



Alcohol sales will begin at Ball State sporting events in the 2018-2019 school year. **Madeline Grosh, DN**

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How beer sales at Ball State will work

by *Mary Freda* (<http://www.ballstatedaily.com/staff/mary-freda>) / 12:00 p.m. Aug. 30, 2018

Starting at 7 p.m. Thursday, fans can order a 16-ounce beer while the Cardinals face the Blue Devils in Scheumann Stadium.

On Aug. 23, Ball State Athletics announced its beer sales pilot program, which will allow those 21 and over to purchase beer at football and men's and women's basketball games. The program will be a part of Ball State's effort to promote the fan experience at games.

Before kickoff Thursday, here's what football fans and Cardinals alike need to know:

There's (kind of) a limit

Only two beers can be purchased per transaction, with sales being cut at the end of the third quarter for football and women's basketball and at the 10-minute mark of the second half for men's basketball, according to a press release.

The number of beers purchased during the game won't be limited, however.

Director of Athletics Beth Goetz said staff will receive annual alcohol management training and after will be able to identify signs of intoxication.

Patrons can order domestic or craft brews

Although Goetz, along with Shawn Sullivan, associate athletics director of marketing and fan engagement, anticipate on selling beer at the first home game of the season Thursday, the university has yet to nail down a distributor.

The contract likely will be signed prior to the game, however, serving beer isn't contingent upon having an agreement in place, Sullivan said.

A 16-ounce-beer will run \$7. Domestic and craft brews will be offered during games, but it's likely the craft beer won't make it to Thursday's game.

"We're also planning on what we'd like to incorporate from local craft beer at some point in time. Although it's been in the work for some time, we're just working through the approval processes on how to implement it," Goetz said. "That might take a game or two to get some of those folks in there, but I think it's really important, in terms of trying to support some of the local breweries both here in our community and in the greater Indiana area."

Alcohol-free zones will be established

Although some fans have expressed interest in alcohol sales through surveys, social media and conversations with athletics, Goetz said it's important a safe environment is maintained throughout the games.

"I think it's very thorough from top to bottom about how long the steps are going to take to ensure an environment where fans that are interested in having alcoholic beverages can enjoy them, but also creating a safe environment and being respectful for those that don't," Goetz said.

The alcohol-free zone will be located in Section Q at Scheumann Stadium during football games and is slated to occupy the same section in Worthen Arena during basketball games, Sullivan said.

Attendance wasn't the driving factor

Over the last five years, Ball State's average football game attendance — compared to current universities in the Mid-American Conference — ranks in the bottom quarter.

In 2017, the average game attendance was 9,899. Boosting attendance numbers, however, wasn't the plan when a committee met nearly a year ago to work on the year-long pilot program.

"I think anytime we implement any sort of element to a game day, the hope is that, and our drive is, to increase attendance and revenue overall," Sullivan said. "Talking to other schools, it hasn't necessarily been a boom from an attendance standpoint as far as they can tell. So, it's not something we're banking on."

In a study (<https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1050&context=sport>) published in a 2018 edition of Journal of Sport, researchers found no correlation to beer sales and attendance, despite universities implementing alcohol sales to increase attendance.

There's emphasis on safety and responsibility

Even though Ball State is a university, Sullivan said the sales aren't geared toward students.

"We want to be clear that this isn't a student-targeted initiative. This is when a consumer, a fan, an alumnus, sports fan, they have discretionary income and they have decisions to make to spend on that money," Sullivan said. "We're in a crowded marketplace with professional sports in Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, other college properties here in our state. We want to continue to be on par with the fan offerings with our competition."

Along with targeting an older audience, Goetz said there will be public service announcements about drinking responsibly.

University Police Chief Jim Duckham said the police department is adequately staffed to manage the football and the men's basketball games. However, Duckham said UPD plans on adding an officer to women's basketball games because of attendance.

Contact Mary Freda with comments at mafreda@bsu.edu or on Twitter @Mary_Freda1 (https://twitter.com/Mary_Freda1?lang=en).

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