

# Doctors woo sports team from tobacco firm

By Howard Wolinsky

In a medical first in this country, a doctors group has wrested sponsorship of a sports team away from a tobacco company.

The U.S. Boomerang Association's team, which includes the world's No. 1 and No. 2 boomerangers, will be going to the World Cup competition next month in Australia under the flag of Doctors Ought to Care, a health promotion group with more than 6,000 members.

Philip Morris, which sponsors the Virginia Slims tennis tournaments, Marlboro Grand Prix auto race and many other sporting events, was going to pay for the boomerang team's trip until team members were stricken by guilt, Chet Snouffer, captain of the three-man team, told the Chicago Sun-Times last week.

Dr. Alan Blum, DOC chairman

and a faculty member in family medicine at Baylor University in Houston, said, "This a breakthrough in separating sports from tobacco companies. We hope other medical groups will follow our example."



Chet Snouffer.

out of nothing."

Snouffer, 31, who is the top-rated boomerang thrower, said the team desperately needed \$12,000 to attend the World Cup competition in Barooga, Australia, starting May 6.

During competitions, boomerang throwers are ranked in eight events, including accuracy and how long they keep the boomerang aloft.

Snouffer, of Delaware, Ohio, said contact with Philip Morris was made when another team member, Barnaby Ruhe, a New York artist, had an agent try to obtain sponsorship.

"They promised us all kinds of publicity," Snouffer said. "If we'd wear big Philip Morris logos on our chests, they told us we'd be on [ABC-TV's] 'Good Morning America' and so on."

The issue caused "a rift" in the team, Snouffer said. He said his position was supported by Eric Darnell, of South Stratford, Vt., the No. 2 boomeranger, an asthmatic "who falls over dead when he gets near smokers." The third team member, Ruhe, a reformed smoker, favored taking the money to help

get attention for a sport that is little known in this country, said Snouffer.

Meanwhile, Blum heard of the team's dilemma.

He noted that anti-tobacco groups long have been burned up over their foes' sponsorship of sporting events. "It was time to put our money where our mouth is," he said. "Tobacco companies have put enough lungs on the barbie."

Blum, whose group has run its own "Emphysema Slims" tournaments over the last four years, offered to raise the money for the U.S. boomerang team. Thus far, he has lined up \$5,000. He hopes to obtain more from anti-smoking groups and individuals. Donations can be sent to DOC, P.O. Box 31604, Houston, TX 77231.

Weiss said Philip Morris was disappointed because the company felt a tie-in with the boomerang team was a natural after its spon-

sorship last year of Dennis Conner, who recaptured the America's Cup title in yachting from Australia. But he said it was clear, especially after Darnell's physical sensitivity to cigarette smoke came up, that it was in the interest of both sides to end negotiations.

He stressed, however, that Philip Morris, does not require any athletes that it sponsors to smoke or defend smoking.

There was precedent for doctors sponsoring a sports team. In 1980, an Australian eye specialist personally underwrote a cricket team that had been pursued by a tobacco company. The doctor-sponsored team wore anti-smoking logos on its uniforms.

Blum, the new patron of a sports team, said his next step is working up a logo for the boomerangers. "Maybe we'll have a boomerang slicing through a Marlboro pack," he said.