Drying Out “The Game”

Reacting swiftly to the alcohol-related problems at last November’s edition of The Game (see “Unsavory Record,” January-February, page 83), College administrators put new policies in place for future contests at Harvard Stadium. In December, dean of the College Harry R. Lewis let it be known that henceforth, kegs would be prohibited in the Soldiers Field area and the parking lots. That ban applies to everyone: alumni, students, and visitors from Yale.

The policy, incorrectly headlined in the Crimson as “Alcohol to Be Off-Limits at Future Harvard-Yale Game Tailgate Parties,” does not govern bottles and cans, nor is it a prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

As a related measure, any pregame parties planned by undergraduates will be relocated to Soldiers Field from the Business School parking lot. That move, Lewis explained, will bring students closer to other Game events; eliminate the risk of students crossing North Harvard Street traffic to get to the Stadium; and make it easier for the Harvard University Police Department (HUPD) to control behavior.

House Masters and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Committee on Athletics endorsed the new policy. It was promulgated, Lewis said, because “there were several serious medical emergencies related to alcohol….HUPD was very concerned about the level of drinking; not only were there a couple of incidents in which students could easily have died, but police were so tied up handling alcohol issues that their capacity to deal with other safety issues was impaired.”

He noted that the policy changes were not directed “specifically or exclusively at students,” although students were clearly among those “who had serious medical emergencies on account of alcohol at this event.” University Health Services reported a spike in alcohol-related student cases during the weekend.

Although Bradford R. Sohn ’02—a self-identified minor and therefore ineligible to drink—assailed the policy in a letter to the Crimson as “tyrannical” (“revoking from students and alum[n]s their liberty to consume beer from kegs at a festive occasion”), it appears to be a benign tyranny to which most subjects assent.

This year’s Game is in New Haven, so Yale policies will rule. But come 2002, the revelries outside the Stadium will be more constrained and more carefully patrolled, presumably leaving fans of all ages better able to follow the football being waged on the turf inside.