

# Sponsor blasted at Virginia Slims

*Ads lead to death, activists warn*

BY JOHN ALTEN  
STAFF WRITER

About 15 anti-tobacco activists gathered outside the Delray Beach Tennis Center on Sunday to protest Virginia Slims' sponsorship of the annual Virginia Slims of Florida tennis tournament.

## Awareness was goal

The protest was organized by the National Organization for Women's south Palm Beach County chapter. Protesters wanted to create awareness that tobacco advertising leads to deaths, said Sheila Jaffe, NOW chapter vice president.

"We want to raise people's consciousness," Jaffe said. "A lot of people said, 'Yeah, but you don't have to smoke.' But if there was less advertising, maybe there would be less smoking."

The protesters held signs outside the tennis center entrance and encouraged people to sign a petition demanding a new sponsor for the tournament. Jaffe said the group got 200 signatures in a little more than an hour.

"That's pretty good considering city officials were directing people away from us," she said.

Ahron Leichtman, executive director of Citizens for A Tobacco-free Society, said spectators got the message as they walked past the protesters.

"(Spectators) were embarrassed the same way a person wearing a fur coat does when they walk by an animal protester," Leichtman said.

Virginia Slims, a subsidiary of Philip Morris, is withdrawing its sponsorship



MEMIAM SUSHMAN/THE NEWS

**Roz Rothman** of Delray Beach protests the Virginia Slims sponsorship of the tennis tournament in Delray Beach.

of the women's tennis tour next year. Leichtman said his organization will keep protesting as long as Virginia Slims sponsors its six tournaments.

NOW member Carla Cassata said she was protesting out of self-defense for women.

"We don't like being targeted by drug dealers," Cassata said. "That's what they are: legalized drug dealers." □