

Nail-biters yield deadly results, study finds

April 13 2011

(PhysOrg.com) -- Sports fans beware: A close win by your favorite team is linked with loss of life for enthusiastic fans after the big game, according to a University of South Carolina study.

USC [economist](#) Dr. Melayne McInnes has found that closer games result in more traffic fatalities among fans of the winning team.

McInnes' research will be featured in the *Journal of Consumer Research*'s online edition in late April and published in December.

Using a five-point scale that ranges from a 1 for blowout to a 5 for nail-biter, McInnes found closely contested games to be the most deadly.

"The closer the game, the greater the number of [traffic fatalities](#)," said McInnes. "The difference between a blowout and a nail-biter resulted in a 133-percent increase in fatal car crashes. What's most interesting is that this effect held whether the winning team played away or at home."

To determine whether the closeness of major sporting games impacts the number of fatalities, McInnes analyzed 271 college and professional football and basketball games from 2001 – 08, including rivalry, conference championship and tournament games. She correlated the number of traffic accidents that involved fatalities with the margin of victory of the games.

"The initial hypothesis, formed while watching a blowout national championship game on the video board at the UNC's Dean Dome, was

that bored fans would start celebrating early, which would lead to more alcohol-related crashes,” McInnes said. “The alternative hypothesis, based on studies showing fans’ testosterone levels particularly elevated for wins, was that close wins would be more deadly because of the higher aggression associated with testosterone combined with drinking. And that’s exactly what the data show!”

McInnes said the study is relevant for [fans](#) and law enforcement.

“More care needs to be taken as games go down to the wire, particularly for winning teams,” she said. “This study gives law enforcement and emergency responders a legitimate reason to follow the game and its outcome while on the job.”

Provided by North Carolina State University

Citation: Nail-biters yield deadly results, study finds (2011, April 13) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-nail-biters-yield-deadly-results.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--