David Bell and Mike McArthur in Intellectual Property Magazine: Name Drop

By David A. Bell, Michael A. McArthur | October 2, 2020

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It's official: the Washington Redskins are no more. Well, the name, that is. Despite team owner Daniel Snyder's famous 2013 proclamation – "We'll never change the name. It's that simple. NEVER. You can use caps" – the National Football League (NFL) team announced the retirement of the 'Redskins' name and logo on 13 July 2020.

The team's name has long been a controversial talking point, with critics claiming the term 'Redskins' is a racial slur and a negative stereotype towards Native Americans.

What's next? A rebrand, accompanied by the task of selecting and protecting a new name. Any large rebrand can be costly and arduous, but it is even more complex for sports franchises. Given the public spotlight, counterfeiting concerns, and the myriad licensing and merchandising issues for beloved teams, rebranding from the Redskins would be challenging enough without the controversy surrounding the name change and the ramifications of its public retirement without a more permanent replacement on hand.

On 20 July, the team proceeded with a placeholder – the Washington Football Team. The organisation's leadership, marketing team and trademark counsel now have more than sufficient time to settle on a more permanent name. The trademark legal issues Washington will face during the next year are considered below.

Excerpted from *Intellectual Property Magazine*. To read the full article, click here.

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