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Charlotte bowl finds new sponsor

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Meineke Car Care Centers Inc. has replaced Continental Tire North America Inc. as title sponsor of the annual college football bowl game in Charlotte.

Meineke executives signed a three-year deal this week, renaming the game as the Meineke Car Care Bowl. The pact begins with the next game, which will be played at Bank of America Stadium in December.

Terms weren't disclosed, but industry experts peg the annual value at \$1.25 million to \$1.5 million.

Continental Tire of Charlotte backed the game through its first three years, including last month's game. The game recorded two sellouts at the 73,250-seat stadium.

Meineke and Continental are based in Charlotte.

"Keeping a local company as title sponsor is tremendous," says Ken Haines, chief executive at **Raycom Sports**, which organizes and manages the game. "It gives you much better communication and it allows the employees to have a much bigger role in the game and the activities around it."

The game generates an annual economic impact of \$10 million to \$15 million, local tourism executives estimate.

Deals with the stadium, television partner ESPN2 and participating conferences (the Atlantic Coast and Big East) run through 2005. Organizers hope to extend those contracts later this year or in early 2006.

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