

Sporting Tips

End of Season Celebrations



The practice of sporting clubs celebrating their end of season with a trip away or 'Mad Monday' type event appear to be becoming more commonplace with many players looking for another excuse to 'party' and unwind. Whatever the reasons, many clubs do not know how to deal with the **health and legal risks** posed by such events.

What are the risks?

Participants in these events often drink far in excess of what is recommended by health professional. They either voluntarily engage in high risk drinking or are coerced into it by their peers.

Health risks:

The **short term** health risks of **binge drinking** (drinking heavily over a short period of time or continuously over a number of days) are numerous:

- Headaches and nausea
- Vomiting
- Shakiness
- Memory loss
- Loss of consciousness (and in extreme cases death)

Binge drinking also leads to an increased risk of damage to both the individual and property. People are more likely to engage in risky behaviour while intoxicated such as swimming, driving, unsafe sex and violence, with potentially horrific consequences.

Long term effects of repeated binge drinking include brain and liver damage, depression and problems at school, work or in relationships.

Legal risks:

Whether a sporting club would be liable for an injury suffered by a player or damage to property on an end of season

trip or event will depend on:

- whether the club owes a duty of care to the player in relation to the event;
- whether the club breached this duty (by failing to take all reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable risks)
- any loss or damages as a result of the accident

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These issues will depend on the circumstances of each case, in particular, the extent of the club's involvement in the organising and running of the end of season event and the foreseeability of the risk that occurred. **Clubs could be liable if they promote and endorse these types of activities to their members resulting in damage to people or property.**

What can clubs do?

In order to reduce the risks to the individual and club, sporting clubs **should not** endorse or support any end of season celebration that involves excessive drinking. This means clubs **should not** hold any fundraising events throughout the year that helps subsidise these activities.

If players still go ahead and organise their own event, the club should make it clear that it takes no responsibility for conducting it and express concern to members regarding their **health and safety**, as well as the potential for the activity to bring the image of the club into disrepute. It is also **against the law** for anyone under 18 to drink alcohol.

Suggestions for reducing the risks of alcohol related harms at end of season events:

- Meet with person / people organising the event and discuss what is planned. Identify **possible risks** and **measures** to be taken to reduce those risks.
- Ensure no-one **under 18** is involved in the event.
- Clearly explain what the club considers **acceptable** and **unacceptable** behaviour.
- Meet with the **whole group** before they depart to explain the above – if this is not possible, meet with the organisers and ensure they inform other participants.
- For **trips away**, encourage transport that does not require anyone to drive. Where driving a bus, assist to organise a trained driver or ensure at least two people will act as designated drivers.
- Ensure drivers have an appropriate **license** and keep **zero blood alcohol** content.
- Encourage **regular meals** and food being eaten throughout the day.
- Consider a **'buddy' system**, whereby delegated participants agree not to drink and look after others.
- For 'Mad Monday' type events, encourage use of **taxis or a bus** (and driver).
- Ensure suitable **insurance coverage** is obtained for the event

For further information please contact:

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