

YSU tailgating — party's over

■ Tailgating outlawed by university officials during games.

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Few American traditions are as pervasive and endearing as football and its sister sport — tailgating.

YSU, whose football team has had unparalleled success this decade, also has a tradition of tailgating. But recently, the rules have changed.

YSU announced last week it would no longer allow tailgating during football games. While fans may still tailgate before and after games, the time from kickoff to the final whistle will be reserved solely for football.

"Tailgating has always been an auxiliary to football," said Daniel O'Connel, assistant director of athletics. "The point of the games is football, not tailgating."

O'Connel said anyone caught tailgating during a football game will be asked to stop by campus police.

He said tailgating includes cooking, eating, drinking soda and alcohol consumption.

O'Connel said YSU will no

longer re-admit patrons to football games once the game has started except in emergency situations.

He said both rulings were based on NCAA and Gateway conference guidelines.

The NCAA does not allow re-admission to football games during the playoffs. Likewise, O'Connel said no Division I school in Ohio allows re-admission to sports events.

James Cvetkovic, Student Government representative at-large and frequent tailgater, said the real issue of the rule changes is alcohol.

"It all comes down to YSU telling Penguin fans they're not allowed to drink in the tailgate lot during football games" Cvetkovic said. "It's an insult to a lot of Penguin fans to say they're responsible enough to buy season tickets, to buy tailgate passes, to shell out hundreds of dollars for a brick, to travel to Chattanooga for a championship game but not to drink a few beers during a football game."

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O'Connel said alcohol consumption was a factor in the decision, but the most important factor was focusing attention away from tailgating and toward the football games.

"A lot of people stay out in the tailgating lot during football games" O'Connel said. "We don't want to encourage people to come here just to tailgate."

O'Connel said the increase in during-the-game tailgaters was becoming a burden on the security operations during football games.

Jain Savage, YSU's alcohol and drug specialist and a member of the committee that discussed the rule change, said alcohol was a major concern in the rule change.

"We want people to come to the games, but we don't want them to use it as an excuse to drink," Savage said. "The purpose of tailgating is to have a good time, it's not

an outdoor bar."

Savage said the decision was made partially to prevent any alcohol-related problems during games.

"It's basically a preventative measure," she said. "The university wants to be proactive about this and curb anything before it happens."

Savage said YSU wants to curtail underage and abusive drinking.

"There is not a thing wrong with drinking," she said. "It's how you do it, and people are using football games as an excuse to drink."

Cvetkovic said many tailgaters are also upset at the timing of the rule change. He said tailgaters bought their passes months ago, but the rule changes were only announced last week.

YSU's sports information office said fans must purchase at least two season tickets before they can purchase a tailgating pass, adding up to at least \$156 for general

admission tickets and a pass to the M26 tailgating lot, the furthest from the stadium.

Tom Morella, YSU's coordinator of athletic ticket sales, said, while refunds are normally not allowed, YSU will give refunds to fans on a case by case basis. He said the refunds are necessary because of how late the rule announcement was made.

Cvetkovic said he has been tailgating with his family for 13 years and said during-the-game tailgating has never posed a problem.

"Tailgating is such an essential part of football games," Cvetkovic said. "Why fix something that isn't broken."

O'Connel agreed tailgating is essential to football festivities.

"Tailgating is extremely important — it takes our day from being just a football game to a complete event," O'Connel said. "You figure everyone who has a tailgating pass is a season ticket holder — that's the lifeblood of our operation."