



THE WRIGHT WAY / DON WRIGHT

Women shouldn't be exploited to promote our sport!

I recently read a column by Dick Evans in which he quotes LPGA golfer Laura Diaz as saying, "The LPGA needs to acknowledge that a lot of people watch women's sports more for the women themselves than the sport. We have quite a few attractive women [on the golf tour], and we should use our looks to our advantage. After all, what's wrong with seeing an occasional bellybutton?"

I wonder how many women would be out to get a male reporter or broadcaster fired for making a remark like that? The term "sexist" comes to mind.

Evans opined that "there are many attractive women on the Professional Women's Bowling Association national tour, but you would never know it from the PWBA's drab dress code during competition."

I guess I have to agree with both Diaz and Evans: You only have to look at women's sports in general to realize that both are right.

Tennis player Anna Kournikova is described by writers as beautiful, glamorous, and sexy. She has had considerable coverage in *Sports Illustrated*, even though after six years as a professional she has yet to win a singles tournament. She is currently ranked 74th out of the top 100. Many believe her failure on

tour is due to other interests such as modeling.

Playboy allegedly offered a six-figure deal to WNBA forward Lisa Harrison to pose nude for its magazine after she was the winner of their "Sexiest Babes of the WNBA" contest on *Playboy.com*.

The *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue is their biggest seller and used to promote subscriptions for the magazine.

Evans, an ABC and PBA Hall of Famer, concludes: "Listen, times change and you have to go with the flow. For some reason, bellybuttons are fashionable these days. Many think that revealing outfits are one reason why women's pro tennis is enjoying such a surge in TV ratings and tournament prize funds. Thus I say, down with any dress code and up with individuality. The PWBA Tour needs all the help that it can get ... a few bellybuttons might just unbutton some advertising dollars on Madison Avenue."

He may be right, but for everyone who agrees, there will be two who disagree. I recall watching a sports show in which several female athletes were discussing a photograph that was taken of a member of the women's swim team. The athlete had on a pair of shorts depicting the American flag and her arms were crossed over her bare chest. Most of the women on the show thought it lacked taste and should not have been done.

Now I realize that we are talking bellybuttons here and not nudity; however, bad taste is in the eye of the beholder. The last thing we need to do is turn off our viewers and fans.

Times are changing, and Venus Williams has changed tennis wear considerably. But tennis was more popular when there was good competition. What Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, or Chris Evert wore had little to do with what made the sport popular. And, let's face it, not all tennis and golf stars look like Kournikova or Annika Sorenstam.

I can't think of a women's sport in which there are not beautiful women. Call me a prude if you like, but I don't think we have to exploit that to increase our audience.

How do you ladies feel about it?

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