

# Doc

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## Doctors Ought to Care

In a dramatic effort to raise the alarm about the growing influence of tobacco companies on athletes and sports competitions, DOC (Doctors Ought to Care), a national physicians health promotion group, has called on its 7,000 members to provide financial support to a professional sailing team, Mariah SailSport, which on Sunday, May 15, will unfurl a spinnaker with the international no-smoking logo.

"It's time to take a breather from tobacco sponsorship of sports," said Dr. Alan Blum, a Houston family physician who founded DOC in 1977. "Tobacco caused diseases are the largest single preventable causes of deaths and rising medical costs. According to the United States Surgeon General, nearly 400,000 Americans die from using tobacco products each year--from lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease, other cancers, and fire. The cost to the nation is astounding, well in excess of \$60 billion per year, or at least one in every four health care dollars.

"While 1.5 million Americans are stopping smoking each year--one way or another--another 1.2 million teenagers are

taking it up. Sports and other youth-oriented events are fast replacing traditional advertising as the way to hook children and adolescents on tobacco."

DOC is encouraging the use of anti-smoking signage at sporting events in order to be picked up by the television cameras, just as the tobacco industry has used this technique to end-run the law that was designed to end the promotion of smoking on TV.

Blum and DOC president Dr. Rick Richards of Augusta, Georgia condemned the sponsorship contract for Dennis Connors' America's Cup defense later this year which may include as much as \$11 million from Philip Morris, makers of Marlboro cigarettes. DOC also cautioned about the imminent takeover of another class of sailing by a second tobacco company. "Fresh air and tobacco smoke don't mix," said Richards. "Athletic performance and smoking are the opposite of one another. I'm tired of turning on TV and seeing boats associated with drugs."

DOC is also calling upon the Justice Department and congressional committees to investigate the illegal use of television to advertise tobacco products, and to explore the level of cooperation between media corporations and the tobacco industry. ESPN and TNN televise several hours of

tobacco sponsored events each week, and ABC, NBC and CBS all regularly show such events including automobile racing, soccer and tennis.

In recent years DOC has sponsored a variety of events designed to ridicule the tobacco industry, including the Emphysema Slims Tennis Tournament and the Dead Man Chew Softball Championships. Last month DOC became the first American health organization to sponsor a world championship sports team; the U.S. Boomerang Team, which is currently defending its title at an international match in Australia, rejected an offer of \$15,000 from tobacco giant Philip Morris in order to accept funding from DOC and to wear the no-smoking logo on their uniforms.

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