

Deal Means AT&T's Logo Will Race NASCAR Tracks Until 2009

The six-month fight over a corporate logo on NASCAR driver Jeff Burton's No. 31 Chevrolet settled Sept. 7 as Burton prepared to race in Richmond, Va.

NASCAR and AT&T Mobility Inc. officially ended their legal feud in a confidential out-of-court settlement that will allow Burton to display AT&T's blue-and-white globe logo on No. 31 for the next 18 months, according to a news release by Richard Childress Racing, for whom Burton drives.

But Childress must find a new corporate sponsor to replace AT&T by the beginning of the 2009 season to preserve an exclusive sponsorship agreement between AT&T competitor Sprint-Nextel and NASCAR.

As NASCAR announced the settlement late Friday, Childress immediately began restoring AT&T's logo on Car 31. The car used to carry the orange jack of Cingular Wireless, which was allowed as a corporate sponsor despite Sprint-Nextel's exclusive sponsorship of what was once known as the Winston Cup.

But when Cingular merged in January with AT&T and was eliminated as a brand, AT&T attempted to replace Cingular's corporate logo with its own.

Prompted by Sprint-Nextel, which had paid more than \$700 million for what was intended to be an exclusive telecommunications sponsorship of the Nextel Cup, NASCAR objected to the new logo, and AT&T sued.

"We're pleased to have resolved the matter," said David Balser, a partner with McKenna Long Aldridge in Atlanta who represented AT&T Mobility.

Richard L. Robbins, a partner at Sutherland Asbill & Brennan here who represented NASCAR, called the settlement "a win, win, win situation."

AT&T's logo will adorn Burton's car during an 18-month transitional period, according to Robbins. Sprint-Nextel secures a termination date for AT&T's presence in the sport. The dispute is resolved, and Childress "gets taken out of an awkward situation," Robbins said.