

October 2, 2003

TO: Fans, Friends, and Supporters of LSU Athletics

FROM: Skip Bertman, LSU Athletics Director

Last week's Cyber-side Chat emphasized the impact that our great Tiger fans can have on an athletics event. Our fan support is one of the things that separate LSU Athletics from other programs.

Certainly 99 percent of our fans are great, loyal and enthusiastic supporters who represent the University with pride and share in the spirit of sportsmanship. These fans support the Tigers with great fervor, and they respect fellow Tiger fans and visiting fans as well.

We received a number of very nice and inspiring messages from Georgia fans who enjoyed their stay in Baton Rouge. They were treated with respect and hospitality.

The disheartening thing is that many of those e-mails began with "I had heard terrible things about your fans before going to Baton Rouge." They were surprised by how well they were treated. Where's does this reputation come from?

It's that other one percent of the fans who can ruin the reputation of our entire institution. As I said last week, there were approximately 115,000 fans on campus for the LSU vs. Georgia game. Consider that one percent of 115,000 people is over 1,100 people who throw items, curse, are inebriated, obnoxious or otherwise disruptive, and can make a visit to Tiger Stadium miserable for our fans or visitors to our campus.

Visitors spend money in Baton Rouge and are important to LSU's contribution, with the use of no state tax dollars, to our community.

We have a diverse group of people who attend LSU football games, and we'll never solve all of our problems. But I implore those who share LSU's sense of sportsmanship and pride to report to authorities when you see something amiss.

Join me and stand up against behavior you know is wrong. The LSU campus is our neighborhood on game days, and I'm asking you to participate in our version of a neighborhood watch program.

There was no reason why a young Georgia man should have had to spend the entire game at the hospital after the port-o-let he was in was toppled and then he was punched when he emerged from the portable facility.

There was no reason why a University of Georgia administrator should have been hit by a mud ball just because she was wearing Georgia colors.

There was no reason why a Georgia couple should have had to return to their car to find their hood dented and their Georgia flag burned and lying in a ditch.

There was no reason a young Georgia woman and other people should have been subjected to some very lewd comments as they entered the stadium.

The reports we receive are not just from visiting fans. There is no reason why LSU fans and their young children should be subjected to obscenities and vulgar gestures while enjoying an LSU football game. There was no reason why a four-year-old boy should have been hit in the face with a cup of ice tossed from the upper deck.

People tell me, "Skip, kids will be kids and you'll never solve all of the problems." I won't accept that. No, we probably won't solve all of the problems, but we're going to try.

And I don't buy the argument that a crowd cannot be loud and intimidating while also practicing good sportsmanship. What happened to yelling "Tiger Bait" when the opposing team comes onto the field instead of the booing that now seems more prevalent? Isn't "Tiger Bait" more unique, more creative and, in fact, more intimidating?

When the crowd cheered for LSU even after Georgia's touchdown late in the game and when no one rushed the field after the win, those were indicators to me that we "expect to win." We should sustain that measure of confidence without feeling the need to belittle our opponent.

I have heard from so many Tiger fans who feel the same way that I know we can improve. I know we have the best fans in America; however there is a very small contingent of people who are giving our school a bad reputation in some corners of the SEC.

So for the 91,000 of you in the stadium who cheer and yell and help us to victory, thank you. You're the greatest. To the 900 or so in the stadium or tailgating who go overboard in a negative way, we ask that you join the vast majority in supporting the Tigers in a positive manner.

We welcome your feedback, so write to us at LSUvision@etigers.net and tell us how we can make LSU Athletics better for you. I cannot promise a response to every letter we receive, but each one will be read.

Thank you for your support of Tiger Athletics.