

Anything for the Team

THESE PEOPLE ARE NUTS. EVERY Saturday morning, they're up before dawn to coat themselves in war paint, pack up for the road and fire up the grill in preparation for the gridiron war of the week.

They're the fanatic fans, kickoff crazies and sideline psychos hitting their prime every fall at colleges across the nation.

It's ridiculous to most, but to them, it's religion. "I may be an Irish-Catholic," says Boston College sophomore Kevin Sullivan. "But on game days, I'm a football fan."

IN-PLAY

Sullivan says he loves to be rude and crude while rooting for his Eagles — especially against the U. of Notre Dame. He was ready last season when "that other Catholic school" came to Boston. He and his friends made T-shirts with big letters on the front greeting the Irish: "SOUTH BEND OVER!"



Pulling for the team can be a hair-raising experience.

When the Irish ran by Sullivan, he demonstrated the gesture. "I just wanted to make sure those heathens knew what the shirt meant," he says. "[Boston College] is a Catholic school, but that's why the games are on Saturday. We'll repent on Sunday."

U. of Michigan sophomore Andy Smith doesn't wear shirts. Instead, he paints "GO BLUE!" on his body and strolls around Michigan Stadium.

"I'm on a quest for the manliest tailgaters of all time," he says. "When they see my maize-and-blue chest, they invite me over. Crisp Saturday afternoons, burnt hot dogs, football and free beer is what college is all about."

But, as U. of Southern California sophomore Kerry Krentler says, going topless can have its consequences.

"My boyfriend and his fraternity brothers painted 'GO TROJANS!' on their chests for the California-Berkeley game last year," she says. "But they got sunburns and had 'GO TROJANS!' branded on their bodies for weeks."

Michigan State U. police are on their guard when Wolverine fans visit East Lansing. Seems the school's mascot statue, Sparty, attracts visitors the night before the game. "They like to paint certain body parts blue," says Michigan State sophomore Waleed Ezzar.

The fun usually stops short of police action, but that depends on where you are. At home games, the pranks are seen as good clean fun. On the road, however, rival fans might not be as tolerant.

At Notre Dame, life is relatively docile. Some dedicated fans take their religions seriously — both football and Christianity. Sophomore Eric Sharage says the colossal painting of Christ that overlooks Notre Dame Stadium is respected. "We go to church before every game like the players do," he says. "Touchdown Jesus is a big fan."

Maybe. But church on a Saturday morning? It doesn't get any crazier than that.

Nicholas J. Cotsonika, U. of Michigan/Photo by Jill Oczkowski, Sam Houston State U., '94-'95 U. Photo Contest Winner

Love it or leaf it?



High Time for a Change?

IF YOU THINK DROOPY-EYED POTHEADS reeking of incense and brotherly love are the only ones advocating the decriminalization of marijuana, toke again.

The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) has been steadily gaining support since it was founded in 1970, although it weathered a small slump in the '80s just-say-no era. Traditionally strong on college campuses, NORML advocates an end to all criminal penalties for personal possession, use and cultivation of marijuana.

PULSE

NORML chapters have experienced a wide range of reactions from students and faculty.

Tiffany Davis, a senior at the U. of Virginia and member of NORML, says the stigma attached to members distracts people from the real issues.

"People think that if you promote marijuana, you're a stoner," Davis says. "For me, it's just recognizing that it's a valuable plant and that the government is wasting money by enforcing marijuana laws."

Keith Meadows, a sophomore at U. of Wisconsin, Waukesha, and president of the campus NORML, says students are afraid of marijuana because they don't know much about it. "One girl started crying because she didn't want the group on campus. She said

marijuana kills people, though she had never heard of anybody who had died from it."

NORML peaked, both in attention and membership, from 1974 to 1980, when 11 states reduced criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of marijuana. Membership declined during the Reagan/Bush era, but support has started to crop up again, with 50 to 75 percent growth per year.

Most health officials on college campuses find the renewed interest troubling.

Frank Calvin, assistant director of the health center at the U. of Texas, Arlington, says legalizing marijuana could have adverse effects on the way students learn.

"Marijuana shouldn't be a part of the learning atmosphere," he says. It has a sensory-dulling effect.... You have no drive for anything."

New concentrations of marijuana are making the drug more dangerous than ever, Calvin says.

"The stuff now is at least 10 to 20 times more powerful than the old stuff [from the '60s]," Calvin says.

Although starting an organization like NORML on campus wasn't difficult, Davis says that keeping it alive is.

"We don't get much support at all," she says. "Once people realize how common [the use of marijuana] is, the sooner they'll realize that enforcing marijuana laws is a waste of taxpayers' money."

Ben Eden, U. of Texas, Arlington/Photo by Sal Paradise