

# Tennis YES Tobacco NO

# The Palm Beach Post

## Virginia Slims: game, set, death

Thanks to Virginia Slims,  
Lung Cancer Is Now The  
1 Cancer Killer of Women  
(You've Come The Wrong Way Baby!)

Just Say  
NO

8  
ONLY STATES STILL HAVE  
VIRGINIA SLIMS SPONSORSHIP.  
LET'S MAKE IT 7

**T**he Virginia Slims of Florida Tennis Tournament is threatening to leave Boca Raton for Coral Springs in 1993. Good riddance. Please go a long way, baby.

Having a cigarette company sponsor a women's sporting event is like having Ted Bundy sponsor a sorority rush. The difference is that Bundy isn't going to kill any more women. Philip Morris will.



**JAC WILDER VERSTEEG**

A group of physicians called Doctors Ought to Care reports that lung cancer now kills more women than breast cancer. In fact, lung cancer kills more women than any other disease. That gives Philip Morris, maker of Virginia Slims, the right to the television cameras that "We're Number One!"

And TV cameras are a big part of the push by tobacco companies to affiliate themselves with sporting events. Their ads are banned from television, but their logos show up constantly on race cars or on banners prominently displayed in sports arenas or, as in the case of the Virginia Slims tournament, in the name of the event itself.

Because tobacco wrecks health, tobacco's sponsorship of sporting events is so outrageous that only a kid could fail to see the contradictions at work. Bingo. Kids are the target. Girls in particular. While most groups are smoking less, young women are

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lighting up more. Hence the increase in lung cancer. Hence tobacco's interest in links to role models for young women. Hence the Virginia Slims tennis tournament, which features some of the world's finest women athletes. I don't bet on sports much, but I'll bet the winner doesn't smoke.

Virginia Slims presents another jarring contradiction. The brand's famous ads say these cigarettes are for women who've broken free from a male-dominated society. Now, instead of being chained to the sink, women are being chained to nicotine addiction. If she smokes enough, Virginia won't just be slim, she'll be skeletal.

What's to be done about this? In the case of the Virginia Slims tournament, fans have to stop supporting it. And opponents have to make sure the tobacco-sports link gets the negative publicity it deserves.

This year, the Slims tournament still is being played in Boca. Protesters will picket Sunday's matches, gathering at 1 p.m. on the sidewalk outside the entrance to The Polo Club at Military Trail and Champion Boulevard. The protest is sponsored by DOC (which calls it a "house call" rather than a "protest") and by the National Organization for Women. Organizers ask that participants bring a poster and a tennis racket and dress in white.

The goal, by the way, is not to stop the tournament but to change its name. Kraft owns Philip Morris. And you'd think that a seemingly wholesome company like Kraft would sponsor the event under its own name. Instead, the company is exploiting an association between tennis and cigarettes that encourages those cute kids in their macaroni-and-cheese commercials to use a product that will kill them. Now that's the cheesiest.

Should tobacco companies sponsor any sporting events? Maybe some that could more logically be associated with smoking.

- Benson & Hedges Hack and Field Championships. Events include phlegm-flinging and the 10-meter wheeze.

- Doral Open Heart Surgery.

- Kent Swimmers' Invitational. Features top competitors in dead man's float.

- Marlboro Man's Rodeo. Young people are roped in and branded.

- Pall Mall's Football SKills. Longtime smokers compete at halftime in three areas: grunt, gasp and kick the bucket.

- Camel's Iron Man Competition. A tri-packeton event. Heavy smokers eat a big meal, endure a stressful meeting and, if they're still able, make love. All without smoking a cigarette. Will they crack under the intense blood pressure?

There's one other championship open only to tobacco executives, their political lobbyists and the ad people who sell cancer on a stick. The competition is to see who's the most despicable. It will be fierce. It will be called The Virginia Slimes.

Jac Wilder Versteeg is an editorial writer for The Palm Beach Post.