

Duck Fan Civility



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I. Executive Summary

This paper is reporting research of fan civility at athletic events. The research is focused on fan ejections at Autzen Stadium and the general behavioral trends that lead to fan citation or ejection during games. One of the overall goals was to discover why Oregon Duck fans have a bad reputation and what caused it.

The Department of Public Safety provided ejection data for home games from the 2010-11 season and half of the 2011-12 season. The reports list how many people were ejected each game and the cause of each ejection. This information was compared to ejection data reported from other universities throughout the country. Secondary research efforts found that a majority of fan ejections were alcohol violations and the number of ejections was evenly split between students and non-students.

Researchers held a focus group as a part of qualitative research. The focus group hosted nine people: eight students and one non-student. A general trend was students tend to consume alcohol before a game. Students witness fans taunting and yelling at opposing fans, making personal attacks against others, urinating in public and fighting with other fans. According to focus group participants, fan behavior at Autzen Stadium is aggressive because Duck fans have “the mass” to back them up and have home field advantage. When asked if there was a solution to curb negative fan behavior, many in the focus group said, “It was a lost cause” and there would be no way to change this behavior due to the competitive, physical nature of the sport and how passionate Duck fans are towards their team. Many participants were proud that ESPN and Sports Illustrated surveys rated Oregon Duck fans the rudest. They also indicated they are proud other fans are afraid to enter Autzen Stadium.

In the report, three researchers conducted participant observation. One student researcher conducted participant observation at Autzen Stadium and two student researchers

attended a game at Stanford Stadium versus Oregon. There was a significant difference in the way Duck fans acted at Autzen versus how they acted at away games. At Autzen, participant observers found Duck fans yell profanities and verbally attack other fans. From the student researchers observations at the Stanford game Duck fans exhibited civil behavior and yelled “Go Ducks!” or “O.” All three group members observed that alcohol was consumed at both home and away games.

Researchers conducted quantitative research by sending out a survey. The survey also supports the information previously conducted. The survey results revealed different fan groups blame each other for Oregon’s poor reputation. Students blame alumni, alumni blame students, and non-students blame alumni and students. The survey results also showed that males are more likely to consume alcohol than females.

Major findings:

- Alcohol violations accounted for 48 to 74 percent of fan ejections from the 2010-2011 season and half of the 2011-2012 season.
- The consensus of the focus group was they could not think of a solution for out-of-control fan behavior.
- Of the 211 survey respondents, 190 report consuming alcoholic beverages before games.
 - Of the 190 responses, the average number of drinks consumed is 3.27.
 - However, 47 respondents said they do not consume alcoholic beverages.
 - Of the 143 respondents who reported consuming alcoholic beverages before games, the average number of drinks consumed was 4.35.

- There were outliers that skewed the data: 22 respondents consumed seven to 20 drinks.

II. Situation Analysis

In 2009, Sports Illustrated held a college football conference poll for all the major conferences in the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). The poll asked which college had the rudest fans for visitors and which college fans were the most polite. The University of Oregon was rated the worst fans in both polls. Oregon was voted to have the rudest fans at 26.2 percent. Duck fans were also voted last on politeness with 2.6 percent.¹ In 2010, Bleacher Report released an article called “Top Ten College Football Programs With The Most Rude and Arrogant Fans.” Oregon was ranked No. 8 in the country.²

Fan civility has become more problematic in recent years, possibly due to the Ducks’ recent athletic success. Other teams, their fans and major sports publications have begun to take notice of the unsportsmanlike behavior of Oregon fans.

Civility, as defined by the dictionary, is polite, reasonable, and respectful behavior.³ Translated to athletic events, civility is showing respect for opposing teams, other fans, facilities and the referees; refraining from using profanities or other inappropriate language; behaving with good sportsmanship toward the opposing teams and their fans; and representing themselves and their school in a classy and positive way. Oregon fans are not acting civil and therefore, have created a problem that needs to be addressed.

This report analyzes secondary research, largely fan ejection data to determine the

¹ <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/football/ncaa/specials/fansurvey/2009/pac10.html>

² <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/356423-top-ten-college-football-programs-with-the-most-rude-and-arrogant-fans/page/4>

³ <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/civility>

following information:

- Are students or non-students the more responsible party for fan ejections?
- What role does alcohol play in fan ejections?
- What are the most common violations fans get ejected for?
- Is there a trend in seating area and ejection rate?
- Is there correlation in ejection numbers and game time?

The University of Oregon Athletic Program wants to change its current image as home of the rudest college sports fans. There have been efforts to create awareness towards being civil and mindful of others at football games. Before each game, students receive an email reminding them of the “Code of ConDUCKt” (see **Appendix 1**) and a video is played at the beginning of each game reminding all sports fans to remain spirited, to be respectful and to be mindful of others. However, fan ejections are still a reoccurring problem for the University of Oregon. Research can provide a clear message as to what the root of the problem may be.

Fan behavior is a known problem at Oregon Duck football games. Whether some have witnessed this behavior first hand or watched it on the news, it has raised the attention of both the media and people outside of Oregon.

III. Secondary Research

The University’s Department of Public Safety (DPS) provided data from five of the six homes games during the 2010-2011 football season, and four homes games from 2011-2012 (see **Appendix 2**.) According to ejection data from the games provided, in 2010-2011 there was a total of 611 ejections from Oregon Duck football games. The games had an average of 122 ejections per game; the games with the most ejections were versus Stanford with 158 ejections; the game with the fewest ejections was versus Arizona with 90 ejections. There does not seem to

be a trend with ejection and game time. For example, this year's game versus Nevada at 12:30 p.m. had 26 ejections, where as the next week versus Missouri State, which was also at the same time, 128 ejections occurred. The attendance during home games at Autzen stadium averages between 59,000 and 60,000 people. The trend so far this season is a lower average of game ejections compared to the 2010 -2011 season.

To put these numbers in comparison, at the University of Florida's game against Tennessee on September 17, 2011, the University of Florida ejected 94 fans in a stadium of 88,548 people, and 109 ejections against the University of Alabama on October 1, 2011.⁴ They had the most ejections against Louisiana State University on October 9, 2010, with 119 ejections. A University of Wisconsin home game had 29 fan ejections against the South Dakota Coyotes in a stadium that holds 80,321.⁵ These numbers are low compared to the number of fans ejected from Autzen Stadium, a stadium that holds significantly fewer people than Florida and Wisconsin stadiums. Fan ejections involving students range from 28 percent to 52 percent per game. However, students are the majority percentage in every category for ejection other than alcohol. It is also important to note, 5,000 student tickets are released per game. The ratio of students who are ejected is higher because there are significantly less students in the stadium compared to other fans.

According to the "Oregon Live" blog, a fan is more likely to be ejected from Autzen, a one in 474 chance, compared to Reser Stadium in Corvallis, Oregon, where a fan would have a

⁴ Gainesville News Article <http://www.gainesville.com/article/20110918/NEWS/110919437>

⁵ Wisconsin State Journal http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/crime_and_courts/article_4e81fd32-e795-11e0-9550-001cc4c03286.html

one in 2060 chance of being ejected.⁶ This may be due to a more strict policy of fan behavior at Duck games.

Main Points:

- Alcohol is the main contributing factor to fan ejections.
- Student and non-student fan ejections are fairly even on average per game.
- Students are the majority of all non-alcohol related ejections.
- Conference games do not seem to correlate with number of ejections.

Overall, the cause for the majority of ejections is alcohol violations, ranging from 48 percent to 74 percent of total ejections. Reasons for ejections vary from alcohol, drug possession, urinating in public, fighting, harassment, assault, minor in possession, theft of services and misuse of tickets. Hospitalizations occur but DPS did not make detailed information available. Information DPS did reveal suggested hospitalizations tend to be caused by fans falling down and hurting themselves while intoxicated.⁷

IV. Qualitative Research

Researchers administered three methods of qualitative research to further understand what causes fan ejection, why they behave a certain way and how fans feel about ejection data and fan civility.

Qualitative Research Method: In-depth Interview

The first qualitative research method used was an in-depth interview with Department of Public Safety Captain, Ed Rinne. The interview was conducted in the DPS office, which was

⁶ Oregon Live http://blog.oregonlive.com/behindducksbeat/2010/12/civil_war_fan_zone_at_reser_an.html

⁷ Julie Brown, Director of Media Relations

recorded and lasted for approximately 30 minutes (see Appendix 3 & 4.)

Qualitative Research Results: In-depth Interview

After analyzing the DPS ejection data, the majority of ejections for students and non-students were alcohol related. When interviewing Captain Rinne, some common themes emerged regarding alcohol and ejections. Captain Rinne felt there was a positive correlation between game times and ejection rates. The later the game, the more fans were cited or ejected. People have more time to drink before night games. Captain Rinne felt night games contributed to high number of ejection rates. This information is contrary to the data that we collected from DPS, which showed no correlation between game time and ejection rates. DPS officers witness more events than the data shows; therefore, it’s possible Captain Rinne’s perception can vary from the data.

Game	Year	Total Ejections	Time	Score	Day of Week
PSU	2010	124	3:15	69-0	Saturday
Stanford	2010	158	5:00	52-31	Saturday
UCLA	2010	122	6:00	60-13	Thursday
Washington	2010	117	12:30	53-16	Saturday
Arizona	2010	90	7:00	48-29	Friday

*No data for New Mexico game

Game	Year	Total Ejections	Time	Score	Day of Week
Nevada	2011	26	12:30	69-20	Saturday
Missouri State	2011	128	12:30	56-7	Saturday
California	2011	71	6:00	43-15	Thursday
Arizona State	2011	152	7:15	41-27	Saturday

Captain Rinne believes that enforcing a no re-entry policy should be considered based on his experience. A majority of universities such as University of Southern California (USC,) the University of Arizona and the University of Utah enforce a no re-entry policy and some even go as far as breathalyzing fans at the gates. Breathalyzing would prevent fans with high blood alcohol content from coming into games and potentially causing problems. Captain Rinne

believes this is a good method to improve Duck fan civility, but the University of Oregon DPS does not have enough reinforcement to breathalyze every incoming fan.

Captain Rinne is able to observe a large majority of what goes on at the games. He noted that with football, especially college football, drinking is a part of the culture. He felt there would be problems with any solution, however he said something needs to change with Duck fan behavior because it is becoming a big problem for opposing fans and Duck fans. He also believes allowing fans to purchase alcohol inside the stadium will only contribute to uncivil fan behavior.

Qualitative Research Method: Focus Group

The second qualitative research method conducted was a focus group. The focus group consisted of nine people, made up of seven undergrad students, one graduate student and one former student. There were three females and six males. All are currently attending or did attend the University of Oregon. One of the students spent two years at James Madison before transferring to the University of Oregon. The focus group was conducted in a small classroom in the Knight Library at the University of Oregon. The focus group was filmed, and its duration was one-hour **see Appendix 5.**

Qualitative Research Results: Focus Group

The focus group highlighted important points, when we presented the group with the ESPN poll that determined Oregon Duck fans had the worst fans in the PAC-10, the focus group was quick to deter blame believing that other schools hate Oregon because they are jealous of our uniforms, how much money we receive from Nike and how successful the football program is.

Towards the end of the discussion, members of the focus group began to acknowledge

that we have rude fans. They all agreed fan behavior is fueled by the competitive nature of the sport and alcohol makes fans more aggressive. It was also mentioned that Oregon does not have many professional sports teams, so people take Duck football seriously. One group member mentioned that he felt if he wasn't loud and boisterous then he wasn't being a good fan. He felt, as a fan, it was his job to intimidate other teams through crowd noise or getting in the other players heads to prevent them from performing. When players encourage their fans to get loud after a big play, it's to help motivate the home team and rattle the visiting team.

Some participants mentioned that health issues are a concern among fans. Smoking marijuana in the student section can affect fans who have asthma. Others noticed that some fans had no respect for the people around them and they would urinate in the stands or push people off the bleachers to create more space. People witnessed inappropriate behavior but didn't feel comfortable stepping in to discourage other fans. Focus group members felt that if they intervened they would just cause a bigger problem. They also said that inappropriate fan behavior, such as yelling profanities, urinating in public or heckling did not ruin their overall fan experience.

Everyone agreed that they thought it was "cool" that opposing fans feared coming to Autzen, even if it was fear of the fans rather than of the football team. The focus group participants provided with possible solutions to limit ejections:

- A no re-entry policy, but they agreed fans would be upset with a no re-entry policy because many people wanted to return to tailgates to eat or hang out with friends.
- Breathalyzing fans at the gates, but the group said there were too many people entering the stadium to breathalyze.
- Allowing alcohol to be sold inside the stadium, but they said that selling alcohol in the

stadium would not prevent binge drinking prior to the game because the beer would be too expensive.

- Providing fans with a phone number to report bad behavior to, but the group said that they felt fans would abuse the phone number by texting or calling in false allegations, or text or call to harass the person on the other end. They noted that Autzen Stadium does not provide good cell phone coverage and texting a number would be difficult with little to no service.

When asked about what other ways the University and the athletic program could deter negative fan behavior, the consensus was, “It was a lost cause” and uncivil behavior depended on the specific person and his or her morals, rather than a group of fans.

Qualitative Research Method: Participant Observation

The final qualitative method researchers conducted was participant observation. One group member attended the game against Washington State at Autzen Stadium, and she observed fan behavior in the student section. Two student researchers attended the game against Stanford in Palo Alto, CA. One student researcher sat in the University of Oregon Duck section in the Stanford stadium, and the other student researcher sat among Stanford fans. The participant observation included fact-finding and observation that determined why fans acted a certain way and what motivates fans to act that way.

Qualitative Research Results: Participant Observation

One student researcher attended the Washington State game at Autzen stadium and conducted participant observation to determine how fans were acting and why they were acting that way. Students were drinking to enjoy the game and to maintain a “buzz” that would last four quarters. Researchers observed students before they drank and after they became intoxicated, and

determined that drinking led students to join in the competitive spirit by yelling and cheering at Ducks and the opposing team. Students were more likely to heckle opposing fans and players if people around them were heckling. There was a “pack” mentality, which led others to participate when their friends and peers were acting a certain way. Based on the observations, competitive nature was passed from the game of football to the fans. It was apparent through observation when fans drink, their judgment becomes skewed and they will act before thinking.

Two student researchers attended the Stanford versus Oregon game and conducted participant observation. Both noticed Oregon fans were loud at both the tailgate and game. Many were yelling school spirited slogans such as shouting the “O” and “Let’s go Ducks!” The two student researchers who attended the game noticed that Duck fans did not seem to act as aggressively towards other Stanford fans when attending away games, but they did maintain the level of loudness heard at home games. Participant observers said the reason Duck fans were less crude and aggressive is most likely because they did not have home field advantage.

V. Quantitative Research

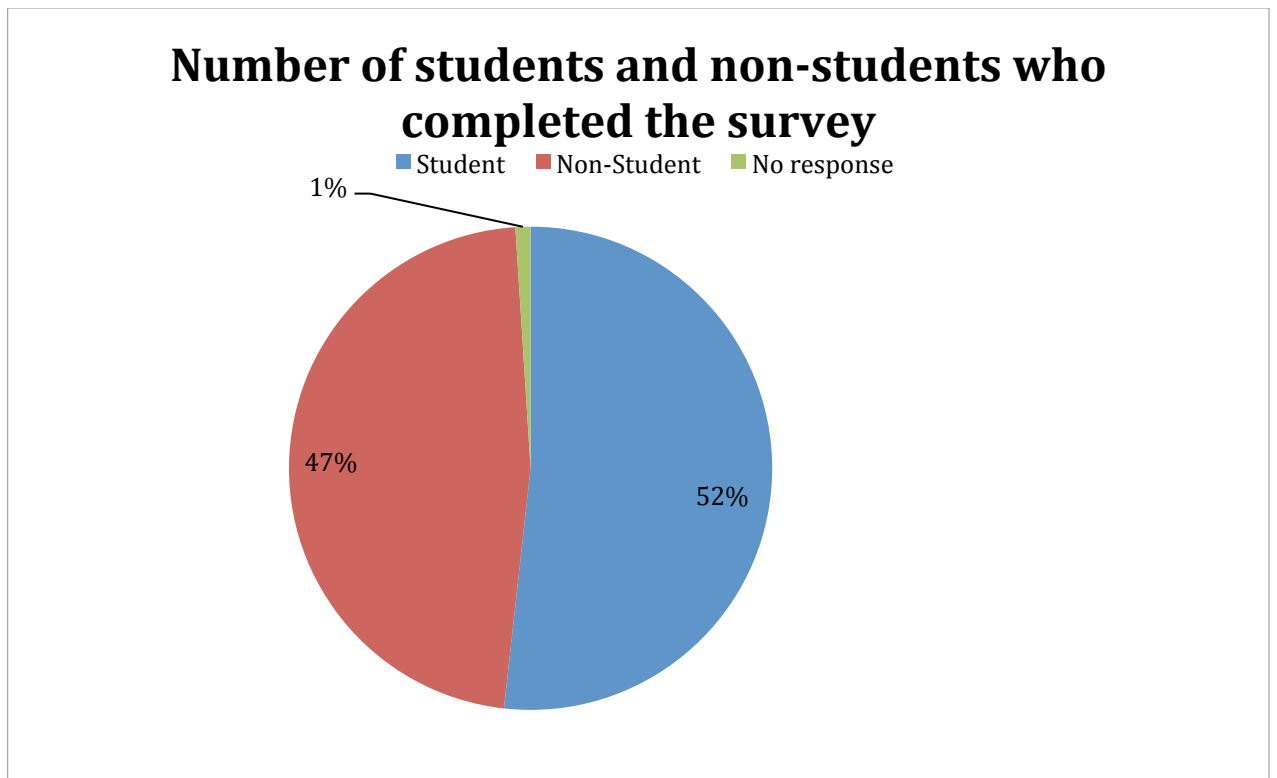
Quantitative Research Method: Fact-Finding

One researcher participated in fact-finding and participant observation while attending the Washington State University game on October 30, 2011 at 12:00 p.m. at Autzen stadium. She sat in the student section and noticed five students being escorted by Eugene Police Department for possessing alcohol. Some of the observations included: someone smoking marijuana, the smell of marijuana was apparent in the crowd. Two students were “patted” down by Eugene Police Department officers. Most of the students were intoxicated and some were drinking during the game. A fight broke out between two University of Oregon students; both students were taken out of the game.

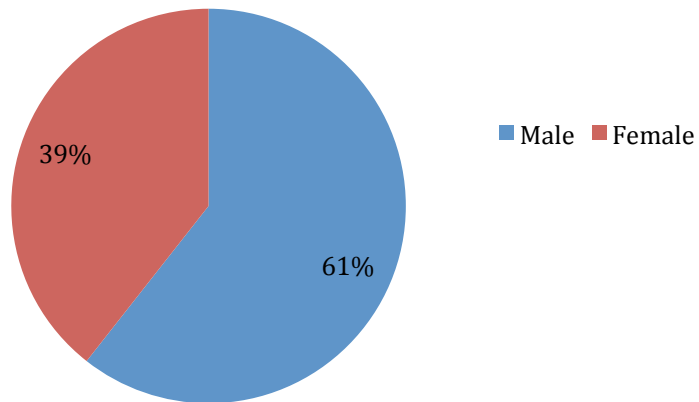
Quantitative Research Method: Survey

Researchers used Qualtrics, an online survey software, to build a survey. They sent this survey out using each researcher's Facebook page and Twitter account and asked that our followers and friends forward the survey. An email was sent to students in some of the researchers' classes using the email list from Blackboard (see Appendix 6.)

- The survey resulted in 211 participants, with ages ranging from 15-76 years old.
- Of the 211 participants, 91.5 percent had attended a game.
- The typical age of participants was 21 years old.
- 119 males and 79 females participated in the survey and 13 participants did not report gender.
- 104 survey participants were students, 92 were not, and 15 participants not offering this information.



Number of males and females who completed the survey



Quantitative Research Results: Survey

The survey results revealed several correlations emerged. Examination of correlations based on age and gender, which varied immensely. Analyzed data from the survey found a negative correlation with age and drinking. The older a person is, the fewer amount of alcoholic beverages, he or she will report consuming before Duck games. The older a person is, the less likely he or she is to think alumni is giving Oregon fans a bad reputation. However, those who thought students give Oregon fans a bad reputation also thought alumni were the persons responsible for contributing to the bad reputation. Lastly, those who consume more alcohol are more likely to think alumni give Oregon fans a negative reputation. The younger a person was, the more likely he or she was to consume alcohol.

The 80 percent of survey participants who have seen the video about fan civility by Chip Kelly said they found it to be “somewhat effective,” 20 percent of the participants who had seen the video were indifferent listing it as “neither effective nor ineffective.”

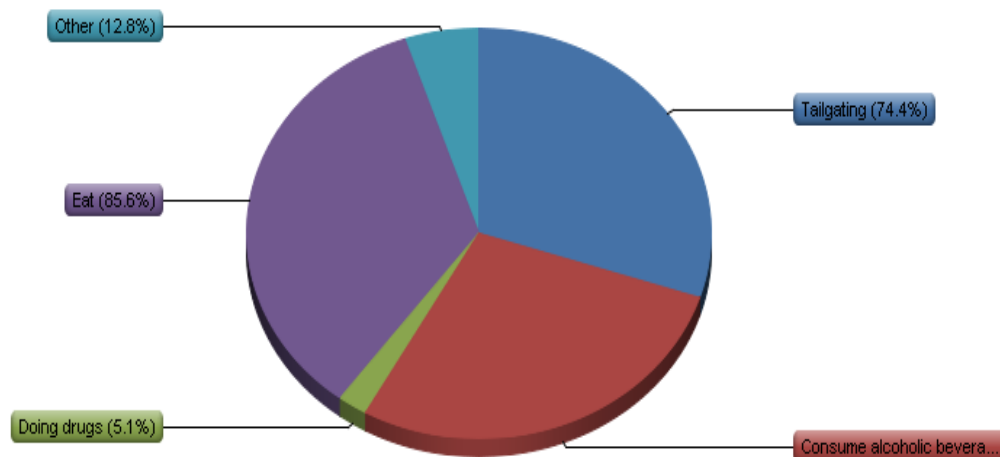
One of the major trends found with non-students from the survey data is, they consume

significantly more alcohol than students. The survey results also found non-students feel the blame should be placed on other groups. Non-students blame students and alumni for the bad reputation of Duck fans.

Researchers also discovered through survey results that the answers varied significantly according to gender. There are three major trends; females were significantly more likely to believe the fan civility video played before Duck games was effective. Females were less likely to consume alcohol and to blame alumni for Duck fans' negative reputation.

The Qualtrics survey allowed researchers to analyze statistics including some popular pre-game activities, which included: Tailgating (74.4 percent), consuming alcoholic beverages (69 percent), doing drugs (5.1 percent) and eating (85.6 percent). The option was given to enter other information (12.8 percent) about what each participant does before attending a game. Participants listed the following: "socializing," "throwing a football," "playing music," "playing beer pong" and "shopping at the duck store."

Pre-Game Activities Data



One of the survey questions asked participants to rate how aggressive Duck fans are towards opposing fans of each team. Washington topped the list as receiving the most aggression from Duck fans and Oregon State was just behind Washington in this category. The last question asked if participants felt that fan behavior discouraged them from bringing children to Duck games 72 percent of participants whom have children said they would still bring kids to games.

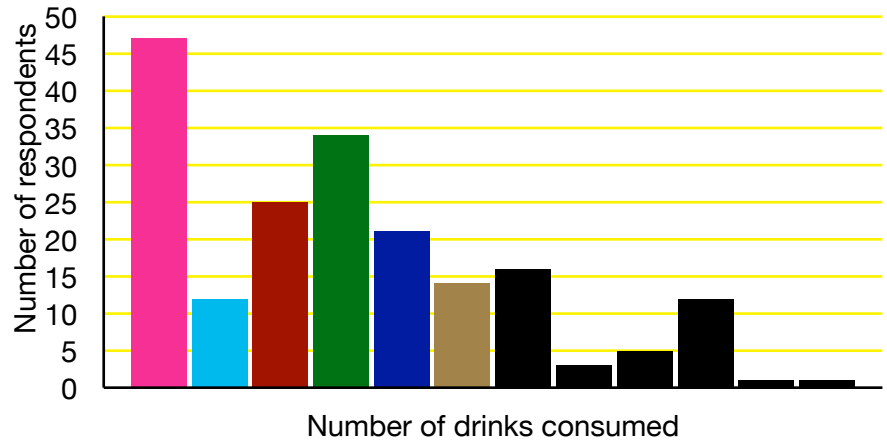
The main themes researchers found from the quantitative data is a correlation between age and amount of alcohol consumed, the younger a person is the more alcohol consumed prior to the game. The research revealed no one group was willing to take blame for the bad reputation of Duck fans, each group was placing blame on every other group.

Major Findings:

- Alcohol violations accounted for 48 to 74 percent of fan ejections from the 2010-2011 season and half of the 2011-2012 season.
- Focus group participants believed it was acceptable for Duck fans to intimidate opposing fans and players.
- The focus group could not think of a real solution to the problem with out-of-control fan behavior.
- The focus group said the most offensive of behaviors was personal attacks about a fan.
- Of the 211 survey responses, 190 participants reported the number of alcoholic beverages consumed prior to a Duck game.
 - Of the 190, the average number of drinks consumed 3.27.
 - 47 respondents said they did not consume alcoholic beverages.
 - The average of alcoholic beverages consumed of those who drank prior to games is 4.35

- There were outliers that skewed the data: 22 respondents consumed seven to 20 drinks.

How many drinks fans consume on average before football games



Summary:

Alcohol violations are the primary cause of ejections. Gender is a factor in how a person views bad fan behavior, consumption of alcohol and effectiveness of civility video. Age is a factor in consumption of alcohol and blame of reputation. Effects of alcohol on fans will dictate how he or she will act in a situation. Therefore, the University of Oregon should focus its efforts on minimizing alcohol-related issues and promoting alcohol awareness among fans.

Football is a naturally competitive and aggressive sport and Duck fans are similar to any loyal fans of a football team. Alcohol is served in other university football stadiums and NFL stadiums and it would be worth the University of Oregon's time and effort to look into how each stadium deals with negative situations from alcohol.

Although it may not be possible to stop fans from drinking before games or yelling at opposing fans, the University of Oregon should concentrate on promoting a positive competitive atmosphere. It may be possible to increase security at Washington and Oregon State games which both have revealed the teams to bring out the most aggressive behavior in Duck fans.

Overall, Duck fans are respectful toward one another unless provoked by aggressive behavior specifically verbal personal attacks. Duck fans are proud of the success of the football team, which may influence aggressive behavior. Duck fans do not see a problem with how they act towards opposing fans and this perception should be taken into account with further research. Oregon Duck fans have shown pride in the idea they are intimidating and Auzten Stadium is feared territory.