

Quiksilver Manager Leaves Over Facebook Comments

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Quiksilver confirmed Monday that surf-team manager Chad Wells has abruptly left the Huntington Beach company in the wake of derogatory comments made on his personal Facebook page in defense of a controversial video ad by women's surf outfitter Roxy, one of Quiksilver's sister companies.

The clip is a teaser for the Roxy Pro Biarritz contest, part of the 2013 Women's World Championship Tour of Surfing. Set to background music with thumping club beats, the video follows the beach-toned and scantily clad body of a faceless female surfer as she gets ready to paddle out, and features shots of her in bed and in the shower.

Since its debut in January, the video has drawn complaints and prompted a petition against Roxy that has garnered 1,500 signatures. Critics have likened the video, which has more than 1.8 million views on Youtube, to a voyeuristic lingerie ad in a sport that often struggles with rampant sexism.

Earlier this month, Wells posted several Facebook comments defending the clip. "Some butchy lesbos were representing surfing [in the past]—not rigged out sexy women who are in touch with their sexuality and know exactly how they are represented and marketed," he wrote. "(One) well ridden wave at the end of this clip would've made the critics happy." He later added, "The 'average' dude may be drawn in by the sex appeal but anyone that loves surfing watches the women's heats now because they are RIPPING!"

Quiksilver swiftly issued a statement: "We took immediate action....The inappropriate and hurtful language contained in the

post goes against our company and brand values, and is inconsistent with our long-standing policy of inclusiveness and dedication to supporting all athletes and fans. We do not stand for intolerance and this employee is no longer with the company.”

The mystery star of the Roxy video was later revealed to be five-time surf champion Stephanie Gilmore, who said the anonymity was designed to inspire curiosity and introduce her as the newest member of the Roxy surf team. Roxy responded on Facebook, “We believe all athletes are naturally beautiful, in and out of the water. You certainly don't have to be sexy to be an athlete, and we also believe it's not wrong to be an athlete and to be sexy, if you choose to be. We don't judge one to be better than the other and we don't believe in excluding one for other.”

Ira Kalb, a marketing professor at USC's Marshall School of Business, said he doesn't think business will be affected because both Roxy and Quiksilver have handled the incident well. “The message won't affect sales unless it becomes a big issue for the target audience, and I don't think it will, because with athletes, men and women, sex is often brought in.”

The Roxy Pro in Biarritz, France originally was scheduled for July 10-14, but postponed to late September because of poor surf conditions.

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