

# Women's tennis still hooked on cigarettes

Has Jenny, the most famous smoker since the Marlboro Man took his last puff, finally kicked the habit?

Who's Jenny? If you're a fan of Steffi Graf, Gabriela Sabatini or Martina Navratilova, or women's tennis in general, you know Jenny. She's the pert young lady silhouetted in the Virginia Slims/Women's Tennis logo, doing what appears to be a deep knee bend.

Jenny has a tennis racquet in her right hand, the shaft draped over her right shoulder. For 20 years, the length of time she's served as the emblem for women's tennis, Jenny has held a cigarette (in a foot-long holder) in her left hand.



**BILL VARNER**

But not this year. Instead of a cigarette in her left hand, some new Virginia Slims logos depict Jenny holding a tennis ball. And this year it's the Kraft General Foods World Tour instead of the Virginia Slims Tour.

Is this a victory for anti-

smoking forces? Have Steffi and Gabriela and Martina finally realized they're contributing to the rapid rise in lung cancer among women, as well as the negligible drop in the percent of women who smoke? Is the Women's Tennis Association ready to kick the habit?

No, Jenny's still hooked, and so are Monica and Katerina and Zina and (as of 1987 figures) one in three American women. As a sport, women's tennis has come a long way, but the WTA still shamelessly accepts nicotine-stained money.

To ease pressure from the anti-smoking movement, Philip Morris simply switched title

sponsors from one of its brand Virginia Slims, to one of its subsidiaries, Kraft. But it's still the Virginia Slims Champions this week at Madison Square Garden. It's still the Virginia Slims Rankings, the Virginia SlimStat system, the Virginia Slims year-end bonus pool and tournaments named Virginia Slims of Chicago, Virginia Slims of Oklahoma, Virginia Slims of Houston, etc.

At least in New York, the future for Virginia Slims is secure. It will remain the title sponsor of the year-end tournament for at least four mor

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years. Madison Square Garden signed a new five-year pact with Slims earlier this year. And the WTA board of directors voted unanimously this year to retain the Slims link.

Nor did Philip Morris ignore Great American Smokeout protests outside Madison Square Garden this week. Up to 40 representatives of such groups as Smokefree Educational Services carried signs declaring "Billie Jean Drug Queen" and "Yes, Virginia, there is lung cancer."

Reporters who interviewed the pickets found themselves approached as they re-entered Madison Square Garden by a Philip Morris representative. Anyone who wished was escorted to a Garden office to get the Philip Morris counterpoint from director of media affairs Sheila Banks-McKenzie.

She said the new logo was nothing more than change for the sake of change, something like the way Barbie dolls evolve, and said the old Jenny wasn't being phased out. She said no one cares about the pickets, that "very few people express displeasure" with Virginia Slims. She also said Mayor David Dinkins was "a little misguided" in his efforts to limit tobacco advertising and sales in New York City.

Tournament director Ella Musolino-Alber noted that attendance has increased every year and is heading for a record this week. She called Virginia Slims a "wonderful sponsor" that has added a "lot of class and sophistication" to the sport. Virginia Slims, she said, is "synonymous with the best in women's tennis."

Musolino-Alber also argued that Virginia Slims has never encouraged the players to smoke or endorse smoking. That's the lame excuse they offer. "We aren't promoting smoking," the players innocently insist.

But they sell T-shirts and other souvenirs featuring Jenny and her cigarette holder. Walk into the press room and a poster-size picture of a group of women players is prominently displayed, including Billie Jean King, front row, wearing a Virginia Slims sweat shirt. There's Jenny, with her cigarette, sprawled across King's chest. There are complimentary packs of cigarettes on every table in the media dining room, for that after-dinner smoke.

"Say 'Virginia Slims' and you think women's tennis as much as cigarettes," Musolino-Alber said.

They just don't get it. Jenny's still hooked. Bill Varner is a staff writer and columnist.

Dear Joe

Perhaps you missed this. He - Varner - should be lauded.

Bill Calver

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## Briefly . . .

Here's our nominee for the year's least-appetizing slogan: "You've Coughed Up Enough Phlegm, Baby." The Women's Medical Association of New York used that motto to protest Virginia Slims cigarettes' sponsorship of women's tennis. One sign at the Madison Square Garden protest read, "Tennis is a sport; smoking is a racket."

► It's where everybody knows your name — and your personal record, too. The Bull & Finch Pub, the inspiration

for the TV series *Cheers*, is sponsoring Boston's 9th Annual Thanksgiving Day Road Race. Don't look for Norm in the 3.1-mile run, though.

► New York Knicks rookie forward Jerrod Mustaf, 21, is not entirely sorry he skipped his last two years at Maryland to join the NBA: "What I do miss is that I didn't get the full college experience." Still, he said, "Education comes from living. I've learned more the last four, five months than I did my whole college career."