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Sports Business

Sparks fly in Mavericks–Stars court hearing



A 2022 file photo showcases the American Airlines Center's primary tenants: the Dallas Stars and Dallas Mavericks. The two pro sports teams are now feuding in court over control of the facility.

JAKE DEAN



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The latest step in the legal showdown between the Dallas Mavericks and Dallas Stars brought together two of the most high-profile names in North Texas sports on March 6, as well as their high-powered legal teams.

The Dallas Morning News' Brad Townsend was there and captured the scene presided over by Judge Bill Whitehill in a Texas Business Court hearing on the campus of SMU.

The judge did not immediately rule on any of the motions seeking summary judgement, so a trial is still tentatively set for May 11.

Instead, the hearing was notable for the fireworks on display as lawyers for both sides – including Jackson Walker as Mavs outside counsel and Winstead for the Stars – collided in court.

The barbs included a request from Frank Carroll of Winstead to deny "the Las Vegas Mavs' – excuse me, Dallas Mavericks' – motion for summary judgment."

The dispute kicked off in October when the ownership group of the Mavericks, under the name Dallas Sports Group LLC, [sued the Stars owners](#), alleging the NHL team violated both teams' 1998 franchise agreement with the city of Dallas. That deal, reached ahead of the American Airlines Center's opening in 2001, requires both teams to be headquartered within Dallas city limits.

Stars owners, under the name DSE Hockey Club LP, fired back with their own lawsuit last fall and [accused Dallas Sports Group of being based in Las Vegas](#). The Mavs are majority owned by the Adelson and Dumont families of Las Vegas, who also control casino company Las Vegas Sands Corp.

The Stars argue the Mavs have long known about their HQ location outside Dallas, in Irving in the '90s and then starting in Frisco in 2003. And Whitehill raised the question of the lawsuit's timing with attorneys for the Mavericks.

Jackson Walker's Chip Babcock explained "nobody wanted to rock the boat," Townsend reported. Babcock said the argument boiled down to who was willing to maintain the American Airlines Center. Leases for the Mavs and Stars at the AAC end in 2031 and the Stars are [considering an alternative offer to move to Plano](#), while the Mavs' arena search is focused on downtown Dallas and the former Valley View mall.

For now, both sides had to be content with reinforcing their early legal arguments while trading a few witticisms. As Carroll quipped about Dallas Sports Group during last week's hearing: "It's a Vegas corporation that traded Luka [Doncic] for a bag of magic beans."

For more, check out [Townsend's story in the DMN](#).