

# Tebow Trade Leads to Legal Dispute Between Apparel Companies

by Anthony Caruso on April 3, 2012

Regardless of whether you think the New York Jets' acquisition of Tim Tebow is a good idea, I think we can all agree that controversy seems to follow the young quarterback. Nike recently filed a sports lawsuit against Reebok for selling New York Jets apparel with Tebow's name.

According to the lawsuit, Nike has the exclusive rights to use Tim Tebow's name on clothing. Interestingly, the dispute has a lot to do with the timing of the Tebow trade, which occurred in what is generally a quiet month for the NFL.

As reported by CNN, at the time Tebow was traded, no company had the rights to sell licensed NFL apparel with both the team's name or logo and a player's name on it. That's because the NFL is switching from Reebok to Nike as its exclusive apparel outfitter. Two different agreements cover the licensing of NFL apparel—one addresses the use of players' names, which transitioned on March 1, and other, which deals with NFL teams, did not take effect until April 1.

In addition to the pending lawsuits, the provisions in these rights deals have also lead to a shortage of Tebow jerseys for Jets fans. Although the official outfitter of the NFL generally keeps a stock of blank jerseys for situations like this, Reebok discontinued production because its agreement was ending.

Ironically, there was also a shortage of blank Denver Broncos apparel when Peyton Manning signed with the team, due in large part to Tebow's surging popularity during Denver's playoff run at the end of last season.

As this case highlights, licensing agreements can have a host of potentially unintended consequences. Therefore, it is important to consult with an experienced sports law attorney.