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ABD keeps its name during Wells Fargo lawsuit



By [Chris Rauber](#) – Reporter, San Francisco Business Times
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Round one goes to the new ABD, but the bout ain't over yet.

ABD Insurance & Financial Services, the reborn San Mateo-based brokerage that snatched its name back from Wells Fargo Insurance Services, has won a preliminary round in court against Wells in the naming dispute.

U.S. District Court Judge Phyllis Hamilton ruled March 8 against Wells Fargo's request for a preliminary injunction that would have forced ABD to stop using its moniker at least until the federal suit is resolved.

Hamilton said Wells' San Carlos-based insurance unit did not appear to have kept "its trademark registrations current" for the ABD name.

Not surprisingly, officials at ABD considered the ruling "very good news for us," while Wells said it "respectfully" disagreed with the court and would appeal the ruling.

Wells acquired the original ABD brokerage, originally known as Alburger Basso de Grosz Insurance Services, six years ago and made it a key part of the foundation for its Wells Fargo Insurance Services insurance brokerage, one of the nation's largest.

But Kurt de Grosz, son of one of the original firm's founders, discovered two years ago that Wells had allegedly let the ABD name lapse, so he grabbed it back.

Not only that, but the reborn ABD nabbed about 75 former Wells Fargo staffers to help it launch the new firm. ABD is led by co-chairman, president and co-founder de Grosz, and CEO and co-founder Brian Hetherington, who headed Wells Fargo's insurance unit in the region until January 2012, when he says he was forced out.

Wells promptly fired back at ABD with two mid-2012 lawsuits, the July 24 District Court suit over alleged misappropriation of the ABD name and trademark, and a July 31 filing in Santa Clara Superior Court alleging that some former Wells staffers conspired against the company and breached their duty of loyalty to Wells by planning and executing a mid-summer 2012 exodus to help relaunch the rival firm. Wells later filed for the preliminary injunction Nov. 30.