

# Financial windfall seen for match

*An event with the Williams sisters would have made millions, an expert says.*

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WEST PALM BEACH — A successful battle-of-the-sexes tennis tournament would have put between \$5.5 million and \$7.7 million into the pockets of two promoters who claim they were bilked by the famous Williams family, an accountant testified Thursday.

While the figure is less than the \$9 million Carol Clarke and Keith Rhodes said they would have made had Venus, Serena and father Richard Williams honored alleged promises to participate in the 2001 event, accountant Robert Zucker left no doubt that the match could have been a resounding success.

In pay-per-view revenue alone, it would have been one of the biggest sporting events of all time, ranking alongside the millions promoters raked in on the 2002 Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis heavyweight title match, Zucker testified. At the time, the bout was the highest-grossing sports event ever, he said.

Faced with an incredulous reaction from attorney F. Malcolm Cunningham Jr., who represents the famous tennis-playing sisters, Zucker held his ground.

"Women's tennis was exploding in 2000," he said. "The dominance of the emergence of the Williams sisters was a major factor in the explosion of women's tennis."

In addition, Zucker repeatedly asserted, his analysis of how much money the failed match could have made was conservative.

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## Defense disputes boxing comparison

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Cunningham countered that the figures the jury will weigh when they decide the breach-of-contract lawsuit are far from scientific. He dismissed Zucker's analysis as little more than "a book report" by an accountant who knows nothing about promoting sporting events. He said Zucker merely read newspaper accounts of how much money was generated by various boxing matches, plugged them into a spreadsheet and declared it a revenue projection.

Further, Cunningham said, a boxing match has little in common with a tennis match. He said the Tyson-Lewis match was watched by 2 million home viewers who paid \$60 a pop. By comparison, the 1992 battle-of-the-sexes match pitting Martina Navratilova against Jimmy Connors was watched by a meager 120,000 viewers who paid \$24.95 each.

Still, Zucker stood firm on his projection that the doomed match featuring the Williams sisters would generate \$15 million in pay-per-view revenue alone.

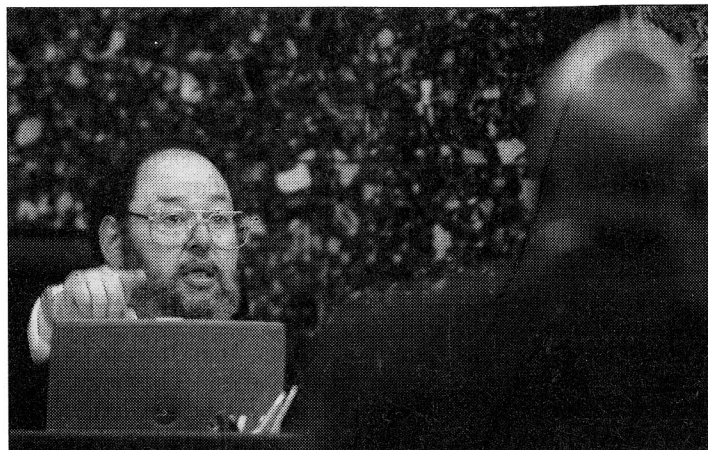
"You're comparing apples and oranges," Zucker said. "You're looking 10 years into the future, and you're talking about Connors and Navratilova, who did not have the global appeal that the Williams sisters did."

Zucker, whose Boca Raton firm was paid \$81,000, painted two scenarios for the proposed Wow Event, pitting the Williams sisters against two male tennis greats. In both, the once-top-ranked sisters would have traded ground strokes with retired tennis players John McEnroe and Connors, who would have been paid a total of \$4.13 million.

The most lucrative option would have been to hold the match at an arena. Using ticket prices from the 2005 NCAA Final Four basketball tournament adjusted for inflation, Zucker estimated the average ticket price at \$400. Based on a sellout crowd of 40,000, ticket sales would have generated \$16 million.

With sponsorships, merchandise sales, closed-circuit TV sales and replay rights, Zucker estimated, an arena event would have made \$38.7 million after an projected \$7.2 million in expenses.

According to the disputed



RICHARD GRAULICH/Staff Photographer.

Judge Jeffrey Winikoff listens Thursday to defense attorney F. Malcolm Cunningham Jr., who dismissed expert analysis as a 'book report.'

contract Richard Williams signed, he would have gotten to keep 80 percent of the profits, or roughly \$31 million, and Rhodes and Clarke would have pocketed the other 20 percent.

Zucker's other scenario was to hold the event at a casino. He claimed a casino would have paid \$8 million to host the event in return for keeping the ticket revenue. With most of the other rev-

enues and expenses staying the same, he estimated, a casino event would make \$27.8 million after expenses.

Zucker is expected to spend most of today on the stand defending how he came up with his figures.

Testimony has dragged in a lawsuit trial that was to wrap up by Dec. 15. It is now likely to continue into the week of Dec. 18.

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