



Coalition on Smoking OR Health

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March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation

February 19, 1993

Anne Person-Worcester
Managing Director
Women's International Professional Tennis Council
215 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10003

Dear Ms. Person-Worcester:

The American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and the American Cancer Society, united as the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, writes to strongly urge you to end the Virginia Slims sponsorship of women's professional tennis. Tobacco is responsible for 434,000 deaths each year, and now costs taxpayers an average of \$65 billion annually in lost productivity and health care expenses. Unfortunately, the tobacco industry is often able to hide these facts behind a facade of respectability through sponsorship of events such as yours.

Televised tennis tournaments are seen all over the world, by millions of viewers young and old. Young tennis fans thrill to the skills of stars like Jennifer Capriati, Steffi Graf, Martina Navratilova, and Monica Seles. It is the height of absurdity for these supremely health and skilled athletes to be associated with a message promoting the lethal habit of smoking. Since young females are the only demographic segment of society experiencing an increase in smoking prevalence, it is particularly important that the backdrop of Virginia Slims advertising is not present during competition between young women, viewed by young women. Cigarette advertising in a tennis tournament implies to viewers that the athletes participating also endorse smoking, even though tobacco companies cannot use athletes in their ads and some of the younger players themselves are too young to legally purchase the Virginia Slims cigarettes that are being advertised.

Several years ago, the tobacco industry established a voluntary code which states that, "Cigarette advertising shall not depict as a smoker any person participating in, or obviously having just participated in, physical activity requiring stamina or athletic conditioning beyond that of normal recreation." If the tobacco industry itself admits through its advertising code that the concepts of tobacco use and athletics are incongruous, then how can accepting tobacco sponsorship be justified? (Of course, the industry does not even come

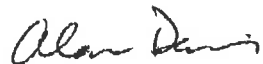
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remotely close to adhering to its code).

The Women's International Professional Tennis Council should take action and end the Virginia Slims sponsorship immediately. The exceptional health and athletic conditioning that is displayed by women in professional tennis should not be tainted through an association with a product that when used as intended kills.

Sincerely,



Alan Davis
Vice President for Public Affairs
American Cancer Society



Scott D. Ballin
Vice President for Public Affairs
American Heart Association



Fran Du Melle
Deputy Managing Director
American Lung Association