

CORRECT CALL ON FED CUP

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Delray Beach caught some criticism for spending money on a major **tennis** event that happened to take place just after the inquest into the death of Jerrod Miller. The first had nothing to do with the second.

The city spent \$150,000 to attract the Fed Cup match between teams from the United States and Belgium. It is to women's **tennis** what the Davis Cup is to men's - top-level international competition. The matches drew about 4,000 people both days to Delray's **tennis** center on West Atlantic Avenue, crowds as healthy as those that came last year to a quarterfinal match of the Davis Cup. Mayor Jeff Perlman estimated that the city's investment, offset by \$40,000 from the county's Tourist Development Council and \$20,000 from sponsorships, returned between \$2 million and \$3 million in business. Plus, ESPN2 broadcast the event worldwide, meaning that it also broadcast Delray Beach worldwide. Whatever the actual numbers, spending the money paid off. With that success, the city hopes to persuade the United States **Tennis** Association to make Delray a regular stop in April for one or both tournaments, if schedules work out. The city has a strong case, and it has a terrific venue as a selling point.

Twelve years ago, Delray opened the \$5.6 million **tennis** center as part of downtown renaissance. With 18 courts as well as the stadium, the complex remains the best in the area. Some in Delray have complained that the center hasn't turned a profit. Brahm Dubin, whose company manages the center, estimates that Delray's current annual subsidy is about \$350,000. But while finances are important, the bottom line itself never was the main reason for building the center. Mr. Dubin is correct when he says the center is meant to be "affordable" for the public and to act as "a marketing arm" of Delray Beach, much like the popular Old School Square that is just across Swinton Boulevard from the center. That complex opened before the **tennis** center and received a subsidy of \$210,000 in this year's budget.

When Delray Beach built the **tennis** center, the idea was to attract people from throughout the city. That sentiment continues. For the Fed Cup, 200 tickets were distributed each day to minority children. "And they were here," Mr. Dubin said. Free clinics were held for children. It helped that the American team captain, Zina Garrison, and the two best-known players, Serena and Venus Williams, are African-American.

With all the emotion that Jerrod Miller's death has generated, it was unrealistic to think that the subject wouldn't come up during such a large public event as the match. But the city's involvement showed the right priorities, not the wrong ones.