

control advocates from around the world congratulated their Canadian colleagues for ensuring that a tobacco ad-free event was beamed into their countries. Certainly, compared to the Malaysian debacle earlier this year (Malaysia: racing round the hurdles, *Tobacco Control* 2004;13:106–7), the tobacco presence seemed relatively modest yet, up close, it was far more significant, even if at times more subtle.

Massive, pre-race French and English language press coverage included file photos from earlier Grand Prix in Montreal and elsewhere showing “Schumi” and his Marlboro colours and logos as dominant in print as they are on the racetrack. Even without the logos in race and victory podium photos, the Marlboro colours are as evocative as ever. There’s a reason why Philip Morris intends to continue sponsoring Ferrari, even after the European Union’s ban on tobacco advertising comes into force in 2006. The response might not share the sense of urgency and immediacy displayed by Pavlov’s dogs’ rings—smokers are always writing letters to editors huffily declaring they don’t light up just because they’ve seen an F1 driver on a billboard—but it’s an equally real reaction all the same.

In Montreal, the most cynical element of the industry’s “adaptation” to the law came from Benson & Hedges, which blocked out some letters on its cars’ spoilers to form “Be on Edge”. As edgy as a message can be, it forced viewers to mentally complete the brand name, aided by the usual, evocative yellow and black colours. BAT’s Lucky Strike car placed “Look Left” and “Look Right” on either wing, another cheeky name variation.

After the Montreal Grand Prix, four of the top finishers were disqualified for technical violations. Even when the race is over, then, the results are not always what they appear to be. Schumacher continues to win—he took the US Grand Prix a week after Montreal, with his and team mate Rubens Barrichello’s Marlboro logos covered up while those of BAT’s Takuma Sato were not, due to differing team obligations related to the US Master Settlement Agreement—and Big Tobacco continues to adapt. The Chinese Grand Prix may ban billboards but allow logos on cars and drivers. In India, health officials worry that billboards of Schumacher may constitute “surrogate advertising for a tobacco product”, but confusion reigns.

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) insists that each party to the convention “shall, in accordance with its constitution or constitutional principles, undertake a comprehensive ban of all tobacco

advertising, promotion and sponsorship”. Will that be enough to red flag tobacco industry sponsorship of F1 racing, or will the industry just keep motoring through the chicanes with its own special blend of cleverness, daring, and chicanery? The view from Montreal is decidedly unclear. A complaint about tobacco industry “creativity” has been filed with Health Canada, but it’s uncertain whether anything will be different when next year’s race spins around.

STAN SHATENSTEIN
shatensteins@sympatico.ca

USA/World: TFK’s QuiTIP database

The Washington DC based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) has developed a new resource, the Quitting and Reducing Tobacco Use Inventory of Products database, or QuiTIP for short. This free, searchable online database currently contains information on around 80 different products sold in the USA and internationally as tobacco use cessation aids ([https://secure.tobaccofreekids.org/Cessation/.](https://secure.tobaccofreekids.org/Cessation/))

Information on each product (taken from product labels and websites) includes details about the manufacturers, directions for use, product ingredients, warnings, disclaimers, and health claims, together with images of the products and/or their packaging. The products are grouped in two categories: those approved for use in the USA, and all others, such as homeopathic, dietary, and nutritional supplements, and herbal remedies—the vast majority on the database fall into this second category. In addition, evidence of product effectiveness is quoted from US and international public health authorities, and there are links to relevant evidence based reviews and statutory provisions in US legislation, including those against misleading and deceptive claims. The database does not include any behavioural interventions, but does provide links to evidence about which are effective.

Vietnam: health wins at South-East Asia games

Last year saw a double first for the South East Asian Games (SEA Games), a regional athletics event held every two years. Eleven countries participated in the prestigious event, the 22nd in the contest’s history, but it was the first time it had been hosted by Vietnam, and

the first time it was designated tobacco-free.

This meant much more than simply banning smoking in sports arenas; all related venues, indoor or outdoor, training areas, athletes’ living quarters and staff areas, were made smoke-free, and a comprehensive range of other measures aimed to ensure that any opportunity for promotion was left where it belongs—in the hands of health, not tobacco.

Key players in the substantial task of planning and implementing the policy included the World Health Organization (WHO)—the move was initiated to support the tobacco-free sports strategy developed by its Western Pacific region in 2002—and Vietnam’s ministry of health, through its national tobacco control programme VINACOSH (Vietnam Committee on Smoking and Health).

A pivotal aspect of the plan was a Memorandum of Agreement signed by all the main players, which acted as a catalyst for action and clarified many practical issues. A model of comprehensiveness, it defined “tobacco-free” and “smoke-free” games as: “having no tobacco sales, sponsorship, advertising, or any form of promotion permitted at any games site. Smoking to be permitted only in designated areas, and substantial efforts made to provide useful and accurate information about tobacco use to athletes, spectators, staff, and other visitors attending the 22nd SEA games.”

WHO provided technical assistance in developing the regulations, and financial support for training workshops for volunteers, on site officials and key staff. It also supported VINACOSH and the organising committee in implementing the policies, and provided accurate information about the harmful effects of tobacco to athletes, officials, referees, spectators, staff, and other visitors, and for wider health promotion in Vietnam.

The training workshops, policy communication, and public education and information, including television spots, billboards, and features in the press, were all major tasks in themselves; and as befits any worthwhile public health activity, the plan was carefully evaluated. Results found a high level of success overall, with generally good compliance. There was no evidence of tobacco promotion or sales at any venues, and little smoking at indoor venues, including press areas. While there was some smoking in outdoor venues, especially the main stadium, there was scarcely any at all at major events such as the opening and closing ceremonies.

Local health workers felt that apart from achieving its primary objectives,



Poster promoting the first ever smoke-free South-East Asia games.

the exercise had also produced wider gains for public health. It reinforced existing tobacco control policies and put tobacco firmly on the agenda, not just in Vietnam, but in all 11 participating countries, whose ministers of health all received detailed information about it. Health officials spoke of excellent inter-agency cooperation and support, and significantly increased knowledge and awareness of the health effects of smoking over a wide ranging population. WHO provided some US\$30 500 for the implementation of the policy, making its success seem exceptional value for money, and enabling Vietnam to provide a valuable lead for others to follow.

South Africa: courting success

When Ken Sheppard, possibly the only tobacco control advocate in the world to use a Rolls Royce in his work (see *Tobacco Control* 2000;9:131), first encountered the Mossel Bay Magistrates Court, it was a horror story of indiscriminate smoking. To Sheppard, who has filed many a pro-health case in the court, it seemed that every one of the several hundred people going about their business there was a smoker. The majority were those summonsed to answer various offences, but police officers, lawyers and members of the public were smoking, too. To even suggest making the court smoke-free seemed ludicrous.

By 2002, serious efforts were at last being made to isolate smokers into designated areas, but with little success. Sheppard and his Tobacco Control Centre argued that the only workable

solution was to make the court entirely smoke-free; and by 2003, it was. Court security personnel were instructed to order anyone smoking to either leave the building or extinguish their cigarettes immediately. Interestingly, some of the worst offenders and the last to hold out were police and court employees. With the interior now smoke-free, the smokers predictably gathered at the entrance, forming a smoky cloud through which non-smokers had to battle as they went in or out. At last, a senior magistrate decided that enough was enough, and agreed to the court displaying signs in both official

languages with the message, “No smoking within 10 metres of entrance”. This, along with large ash bins some 20 metres from the entrance, has at long last done the trick.

The effort required to rid the court of tobacco smoke pollution was enormous, and success was only possible because non-smoking court officials were determined that their workplace should be a healthy environment. Sheppard is modest about his own role in the achievement, which sets a helpful example for other courts in the country; but as he is a person for whom the word “persistent” might have been invented, we can be sure his frequent presence in the court in the course of his work was not unconnected.

Sri Lanka: BAT uses religion, ousts quit charity scheme

In May, Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC), the Sri Lankan subsidiary of BAT, organised the donation of alms to devotees celebrating Vesak (the birth, attainment of Buddhahood, and passing away of Buddha) at Ranmuthugala Buddhist temple. Its priests were also offered alms the following day by the country's President at his official residence, reportedly with CTC officials in attendance. Traditional Vesak lanterns made from cartons of CTC's Gold Leaf cigarettes were also seen at the temple. Ironically, they had been made by residents of a rehabilitation centre for victims of alcohol, tobacco, and heroine.



Entrance to the Mossel Bay Magistrates Court in South Africa, where smoking is now banned, with a sign saying in both official languages “No smoking within 10 metres of entrance”.