

World No Tobacco Day 2002 puts spotlight on tobacco-free sports

World No Tobacco Day is celebrated around the world every year on May 31. The Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes. This yearly celebration informs the public of the dangers of using tobacco; the business practices of tobacco companies; what WHO and its Regional Offices, including the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), are doing to fight the tobacco epidemic; and what people around the world can do to claim their right to health and healthy living and to protect future generations. The 2002 celebration of World No Tobacco Day is especially focused on the marketing practices of the tobacco industry and that industry's use of athletes and sporting events to sell tobacco products.

According to WHO and PAHO, tobacco use is a "communicated" disease, that is, one communicated through advertising and sponsorship. Perhaps the most pernicious form of that marketing is to be found in stadiums and sports arenas worldwide. Tobacco companies pump hundreds of millions of dollars every year into sponsoring sports events. In countries where direct tobacco advertising is banned by law, sponsorship of sports amounts to evasion and manipulation of national laws.

Tobacco companies claim they are sponsoring sports out of a sense of philanthropic duty. Their internal documents, however, tell another story. A 1989 memo from the R.J. Reynolds tobacco company said this: "We're in the cigarette business. We're not in the sports business. We use sports as an avenue for advertising our products. We can go into an area when we're marketing an event, measure sales during an event, and measure sales after the event, and see an increase in sales."

That is no idle boast. When an Indian associate of the British American Tobacco (BAT) group sponsored the Indian World Cup cricket tournament in 1996, a survey showed that smoking among Indian teenagers markedly increased afterwards. There was also a noticeable increase in false perceptions about athletic excellence and smoking. Tobacco companies think that if they can place their logos and branding on enough athletes and in enough stadiums, then people will think that smoking can't really be all that bad. If smoking is associated closely enough with sport, people will think it

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¹ Based on: World Health Organization, Tobacco Free Initiative. Tobacco free sports—play it clean [brochure]. Geneva: WHO/TFI; 2002. Brochure available in full text in Portable Document Format (PDF) from: <http://tobacco.who.int> [Internet site].

must stand for all the same things that sport stands for—for health, excitement, and fitness.

Sport is a celebration of life, while tobacco products cause disease and death. Tobacco now kills more than four million people every year, and it is projected that the toll will climb to more than eight million people annually by the year 2020. Some 70% of those deaths will be in developing countries.

For the professional athlete, tobacco use lowers performance and can end a career. Even for people who play sport at a less intense level—simply throwing a plastic Frisbee disk with their children, taking part in weekend football with friends, or doing a charity fun-run—smoking can affect their ability to perform.

For the spectator at sports events, exposure to second-hand smoke contributes to the development of disease and reduces their enjoyment of the game. For sports teams and facilities, tobacco advertising and sponsorship run counter to the ideals of health and fair play embodied in sports.

Many athletes, sports fans, and spectators are young people. Recent data suggest that one-third of young smokers start before the age of 10, and the vast majority of adult smokers started before the age of 18. Youth consumption of tobacco is up in many parts of the world. Most people who start that young become addicted to nicotine. While tobacco companies claim that they do not target youth, in practice the companies ensure that sponsorship and advertising flourish at events that are attended by and are attractive to youth. Team jerseys and caps, tote bags and T-shirts, fields and stadiums, cars and sports equipment bearing tobacco brand logos all create a positive association between tobacco and the strength, speed, grace, success, fun, and excitement of sports.

A GLOBAL PROBLEM

The tobacco industry spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year sponsoring sports around the world, mainly on high-profile, exciting sports that receive a great deal of television coverage. The reasons why tobacco companies sponsor sporting events include trying to get around advertising restrictions; wanting to associate their cigarettes with healthy, active pursuits; and trying to create an image of respectability for their companies. Sports sponsorship has become increasingly important to the tobacco industry as governments have cut off other promotional routes. In particular, sponsorship has substantially increased since tobacco advertising on television has been banned in most countries.

Tobacco multinationals sponsor sporting events in numerous nations worldwide. For example, in Uganda the leading British American Tobacco (BAT) brand, Sportsman, sponsors the main soccer competition, the Sportsman Kakungulu Cup. In Pakistan, BAT's John Player Gold Leaf brand sponsored an ocean-going sailing boat to undertake a tour around the Indian subcontinent. When the boat arrived for a promotional visit to Karachi, the country's largest city, BAT gave a gift of some US\$ 75 000 to a local radio station for a live broadcast of the climax of the event, a concert for local young people.

In the United Kingdom, two domestic tobacco companies, Imperial and Gallaher, have sponsored events connected to such sports as golf, snooker, cricket, and rugby. In Indonesia, all the country's major tobacco companies sponsor sports competitions, including badminton, boxing, basketball, and soccer.

In the United States, NASCAR motor car racing is the number-one live spectator sport, and the second-most-watched sport on television. Tobacco sponsorship is prominent in the sport, with R.J. Reynolds' Winston brand being the sport's major sponsor. Winston sponsors the Winston Cup, the NASCAR's premier competition, as well as a racing team. Camel (R.J. Reynolds) and Marlboro (Philip Morris) also sponsor events and teams. NASCAR actively markets their sport to children. Race weekends often include live music, rides, contests, and hospitality areas. There is a brand of NASCAR family restaurants as well as racing video games and a new animated television series called "NASCAR Racers."

The tobacco companies' sports-related marketing efforts are not limited to just individual countries. Formula One motor car racing has been the sport most closely associated with tobacco sponsorship. Up to 1999, tobacco sponsorship accounted for around two-thirds of the sponsorship of the sport. In 1999 alone, tobacco companies invested around US\$ 250 million in Formula One teams. However, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), Formula One's governing body, has voluntarily moved to end tobacco sponsorship of the sport by 2006. As a result, the prevalence of tobacco sponsorship, while still extremely high, is beginning to fall.

TOBACCO USE HARMS SPORTING PERFORMANCE AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

While it is well known that tobacco kills, less well known is the effect that smoking can have on people's ability to take part in sports or other kinds of physical activity. In addition to its long-term ef-

New “World Cup” cigarettes generate outrage

Soccer’s world governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), has angrily denounced the launch by South Korea’s largest tobacco producer of a set of special cigarette packs that highlight the sport just weeks before the start of the international World Cup soccer finals. The month-long World Cup finals will be played in Japan and Korea beginning May 31, which is the same date as World No Tobacco Day.

The tobacco company, Korea Tobacco and Ginseng Corporation, plans to produce and sell 10 million packs of its “Time 2002” cigarettes, according to reports from various newspapers and the Reuters and Associated Press wire services. The special packs come in different designs, with ten of them showing pictures of soccer players and ten others with illustrations of traditional Korean dances. The cigarettes will be offered for sale at hotels, airports, duty-free shops, and other locations that tourists are likely to visit.

Since Korea Tobacco did not use the official World Cup logos on the cigarette packages, the company says it did not violate any laws. The company has also said that its intention is to build general enthusiasm for the World Cup games and to introduce Korean traditions to the many foreigners who will be in the country for the soccer matches.

In a very strongly worded response, a FIFA spokesperson pointed out that FIFA has not had a tobacco sponsor for the past 16 years and that FIFA has signed an agreement of cooperation with the World Health Organization for a smoke-free World Cup in Korea and Japan. The FIFA statement continued: “Tobacco has no place in football [soccer] nor in any other sport, and any involvement of any tobacco company is entirely unwanted and actively rejected. Equally regrettable is the fact that some totally unauthorized tobacco company is apparently attempting to imply a relationship between the FIFA World Cup and its product; exactly the contrary is the case, as this product is completely unauthorized and unwanted in the stadiums of the FIFA World Cup and has not the slightest association with this event or its participants. It is the latest example of how the tobacco industry sets out to mislead the public, as it has been doing for so many years now. FIFA remains very conscious of the need to make the public—and especially young people—aware of the dangers of smoking, which are uncontested, and also wishes to ensure that the non-smoking majority can enjoy the games without having to sit in somebody else’s tobacco smoke.”

ffects on health, tobacco use can have short-term effects, especially on lung function, but also on muscular strength and sleep patterns.

Numerous studies have shown that smokers are simply less fit than nonsmokers. For example, in a large study of young army recruits in the United States, smokers were twice as likely as nonsmokers to fail to complete basic training. In studies of endurance exercise, smokers reach exhaustion earlier than nonsmokers and derive less benefit from the training. Other studies have shown that short-term exercise is also affected by smoking. Regular smokers are twice as likely as nonsmokers to discontinue exercise treadmill tests because of symptoms of exhaustion, fatigue, breathlessness, and leg pain. These disadvantages are directly related to the duration of smoking and the number of cigarettes smoked.

Tobacco use affects more than just lung function. For instance, a 1998 study by researchers in India showed that young adult smokers had less muscular strength and flexibility than did nonsmokers. Another study, in the United Kingdom, found that sports participants who smoked had disturbed sleep patterns and other complaints of ill health.

ADVERTISING PROMOTES TOBACCO CONSUMPTION

Tobacco advertising helps persuade nonsmokers to start smoking, and it helps dissuade smokers from quitting. The overwhelming majority of independent research has shown, across cul-

tures, that tobacco advertising and sponsorship is linked to tobacco consumption.

The tobacco industry has always maintained that the only function of advertising is to persuade smokers to switch between brands and that advertising does not affect overall consumption. In fact, the consensus is that while there is no doubt that tobacco advertising can have an effect on the brand of cigarettes chosen by smokers, it also has an effect on the overall size of the market, by influencing whether or not nonsmokers choose to start smoking and whether smokers will try to stop smoking. In addition, advertising is used to maintain brand "equity," that is, the proportion of the product's price that has less to do with the intrinsic value of the product than with the branding that it represents. The cost of producing premium cigarettes is similar to that of producing budget brands. However, people are willing to pay more for a premium product because of the positive associations that the brand has for them. Without advertising, this brand equity will gradually erode.

The overwhelming weight of evidence supports the view that tobacco advertising encourages children to start smoking as well as reinforces the social acceptability of the habit among adults and children. For example, the 1998 report of the United Kingdom's Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health concluded that "tobacco promotion helps to recruit young smokers, and this promotion occurs without manufacturers making clear the true extent of the harm the products cause and the risk of addiction."

A review in 1992 by the United Kingdom Department of Health's Chief Economic Adviser, Dr. Clive Smee, constitutes the most comprehensive study of the link between advertising and tobacco consumption. Smee looked at both the correlation between advertising and consumption in countries where advertising is allowed, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, and at the effect of total advertising bans on tobacco consumption, in countries such as Finland and New Zealand. Smee concluded that the balance of evidence supports the finding that advertising does increase consumption. Reviewing the impact of advertising bans that had been introduced by that time, Smee concluded that in each case, the banning of advertising was followed by a fall in smoking on a scale that could not be reasonably attributed to other factors.

Nevertheless, other research has indicated that while a *comprehensive* set of tobacco advertising bans can reduce tobacco consumption, a *limited* set of bans will have little or no effect. This is because tobacco companies respond to partial bans by diverting resources from the restricted to the unrestricted media.

The World Bank reached similar conclusions about the need for comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising and promotion in a 1999 publication entitled *Curbing the Epidemic: Governments and the Economics of Tobacco Control*. The Bank estimated that the effect of a total ban on tobacco advertising in high-income countries would be a reduction of around 7% in tobacco consumption.

SPORTS WITHOUT TOBACCO

Some people fear that a withdrawal of tobacco sponsorship will harm sports that are currently heavily sponsored by cigarette brands. However, much evidence shows that this is not the case. Many sports have voluntarily given up tobacco sponsorship money. This includes the world's two biggest sporting events, the Olympic Games and the World Cup soccer competitions, which have not suffered financially as a result. Since the late 1980s the Olympic movement has been tobacco-free. The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the world soccer governing body, has refused to take tobacco sponsorship at any of its events since 1987 (see sidebar entitled "New 'World Cup' cigarettes generate outrage").

There are many other examples of sports teams, sports federations, and countries that have decided to do away with tobacco sponsorship. In India the national cricket team recently ended its long-term association with Wills Cigarettes, a subsidiary of British American Tobacco. This is a significant step, given the growing importance of India as a television market for cricket.

In 1992 the Government of Australia passed legislation banning tobacco sponsorship of national and state sporting events. Since 1996, when the ban went into effect, there has been no evidence that the ban has harmed Australian sports participants or sporting organizations, from either the perspective of raising revenue or of sporting achievement. In fact, between 1996 and 2000, annual support by other kinds of corporations for Australian sports rose from US\$ 350 million to US\$ 700 million.

The time has come to remove tobacco from sports, according to WHO. A comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship is one way to reach this goal. WHO's 191 Member States are currently negotiating these and other crucial issues in the development of the world's first legally enforceable treaty on tobacco, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC will mesh science and economics with legislation and regulation and in some cases, litigation. It will seek solutions for problems such as global tobacco advertising and smuggling, which are both

issues that cut across national boundaries, cultures, age groups, and socioeconomic strata.

Under pressure by this global call for an end to the deception and the resulting death, tobacco companies are unleashing yet another attempt to derail meaningful regulation of their corporate activity. Companies such as British American Tobacco, Philip Morris, and Japan Tobacco now promise to enforce "International Marketing Standards." They propose to enforce these standards voluntarily and to target advertising only at adults who smoke. WHO says no country has succeeded in designing regulations—especially voluntary ones—that eliminate children's exposure to tobacco advertising while permitting advertising aimed at adult smokers.

The 2002 "Play It Clean" campaign for tobacco-free sports

In response to the global appeal for action, WHO and its partners are launching a campaign to clean sports of all forms of tobacco consumption as well as exposure to second-hand smoke and tobacco advertising, promotion, and marketing. This year the theme of World No Tobacco Day is tobacco-free sports, with a special slogan of "Play It Clean." Joining with WHO in this campaign are organizations that include the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Olympic Committee, the FIFA soccer association, the FIA car racing group, and regional and local sports groups. Tobacco-free events have been organized all over the world, including the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games in the United

States and the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Japan and the Republic of Korea. Through this new campaign and other actions, WHO is urging people everywhere to take back their right to health and healthy living and to protect future generations from the preventable death and disease caused by tobacco.

SINOPSIS

El Día Mundial sin Tabaco se centra en eliminar el tabaco del mundo del deporte

El Día Mundial sin Tabaco se celebra en todo el mundo el 31 de mayo. Los Estados Miembros de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) crearon el Día Mundial sin Tabaco en 1987 con el fin de llamar la atención del mundo entero a la epidemia de tabaquismo y a las enfermedades y muertes prevenibles que el tabaquismo causa. Mediante esta celebración anual se le proporciona al público información sobre los peligros de consumir productos del tabaco; las prácticas comerciales de la compañías tabacaleras; lo que están haciendo la OMS y sus Oficinas Regionales, entre ellas la Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS), para combatir la epidemia de tabaquismo; y lo que pueden hacer las personas en cualquier parte para hacer valer su derecho a la vida y a vivir sanamente y para proteger a las generaciones futuras. La celebración en 2002 del Día Mundial sin Tabaco se centra específicamente en las prácticas de mercadeo de la industria del tabaco y cómo esta aprovecha a los atletas y los acontecimientos deportivos para vender sus productos. Este artículo resume el contenido de un folleto especial preparado por la OMS para proveer información sobre el Día Mundial sin Tabaco y el tema central de este año, que es eliminar el tabaco del mundo del deporte.
