

WFDF Proposal 2010.10: To limit the distribution of alcohol at WFDF sanctioned youth events submitted by Sandie Hammerly and Jonathan Potts

Background: The number of youth playing disc sports continues to grow on a worldwide basis. As it currently stands, WFDF hosts a single "youth" focused event, the World Junior Ultimate Championships targeted toward athletes 19 and under (generally ranging from age 19 to age 16). It is foreseeable that as disc sports grow in popularity, events may be created that focus on an even younger audience.

World-wide laws and regulations governing the distribution and sale of alcohol to youth vary greatly. In some cultures the consumption of alcoholic beverages is limited to a certain age or above (and varies widely from country to country). In others, distribution/consumption of alcohol is not permitted at all, or there may be no limitations whatsoever.

Each WFDF national association takes a different approach to alcohol with their youth teams. Currently, a number of the sport's most capable NA's have decided that their U19 teams should be alcohol-free (regardless of the number of players of legal drinking age on the team), so it could be assumed that all teams may eventually move towards that approach.

It is imprudent for WFDF to create a situation whereby youth players, with sometimes less than mature decision-making, might be able to consume alcohol when it is something that they have never done, and for which they may not have developed a mature attitude toward the health, safety and legal consequences of alcohol use (and are also away from the parental disciplinary and responsibility structure).

Many parents explicitly and implicitly expect that their children will not be exposed to alcohol at the tournament. If some players are able to partake of alcohol, it is very difficult to give any guarantee about the remaining players.

For those organizing WFDF world youth events this creates a challenge as they must develop systems whereby athletes who are not permitted to consume alcohol are identified and/or segregated for both safety, legal and cultural reasons.

Distribution of alcohol also forces coaches and chaperones from countries which do not allow youth consumption of alcohol to take extra steps to "protect" their athletes from the possible risk.

Alcohol limitations should extend to all team support staff and tournament staff while on the tournament site or team accommodation or responsible for caring for players. The team support staff and tournament staff are role models for the children. If they insist that they cannot have an enjoyable week without alcohol then they should probably not be a part of the event.

Proposal: *All WFDF junior events (including the WJUC) shall be considered alcohol-free events to include the following provisions:*

- *All players to agree in their participant agreement that they will not drink alcohol (or use any illicit drugs) while at the tournament.*
- *No alcohol may be sold, served or distributed at official tournament venues.*
- *Team officials and support staff, WFDF officials and tournament staff may not drink alcohol while on duty or within a tournament venue or official accommodation.*
- *No alcohol sponsors for the tournament.*

Pros and Cons:

Pros

1. Will reduce risk of harm to U19 players.

2. Will protect WFDF and local organizers/hosts from possible liability resulting from consumption of alcohol by youth who may not be experienced in its use or legally able to do in their home countries.
2. Will enable event organizers to focus on competition-related liability issues rather than insuring that proper methods are developed for "restricting access" and protecting athletes unfamiliar with the effects of alcoholic beverages.
3. Will alleviate necessity for national coaches and chaperones to monitor behavior of athletes during social events where athletes should be free to have fun and meet others.

Cons

1. For some athletes lack of access to alcoholic beverages will be a change from that which is legally accepted in their home country.
2. Possible loss of revenue from the tournament due to lack of sales of alcohol.

Financial Implications: Probably none, although the policy banning alcohol will ensure better risk management and potentially a savings on costs of liability insurance.

Conclusion: Difficult though this decision may be for those who believe in personal responsibility, we need to manage alcohol-related risks pro-actively and make a strong statement to all stakeholders. The purpose of sanctioning a world or continental disc sports event is to promote disc sports and athletic competition. While the distribution of alcoholic beverages at related social events may be appropriate at adult venues, it is not necessary at youth events and will increase the potential liability risks for both WFDF and its event hosts.