

**RL: We need a different kind of fire power, admits Holmes a Court**

League Souths Nightlead  
By David Beniuk

SYDNEY, Oct 24 AAP - South Sydney executive chairman Peter Holmes a Court has admitted the Rabbitohs are looking for a different type of sponsor after parting ways with controversial fuel company Firepower one year into a three-year deal.

Souths and their major sponsor announced the unusual split today, bringing a premature end to a reported \$3.5 million deal.

The company, which also sponsors the Sydney Kings basketball team and the Western Force rugby franchise, has generated some unwanted headlines in recent months in some sections of the media following the departure of chief executive John Finnin.

Asked today whether other sponsors' pressure had contributed to the split, Holmes a Court told AAP: "When we went into the market last year we were a team coming last, we came stone motherless last, (we had) an unknown coach and all promise and all risk for our sponsors.

"A number of brave sponsors got involved at that stage.

"Now we're looking for a different type of sponsor.

"The risk has been taken out of it and I appreciate that Firepower were brave and took a risk with us and we delivered heaps for them.

"We delivered heaps for Firepower in terms of exposure and now we're looking for other major sponsors to support us in the next stage of our growth."

But Holmes a Court dodged the issue of which party had decided on the split when asked if Souths had dumped Firepower.

"I have nothing but good things to say about Firepower, they supported us in our first year of ownership, they helped us build a base and they supported us and I have nothing but positive things to say about Firepower," he said.

Asked again whose decision it had been, Holmes a Court said: "Our relationship has ended amicably and I'm appreciative of their support."

Firepower released a statement on its website saying it had pulled the plug.

"Firepower was not 'dumped' by the Rabbitohs," it read.

"The club was well aware that over the past six weeks Firepower had been reviewing its sponsorship arrangements in the lead-up to the October 31 expiry of the current deal.

"That was always intended to be a one-year sponsorship to raise the profile of Firepower's Australian regional office, and the option to renew for the 2008 and 2009 season was only exercisable by Firepower, not Souths."

The company's sponsorship manager Matt Sutherland said the company spent 90 per cent of its sponsorship money in Australia despite doing only five per cent of its business here and was looking at diversifying into arts sponsorship in the northern hemisphere.

"The decision I guess was made together," Sutherland told AAP.

"Certainly there were a lot of positive reasons to be associated with Souths during the resurgence of that team.

"But given our current level of spending in Australia we had an

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opportunity to renew that sponsorship for a further two years of term and it was just decided as an organisation that we weren't going to go down that path."

Asked whether the controversy had played a part, Sutherland said: "No, not at all."

Holmes a Court said he was already in discussion with around a dozen potential "senior sponsors" who could contribute between \$150,000 and \$1.5 million each per season.

"We depend on sponsors for the revenue in our club but we also offer sponsors a pretty unique package that they don't get or they can't get elsewhere," he said.