

In the Mix with AOD

DRAFT: In the Mix with AOD Episode One- Tailgating

Here we are in the midst of the beginning of a new year and the school spirit is high among us all. The start of a new school year is a truly exciting time, and a huge factor to this excitement is the football season kicking into full gear; practically the first normal year back for many of us as the COVID-19 pandemic eases thanks to scientific advances and efforts to keep all Lakers safe and healthy. The Lakers first game was set at home for September 1st where they hosted the Colorado Mines. This brings plenty of excitement to students as this officially marks not only the start of the football season, but also the start of tailgate season- the event of choice to celebrate football game days. It's important as a student to be aware of how to participate in tailgate festivities safely and enjoy yourself while not throwing a flag on the play on a day meant to be spent under the lights.

Hey, I'm Bethann Long and welcome to episode one of season three of, "In the Mix", a podcast provided through the Alcohol and Other Drug Services here at Grand Valley. I am currently in my junior year studying Multimedia Journalism with a minor in Photography and a concentration on Sport Leadership. Ultimately I would love for you to look out for me covering the sidelines of the NFL for ESPN someday. I am extremely passionate about this podcast, In the Mix, because I fully believe in providing students with education on how to be safe when it comes to the use of substances. There is a lot of information out there that personally I didn't even know when I first started my college experience that would have made the transition a bit easier when it came to these types of choices. In the opening episode of this season we'll discuss tailgating college football games and how to be safe with the use of substances this season.

First, we'll discuss the concept of tailgating college football games and the potential risks there are surrounding an event such as this.

Tailgating is a timely tradition in the world of sports, particularly in college football. This is a time for fans to come together before a home game to grill out, play music, and, often, indulge in alcohol consumption. Tailgates are a great social atmosphere to have fun with friends and to meet other fellow students as well. However, these events can easily go sideways if things are taken out of hand. When contemplating tailgate participation, alcohol consumption can seem inseparable from these events. According to The National Library of Medicine, high profile football game days were among the heaviest days for alcohol consumption, comparable to consumption on other well-known drinking days such as New Years Eve and Halloween weekend. Since game days are ultimately viewed as "party days" at universities, alcohol consumption is increased which can lead to behavioral risks.

To prevent these types of situations, Grand Valley has put tailgate policies in place that help to keep the event contained and monitor the substance use that occurs. Some of these policies include-

- Only allowing tailgating to begin three hours before kickoff and one hour after the game
- Alcohol not being permitted in any tailgate area between the opening kickoff and the end of the game.
- Rules regarding alcohol consumption in the tailgate area during the acceptable pre-game hours include- no kegs or mass purchase of alcohol, no drinking games such as beer pong or flip cup, no alcohol outside of the tailgate area, no underage drinking-
- These policies can be found on GVSU's website

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Regardless of the efforts by Grand Valley to ensure a controlled environment for tailgating to occur on campus, there are still many students who choose to participate in off campus tailgating before games to avoid Grand Valley's on-campus regulations.

No matter where you choose to participate in tailgating before football games this year, there are ways to ensure that you and everyone else around you is safe which we will dive into next.

First, attend the tailgates with a group! Not only is it more fun to attend with a group of friends or people in your building that you are comfortable with, but you are safer surrounded by those you know. You can make a plan to be looking out for each other and ensuring that one another is safe while still having a good time.

Next, if you will be participating in any alcohol consumption or substance use, ensure that you have a designated driver among your group who won't be drinking or using any other substances- that is the best way to be responsible and safe! If everyone in your group wants to participate in any alcohol or substance consumption and can't drive, know that the Laker Line is available transportation to get you home safely, and is free for students. There are bus stops all throughout campus, one being just a few minutes walk away from Lubbers Stadium giving easy access after leaving the game or tailgate area. Another resource available to all students is the Laker Guardian app that is directly linked with the Grand Valley Police Department. This app gives you direct access to GVPD if you are in trouble or see something suspicious, and even notify GVPD and the people you trust to check in on you if you are alone. The Safety Timer feature will provide your status and location to those that you trust. Remember that going to a tailgate doesn't mean you have to partake in alcohol consumption or substance use to have fun, however just be smart about it if that is something you choose to do.

Ensure that you are staying hydrated! Water is an important aspect to keep in mind when attending a tailgate to ensure you're not only balancing the consumption of alcohol, but also the warm weather during the first part of the tailgate season. Along with water, ensure that you are eating food as well!

Try your best to avoid overcrowding. Tailgates can get packed very quickly with students in such a confined space. With many of these students consuming substances, this is an environment that can become noisy and rowdy in a short period of time. This can result in many people getting injured or separated from their original group. Make sure you and those around you feel safe in the environment and know where to find help in case of an emergency.

Last, make sure to avoid overconsumption. It's important to know your limits with alcohol and not to push yourself beyond those limits. If you're newer to the tailgating scene, remember to listen to your own body's cues for when it's a good time to slow down or stop, rather than following what others around you are doing. You certainly don't need to be consuming the same amount as everyone else, we all have our own limits when it comes to alcohol consumption. The signs of alcohol poisoning are important to be on lookout for which include- confusion, vomiting, seizures, slow or irregular breathing, blue-tinged skin or pale skin, low body temperature, passing out and can't be awakened. If you are drinking on campus under the age of 21 and know that you should call 911 due to signs of alcohol poisoning, medical amnesty will ensure that you will not face any legal charges for drinking underage. Getting the necessary medical help for you or a friend is more important! More information about alcohol poisoning and medical amnesty can be found on the Grand Valley AOD website.

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Tailgating is amazing for kicking off the beginning of the athletic season and getting the opportunity to put aside the academic stress while spending time with friends, but should be thought through responsibly. Consuming substances at a tailgate is not necessary to have a good time with others. If you are taking part in consumption at your next tailgate, take the time to ensure you are thinking about the tips we just discussed in this podcast to help make sure you are being as safe as possible and having a memorable experience.

This has been the first episode of season three of “In the Mix”, a podcast provided through the Alcohol and Other Drug Services here at Grand Valley, and I look forward to returning back to you with many more to come this year. Have a safe, smart, and responsible football and tailgate season- Go Lakers!