

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge many individuals and organizations for their support with this project. Notable technical assistance came from Messrs. Mark Northington (Louisiana Office of Tourism), Jason Droddy and Michael Todd Jones (Louisiana State University), and professors Harsha Chacko (University of New Orleans) and Jerome Agrusa (University of Louisiana at Lafayette).

Ascension Parish was very helpful in this undertaking. Mr. W.J. "Fritz" Englade, a school booster, encouraged us to conduct the study in St. Amant and helped open many doors. Coach John Talley and the athletic department at St. Amant High School provided us with a great deal of logistical support and information. Local businesses were very supportive and forthcoming with their observations. In particular, we would like to recognize The Cabin, Sno's Family Restaurant, Picadilly Cafeteria, McDonald's, Pit Stop Exxon and Deli, the Holiday Inn, Best Western, Budget Inn, Comfort Inn, and Quality Inn.

We also would like to thank Ms. Nicolle Couret and Ms. Karynne Abel, along with Ascension Parish Tourist Commission staff members Angela Falgoust and Nanette Daigle for their time and effort in collecting survey information at the event.

State Championship, St. Amant, Louisiana

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the economic significance to the immediate community and surrounding area of the LHSPLA 2000 power lifting meet that was held March 3-4, 2000, at St. Amant High School in Ascension Parish. A total of 515 student athletes plus 130 coaches represented 65 teams from Louisiana schools. Two questionnaires were used to gather data. One was administered to spectators on site, one to coaches. Additional data was secured from several area eating, lodging, and retail establishments. Results show a positive economic impact for St. Amant and Ascension Parish from visitor spending on hotel rooms, admission tickets, concessions, meals, and shopping. Comments about the tournament's operation and suggestions for improving the tournament are also included in this report.

BACKGROUND and INTRODUCTION

This study of the economic benefits of the 17th annual Louisiana High School Power Lifting Association's (LHSPLA) state championship that took place on March 3-4, 2000 in St. Amant, was conducted by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program at LSU (Sea Grant). It is one of three similar projects sponsored by the Louisiana Office of Tourism. Professor Harsha Chacko with the University of New Orleans' School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management analyzed the economic benefits that resulted from a multi-state, girls' youth basketball tournament at the Alario Center in Westwego, while Professor Jerome Agrusa of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette analyzed the benefits of a second tier, professional golf tournament in Lafayette. All three studies were conducted during selected weekends in March 2000.

The primary purpose of the projects is to demonstrate that many of the state's communities benefit from relatively small-scale athletic or other sporting competitions. Such events are usually staged at public venues such as school gymnasiums, soccer fields, swimming pools, golf courses, tracks, rodeo arenas, etc. One particularly attractive aspect of these smaller events to the tourism sector is that they typically take place during the course of a weekend, when business travel demand for motel rooms and other accommodations is relatively low.

The 2000 LHSPLA event attracted over 1200 student-athletes, coaches, and spectators from throughout the state to St. Amant, in the outskirts of Gonzales.

High school power lifting became a bonafide sport in the early 1980s stemming from the need for off-season strength training programs for football players. The first LHSPLA event was held in West Monroe in 1983. Today, the sport appeals to both genders, and participants compete from the sole perspective of strength training. The high school season begins in December and culminates with the State Meet in early March.

In order to qualify for the State Meet, lifters must first compete in four regional meets held in late January and early February. Lifters qualify by placing in the top three spots of their weight class or by placing among the next three best lifters in two divisions. (Official Program, 17th Annual LHSPLA Power Lifting State Championship, St. Amant, Louisiana).

Last year's meet took place in Alexandria, and the 2001 event is scheduled to return to St. Amant for the fourth time. Other high schools throughout the state host invitational power lifting meets and a statewide junior varsity event that provides younger lifters with a highly competitive environment also takes place in Louisiana annually.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Sea Grant's study of the LHSPLA 2000 Power Lifting State Championship study had two primary objectives:

1. To identify the economic significance of the LHSPLA 2000 meet to St. Amant and Gonzales in Ascension Parish. Sea Grant accomplished this objective by identifying the direct expenditures associated with the event, and profiling the visitors to the community.
2. To identify opportunities for enhancing the event in coming years. This was achieved by asking spectators to rate various aspects of the 2000 event. The information is of interest to event organizers and school booster organizations, as well as the Ascension Parish Tourist Commission and the hospitality sector.

THE 2000 LHSPLA EVENT

A total of 515 student-athletes and an estimated 130 coaches representing sixty-five schools from throughout the state participated in the 17th annual LHSPLA State Championship in the Gold Dome at St. Amant High School. The average distance from the participating schools to St. Amant is 100 miles. Over 600 parents and friends accompanied the delegations, although some of the smaller schools (those with only one or two entries) were only represented by the student-athlete(s) and a coach. Over 300 girls and boys in Division I (2A and below) competed on Friday, while over 200 boys in Division II (3A, 4A, and 5A) lifted on Saturday.

METHODS

Sea Grant, in consultation with professors Chacko and Agrusa, the Office of Tourism, and event organizers at St. Amant High School designed two questionnaires. A two-page, spectators' questionnaire was administered on-site and at random to adult spectators at the event on March 3 and 4. Coaches were asked to complete a very brief, second instrument during a meeting on March 3rd. (Appendix 1).

Interviewers randomly intercepted adult spectators at the Gold Dome's concession stand area, and asked if "...they were from out-of-town," and if so, "...would they mind filling out a brief questionnaire that would help determine the impact of the event on the community." Interviewers had explicit instructions to enlist adults who appeared to be spectators, i.e. parents, family members, or friends of the participants. By and large, the spectators were accommodating and ultimately 101 usable questionnaires were completed. Sixty-one were obtained on the first day and 40 on the second. St. Amant Coach and the event's main organizer, John Talley, reported a total of 515 registered competitors with 310 (60.2 percent) on March 3 and the remaining 205 (39.8 percent) on March 4.

In addition, 32 of the 65 coaches responded to a coaches' questionnaire that was distributed during an organizational meeting called by Coach Talley on March 3. The information provided by the responding coaches served as the basis for the final estimates concerning the number of persons in each delegation, information on lodging in the area, and dollar estimates for travel expenses. Discussions on the underlying assumptions for these calculations appear in the analysis presented below. Excel 2000 spreadsheet software was used to compile and tabulate the data that appear in this report.

Several area eating and lodging establishments, as well as the Tanger Outlet Center were also very helpful in this project. Sea Grant had asked them in advance to monitor business activity during the event weekend, and to the extent possible, compare it to the previous weekend (February 25 and 26), as well as Mardi Gras weekend 1999 (February 12 and 13). The 2000 Power Lifting championship dates coincided with the Friday and Saturday that precede Mardi Gras. Some of their observations are included in the section entitled, "Local Businesses."

SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE TO ASCENSION PARISH

The following estimates were prepared of the direct expenditures made by student-athletes, coaches, and spectators at the 2000 event in the St. Amant and Gonzales area.

Sea Grant estimates that the two-day event generated over \$62,000 in direct visitor expenditures in the community.

- An estimated 635 persons paid admission fees totaling \$3,500 to the two-day event.
- The 65 participating schools paid entry fees totaling \$9,660.
- Nearly \$18,000 was spent for lodging during the weekend. Coaches and student-athletes spent approximately \$13,600 for 206 room-nights in the area, while spectators used an additional 65 room nights and spent over \$4,300.
- More than \$21,500 was spent on food in Ascension Parish. The participants and coaches spent an estimated \$10,100, and the spectators spent an additional \$11,400 for food items (concessions, area restaurants, groceries, beverages, etc.).
- Coaches spent over \$750 for fuel while in Ascension. Spectators purchased approximately \$1,200 in fuel.
- Student-athletes and spectators purchased commemorative T-shirts that resulted in net proceeds of \$790.
- Shopping expenditures at area stores and the Tanger Outlet Center were estimated to be \$6,300.
- Expenditures at other area attractions were approximately \$750.

Competitors and Coaches

The 65 participating schools paid entry fees totaling \$9,660. These fees, along with all other gross proceeds, were used to pay for tournament expenses. The net income was distributed on a 50/50 basis between the Power Lifting Club and the St. Amant High School Athletic Department.

Almost one-half of the coaches representing nearly half of the competitors responded to the Coaches Questionnaire. Thirty-two coaches stated that their delegations included a total of 64 coaches, and that they were responsible for 253 participants (8.4 participants per responding delegation). The responding coaches also estimated that over 300 parents/chaperones accompanied their groups.

Coaches and student-athletes paid an average of \$66 per room-night in the area. They used an estimated 206 room-nights, which generated \$13,596 in gross revenues to area motels during the course of the weekend. The figure is based on (1) information furnished by 23 coaches who spent at least one night and used a total of 86 room nights in the area, (2) information gathered by Sea Grant from area motels, and (3) the following assumptions concerning non-responding coaches.

Sea Grant assumed that the 33 non-responding coaches spent at least one night in the area, if: (1) they were from beyond 133 miles away—the average distance for coaches responding affirmatively to whether students and other coaches under their supervision had stayed at a hotel/motel—or, (2) the non-responding schools were from 67-133 miles away, and had student-athletes participating on both days (Table 1). The nine coaches that responded that they had not spent a night represented schools that, on average, were less than 67 miles away from St. Amant. Furthermore, total room-night calculations for non-respondents are based on several additional assumptions: (1) one room for every two coaches, (2) one room for every four student-athletes in the delegation, and (3) two-night stays for delegations having participants on Friday and Saturday.

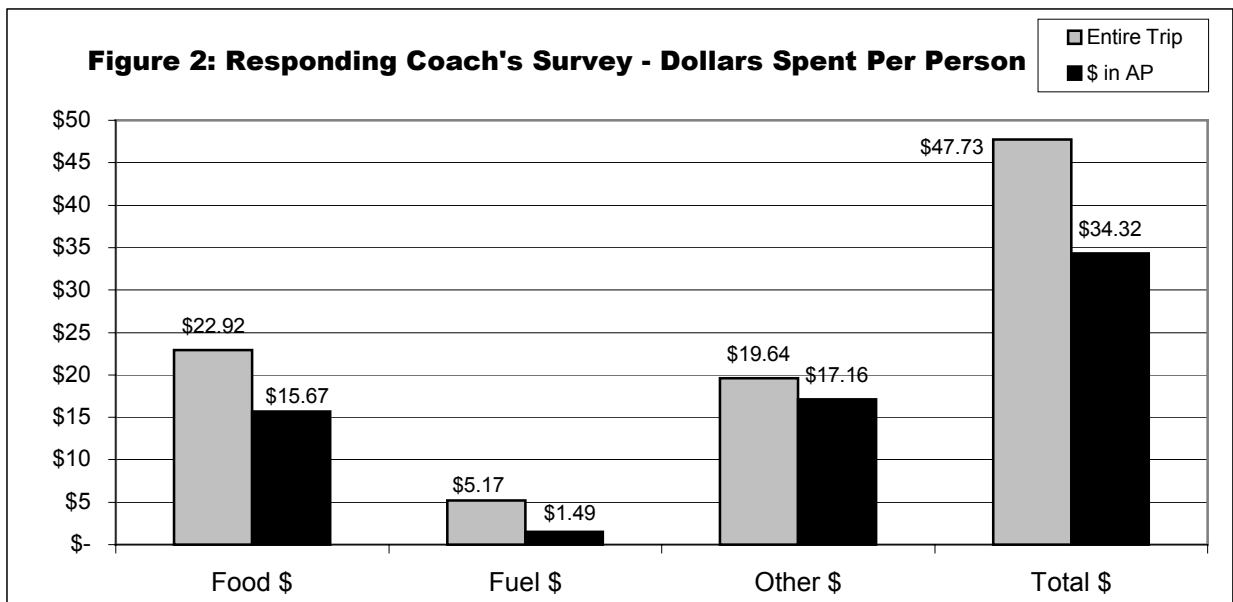
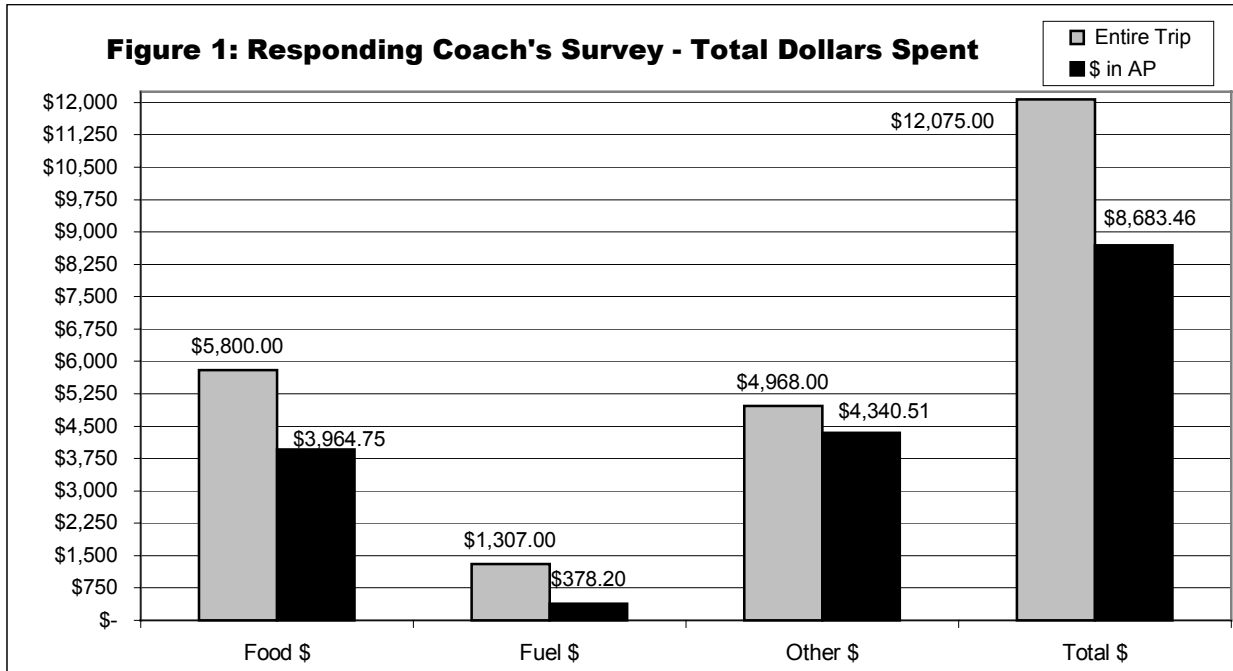
Table 1

Statistics on Distance for All Schools	
Average	100.5887692
Standard Deviation	58.16823608
Median	97.39
Maximum	206.21
Minimum	0
Skew	0.092413667
Count	65

Statistics From Survey Respondents & Assumed Data		
High School	Zip Code	Distance From St. Amant
BROADMOOR	70815	23.48
LUTHERAN	70002	40.56
RIDGEWOOD	70001	40.95
PEARL RIVER CENT.	70452	62.06
MANGHAM	71259	157.12
CEDAR CREEK	71270	151.46
WEST FELICIANA	70775	59.69
NORTHSHORE	70461	64.8
VERMILION CATH.	70510	86.87
COVINGTON	70433	43.97
WESTGATE	70560	66.56
ST. EDMUND	70535	97.39
LUTCHER	70071	11.93
MANDEVILLE	70471	47.87
SOUTH LAFOURCHE	70354	61.92
ACHS	70346	14.88
ST. PAUL	70434	60.7
OPELOUSAS	70571	79.69
BEAU CHENE	70512	69.34
ST. THOMAS AQUIN.	70401	30.43
PORT ALLEN	70767	36.55
CHSPC	70760	52.09
SALMEN	70458	60.53
EPISCOPAL	70816	20.34
LSD	70820	24.28
BRUSLY	70719	31.27
ZACHARY	70791	39.12
FALSE RIVER ACAD.	70760	52.09
ST. AMANT	70774	0
BISHOP SULLIVAN	70879	27.1
FOUNTAINBLEU	70471	47.87

BLOCK HIGH	71343	111.09
WASHINGTON	70615	141.2
WINNSBORO	71295	144.33
ARCADIA	71001	206.21
MAMOU	70554	105.16
DERRIDDER	70634	151.12
NEVILLE	71201	168.82
DELTA	71261	185.51
EAST BEAUREGARD	70634	151.12
ST. MARY'S	71457	176.93
LAKEVIEW	71411	178.14
BOLTON	71301	123.42
MCCALL SR. HIGH	71282	151.46
BASTROP	71220	195.78
PINEVILLE	71360	122.07
WEST OUACHITA	71292	173.06
NORTHLAKE CHRIST.	70433	43.97
MENARD	71303	128.23
LEESVILLE	71446	155.08
CALDWELL	71418	158.66
RAYNE HIGH	70578	94.73
BUCKEYE	71328	115.94
LASALLE	71465	143.84
ROSEPINE	70659	156.28
ST. THOMAS MOORE	70508	73.59
FARMERVILLE	71241	194.55
PICKERING	71446	155.08
TIOGA	71477	126.49
NATCHITOCHE	71457	176.93
OUACHITA	71203	180.35
LAKE ARTHUR HS	70549	115.56
SLIDELL HIGH	70458	60.53
ASH	71303	128.23
WEST MONROE	71291	181.9

Estimates were also prepared of the amount of money spent on food by competitors and coaches in Ascension Parish. The responding coaches estimated that \$15.67 was spent per capita at food establishments (fast food, restaurants, snacks & groceries) while in the Parish. **Thus, the 515 participants and 130 coaches spent an estimated \$10,107 on food in Ascension.** Figures 1 and 2.



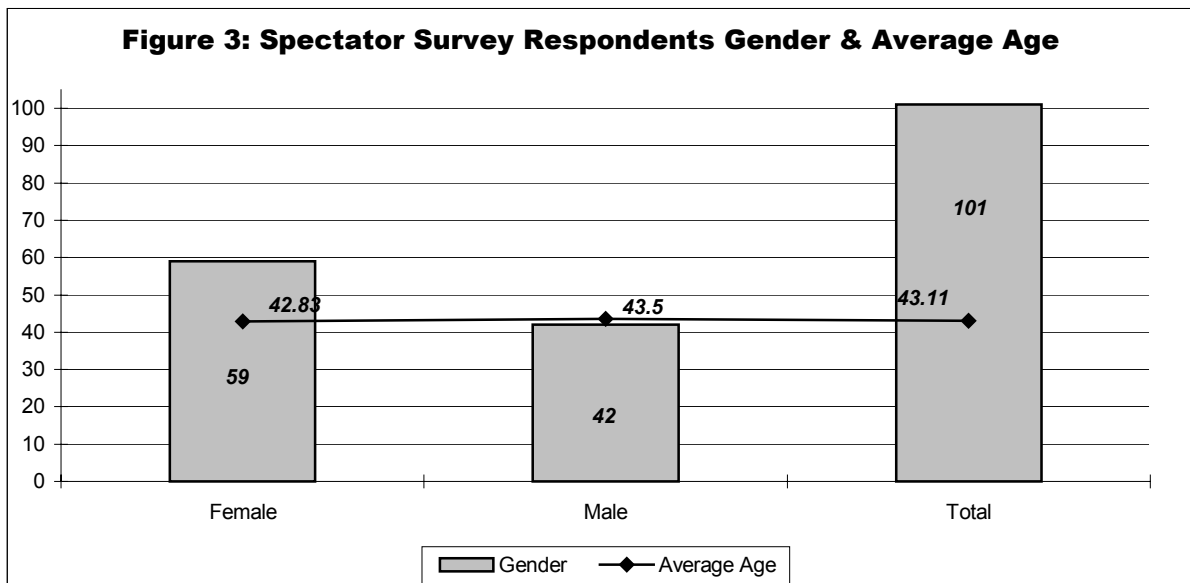
The 32 coaches also reported spending \$378 in fuel while in Ascension Parish. This figure was doubled (**\$756**) for estimating the amount spent in the Parish by the 65 coaches **for fuel purposes**.

Student-athletes also purchased **commemorative T-shirts**, and Coach Talley reported net proceeds of **\$787.41**

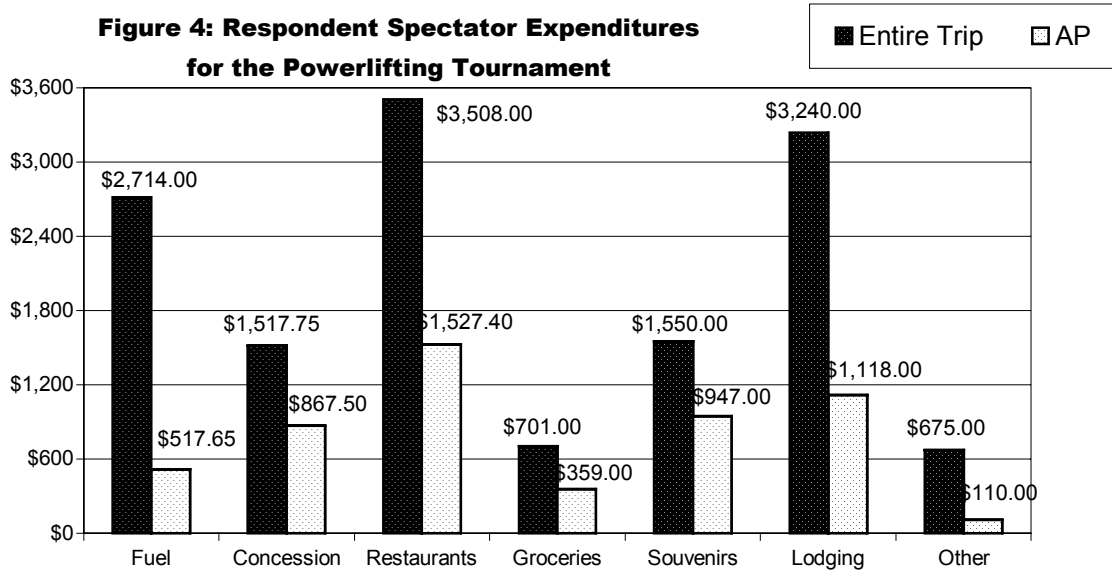
Spectators

Approximately 635 persons paid admission fees totaling \$3,500 to the two-day event. Coach Talley indicated that admission receipts totaled \$3,535 and Sea Grant estimated that 75 percent of the attendees (475 persons) purchased day-passes (\$5.00), and the remaining 25 percent (160 spectators) paid for two-day admission at \$7.00 each.

The 101 individuals that responded to the spectators’ survey noted that there were a total of 367 persons, including themselves, in their party. Fifty-eight (58 percent) of the respondents were female and 42 percent were male. The average age of spectators was early 40s.

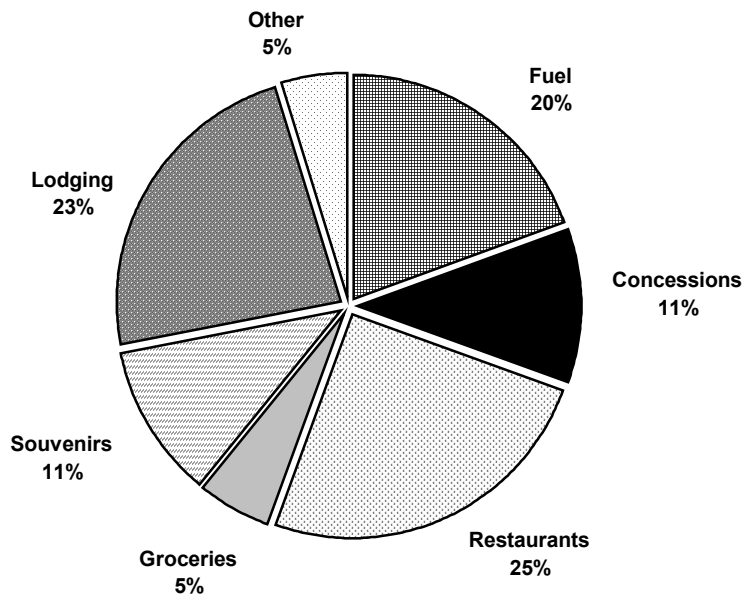


According to Coach Talley, expenditures by spectators and others resulted in a net income of \$3,029.75 from concessions. Eighty-nine respondents estimated that those in their parties spent \$1,518 in concessions, \$3,508 in local restaurants and \$701 for groceries, beverages, etc. Figure 4. By extrapolation, and based on a per capita amount for food of \$17.89 per spectator (\$4.74 per spectator for concessions; \$10.96 for restaurant meals; and, \$2.19 for groceries, etc.), Sea Grant estimates that **the 635 paid spectators spent \$11,360 on food items in the Parish.**



A distribution of all expenditures, by category, appears in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Allocation of Expenditures by Responding Spectators for Entire Trip



Most respondents did not report having spent a night in area motels. Those that did overnight, however, reported staying a total of 46 room nights in area motels, and spending an average of \$67 per night for lodging. Sea Grant thus estimates that all spectators will have used **65 room nights and spent a total of \$4,355 on lodging.**

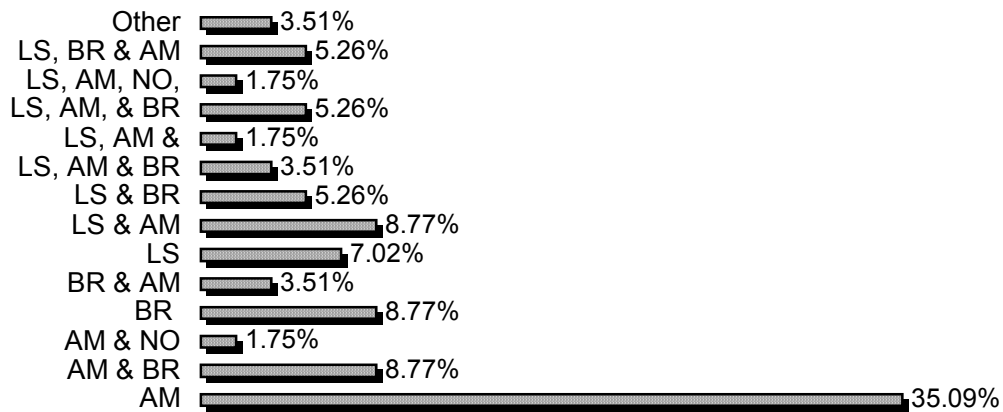
The respondents spent approximately \$2,714 for total gasoline during their journey to and from St. Amant. It is thus estimated, though extrapolation, that all spectators spent over \$3,400 on **fuel**, with about 35 percent purchased in Ascension Parish (**\$1,190**).

Fifty-seven spectator survey respondents, representing approximately 200 persons, noted that they planned on shopping while in the area. Approximately 35 percent stated they specifically planned on shopping at the Tanger Outlet Center, while another 40 percent noted that they had planned on including the Center along with other shopping locations. Other area stores figured in the plans for over 30 percent of the visitors. Figure 6.

The Tanger Outlet Center estimates that, on average, weekend shoppers conservatively spend approximately \$50 per person. **We estimate shopping expenditures at local stores and the area Center to have been \$6,300.**

Fifteen respondents, representing 60 persons, noted that they were going to visit area attractions. We thus calculated that 75 persons went to area attractions. Expenditures at area attractions were calculated at \$10.00 per capita for a **total of \$750.**

Figure 6: Shopping Plans



AM = Area Mall (Tanger Outlet Center), BR = Baton Rouge, LS = Local Shops, and NO = New Orleans.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Several area eating establishments agreed to monitor business activity during the LHSPLA weekend and, to the extent possible, compared volume and revenues to the previous weekend and the 1999 Mardi Gras weekend.

Sno’s Family Restaurant reported that on Friday (March 3) night, the restaurant hosted 55 more persons than an average Friday night. On Saturday, there were 30 more customers than an average Saturday. This despite the fact that Mardi Gras weekends “are not traditionally good weekends”.

The Cabin reported that Friday and Saturday business--lunch and supper--was up 62 percent and 48 percent respectively from March 5 and 6 in 1999. In addition, Friday business was up 60 percent when compared to the previous Friday, but Saturday was down six percent from the previous Saturday. The staff observed that they were not able to differentiate between power lifting families and other tourists visiting local attractions or Mardi Gras visitors.

Picadilly Cafeteria reported declines in the total number of customers for the applicable weekends in 1999 and 2000. Thursday, March 2, figures are also included since persons wearing tournament shirts were seen that evening.

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2000 avg. meal</u>
Thursday	963	808	\$6.32
Friday	1125	915	6.57
Saturday	1001	770	6.68

McDonald’s provided comparisons, in the form of percent change, for the three area stores (Gonzales, Highway 30, and Sorrento) for March 3 through 5, the same days of the previous week, as well as Mardi Gras weekend 1999.

Store	Breakfast		Lunch		Dinner		All	
	1999	Feb. 25-26	1999	Feb. 25-27	1999	Feb. 25-28	1999	Feb. 25-29
<u>Gonzales</u>								
3-Mar	+ 6	+ 9.3	+ 11.8	+ 13.0	+ .09	- 10.4	+ 5.3	+ 5.3
4-Mar	+ 8.1	+ 5.5	- 7.0	+ 10.6	- 5.9	+ 0.9	- 1.9	+ 4.1
5-Mar	- 14.0	+ 3.9	- 17.9	- 1.3	- 4.9	- 5.2	- 11.9	- 1.1
<u>HWY 30</u>								
3-Mar	+ 4.2	+ 5.0	+ 31.2	+ 7.8	+ 7.3	+ 17.9	+ 20.5	+ 16.4
4-Mar	- 4.6	+ 28.4	+ 4.5	+ 7.4	+ 27.8	+ 41.8	NC	+ 22.6
5-Mar	+ 7.3	+ 39.8	+ 12.0	+ 38.6	+ 10.2	+ 3.9	+ 4.3	+ 31.2
<u>Sorrento</u>								
3-Mar	- 4.5	+ 8.8	- 2.8	- 14.6	+ 36.7	+ 35.6	+ 14.3	+ 12.1
4-Mar	+ 3.2	+ 25.	+ 11.8	+ 5.3	- 29.9	- 39.9	- 12.0	+ 2.7
5-Mar	+ 15.3	+ 87.2	+ 18.2	+ 29.5	+ 6.1	+ 68.7	+ 12.0	+ 54.0

Pit Stop Exxon and Deli compared to March 3 and 4 with February 25 and 26, 2000 and Mardi Gras weekend of 1999. Since, gasoline prices had climbed from 99 cents per gallon to \$1.50 in one year, the data was reported as total gallons sales:

Date	12-Feb-99	13-Feb-99	25-Feb-00	26-Feb-00	3-Mar-00	4-Mar-00
Gallons of Gasoline Sold	2840 gallons	2479 gallons	2668 gallons	2408 gallons	2486 gallons	2437 gallons

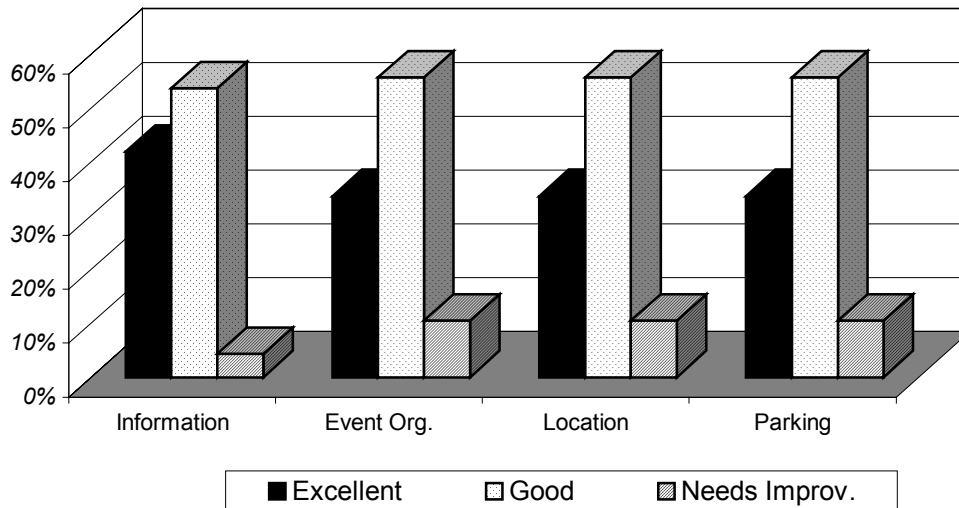
Sales receipts in the store increased, although much is attributed to that week’s large (\$160 million) Powerball jackpot.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING THE 2001 EVENT

Event organizers should be pleased with the overall comments made regarding four major categories: Information, Event Organization, Location, and Parking. Respondents were asked to rate these aspects of the event as either “excellent, good, or needing improvement.” Over 90 percent of the total respondents gave their opinions.

Over 50 percent answered “Good” for all categories. Forty-two percent responded “excellent” to information about the event, while over a third gave a similar rating to the other three categories. There were very few areas of concern. Four of the 93 people answered that the information could be improved. Nine out of the 91 respondents answered that event organization needs improvement. Ten out of 95 responded that the location could be improved. The only area of some concern was parking where 23 out of the 96 answered that it needs improvement. This can be attributed to a shortage of general parking on Friday, a school day.

Figure 7: Spectator Survey Responses



Forty spectators provided open-ended comments at the end of the questionnaire. The comments were categorized as follows: facility, score display, information, positive remarks, future, concessions, and shirts. They have been separated into the following categories.

- Facility. Comments related to uncomfortable seating, lack of bathrooms, a need for better concessions, a larger venue, and free admission.
- Score Display. Comments ranged from the music being too loud, and the scores not being easily readable, as well as a lack of scoreboards covering the different stations. There was also a request for closed captioning on the video.
- Information. Focused on poor signs on the roads and highways to guide spectators and students to the event.
- Positive Remarks. Four commented that the event was good and well organized.
- Future. There were two responses relating to Zachary High School’s desire to host the event, and wanting to see an increase in the number of participants.
- Concessions. There was one request for “Smoothie King” products to be sold at the event.
- Shirts. One response requested that more t-shirts be made available.

Table 2

Category	Comments
Facility	Bathrooms; want to write scores on programs
Facility	Better seating arrangements for parents
Facility	Better seating arrangements; clearer table/result signs
Facility	Better seating for spectators who have driven hours to watch and are overrun by local HS students who go to the event sponsored school
Facility	Bigger gym & better concessions
Facility	Chairs
Facility	Concessions & Bathrooms need improvements
Facility	Free Entrance
Facility	Larger area & help on lifts
Facility	Larger area, more workers to move it quickly, no handicap access
Facility	Larger place for event
Facility	Larger, cleaner facility
Facility	More A/C
Facility	More restrooms
Facility	PA upstairs
Facility	People need to be nice

Facility	Sit closer to lifters
Facility	Women's bathroom facility needs improvement. Concessions were great
Score Display	Can't read names or weights; put sheets where we can see and read. Call names out.
Score Display	Closed captioning on videos
Score Display	Difficult to track multiple stations
Score Display	Lower the music
Score Display	More announcements - the individual names more legible
Score Display	Music too loud on video, couldn't understand the words
Score Display	Not so strict on weight, allow a couple of pounds either way
Information	Better map
Information	Better signs
Information	Dinner for lifters & family only. So they can visit other lifters, exchange info. & thoughts
Information	Hwy sign indicating the event
Information	No signs to HS
Positive Remark	Everything good
Positive Remark	Everything seemed fine & well organized
Positive Remark	Everything was ok
Positive Remark	Very good
Future	More students participating in power lifting
Future	Would like to see Zachary HS host an event
Concessions	Smoothie King should be here
No Category	Only second event attended. Not enough data to answer effectively
Parking	Better identified parking
Shirts	More shirts available