmanship impacts the OSU athletic event experience in the following manners:

- Instills more pride towards OSU and school spirit (**18%**)
- Make games more intense and exciting (**35%**)
- Make games more entertaining and interesting (**48%**)

Group most responsible for making sure good sportsmanship is displayed at OSU athletic events



Residence: University Housing or Campus-Area Rental

A higher percentage of university housing students (**90%**) than campus rental students (**78%**) feel that taunting the opposing team and its fans is poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior.

Students living in campus rentals (**26%**) were more likely than those from university housing (**7%**) to believe that public intoxication was not an example of poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior.

Campus rental students (**41%**) were almost twice as likely as university housing students (**22%**) to find that "obscene" clothing is not an example of poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior.

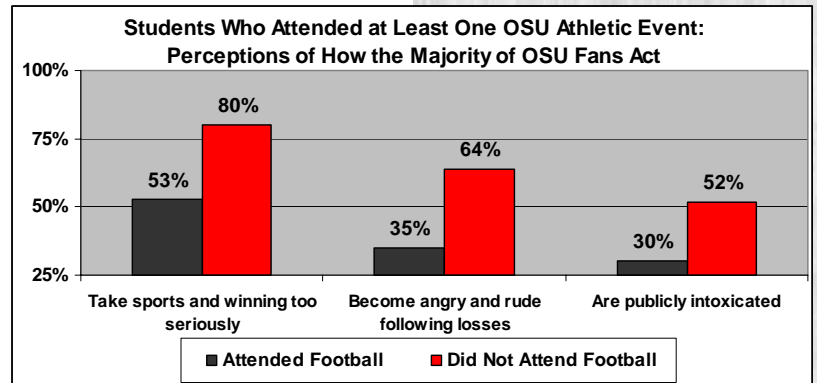
Attendance: OSU Football or A Non-Football OSU Sport

Of those students who indicated that they attended a varsity OSU sports contest in the past year, **89%** attended at least one football game and **11%** attended only sporting events other than football.

100% of students who attended only non-football events believe that swearing at an athletic competition is poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior, **81%** of students who attended at least one OSU football game in the past year hold that belief.

See chart for students' perceptions of OSU fans →

Students who attended a football game (**85%**) are significantly more likely to believe that their actions at any varsity sports event display good sportsmanship than do students who attended only non-football events (**64%**).



Football: Attended or Did Not Attend a Game

This grouping differs from the previous grouping in that it includes students who did not attend any OSU varsity athletic event during the past year with those who did not attend any football games.

Students who attended OSU football games (**73%**) are more likely to believe that most OSU fans create a welcoming and respectful atmosphere at OSU sports events than do those who did not attend an OSU football game (**56%**).

Students who did not attend an OSU football game in past year are more likely to believe most OSU fans take winning and sports too seriously (**75%**) and that most OSU fans let alcohol impact their behavior (**49%**). Among students who attended an OSU football game, **53%** think fans take winning too seriously and only **31%** believe that fans let alcohol affect their behavior.

Student Suggestions (Direct quotes taken from survey responses)

"Crack down on alcohol. Every time I go to an OSU football game I see someone within a few seats drinking from a concealed container."

"Poor sportsmanship could be regulated by increasing the security and those who commit poor sportsmanship should be removed from the event, so that onlookers can see what happens when they act up."

"Have the athletic department and coaches of sports teams give more public presentations as to the seriousness of poor behavior instead of 'letting things slide' for the people who give the most money to the department."

"Create a unified student cheering section where students can be proud and cheer and stand without cursing or being rude."

"Have competitions for the most cheerful, or most "Buckeyeish" people with good sportsmanship."

Suggestions Based on the Findings

Any attempts to impact the OSU sports spectatorship culture need to target the following populations: males, upper-classmen, and students living in campus-area rentals.

Programming should focus on students when they are freshmen or first arrive on campus with the intent of retaining their current attitudes regarding sportsmanship since the survey shows that students become more tolerant of poor sportsmanship as they get older.

Focus on the football culture since it seems more likely than other OSU sports to encourage an acceptance of and participation in fan behaviors that are likely to be viewed as poor sportsmanship and/or poor behavior.

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