

Don Nelson wins \$6.3M settlement from Mark Cuban

Posted 8/1/2008 2:56 PM

DALLAS (AP) — Mavericks owner Mark Cuban must immediately pay Don Nelson \$6.3 million, an arbitrator ruled in settling a long-running battle over the former Dallas coach's compensation package.

Nelson, now the Golden State Warriors' coach, claimed the money was owed to him from his time with the Mavericks from 1997-2005. The arbitrator, retired Judge Glen M. Ashworth, also rejected Cuban's claim that Nelson used "confidential information" to help the Warriors upset the top-seeded Mavs in the first round of the 2007 playoffs.

While the matter was resolved Thursday when the ruling was handed down, there are still plenty of hard feelings.

"He's relieved but feels that it never should have come to this, that Cuban had withheld this money really out of spite and it was just unnecessary," Nelson's attorney, John O'Connor, said by phone from his San Francisco home on Friday. "So, while Nelson's happy and relieved, he's not happy that he had to go through this and that Cuban would do this. We consider it a pretty shameful episode."

Cuban said in an e-mail to the Associated Press that he will pay now that the ruling is in place, but still contends that Nelson and his attorney aren't being truthful.

"The sad thing about the entire situation is that if Nellie would have come to me and asked to get out of his contract so that he could coach the GS Warriors, I would have let him," Cuban wrote. "Instead, he lied about it all and it took a lawsuit to find out the facts."

The Warriors hired Nelson in 2006. When he resigned as Mavericks coach in March 2005, Nelson still had a deal to remain a Dallas consultant through 2011 for about \$200,000 a year.

In Nelson's claim, he contended he was never paid a consultant fee and thus was free to take another job. Cuban has said Nelson returned to coaching after repeatedly telling Cuban that Dallas would be his last job.

O'Connor said the deferred compensation was Nelson's earned retirement money. The terms, originally worked out during Ross Perot Jr.'s ownership, required that he be paid through 2012. O'Connor said Nelson was being paid about \$1 million a year until Cuban stopped payments after Nelson took the Warriors job.

"What Cuban did is try to justify taking away somebody's retirement money," O'Connor said.

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