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Saturday 9th October 2004

The browser wars are back, according to Netscape's founder

Jim Hu

CNET News.com

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Andreessen sees the rise of Firefox for the PC and Safari for the Mac as a 'one-two punch' that will trigger a reaction from Redmond

The Web browser wars may have been reignited, according to browser pioneer Marc Andreessen.

This time, it's not Andreessen's former company Netscape Communications that's taking on Microsoft's Internet Explorer; it's the emerging popularity of smaller products such as Apple Computer's Safari and open-source browser Firefox, Andreessen said.

"It may turn out that there's a one-two punch with Firefox and Safari," Andreessen said on Wednesday at the Web 2.0 conference in San Francisco. "Microsoft is certainly going to respond competitively."

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Firefox owes more than a debt of gratitude to Netscape. The company created and funded the open-source Mozilla project that created it, although Mozilla was later spun off as an independent group.

Claiming browser development has been at a standstill since 1998, Andreessen said the recent emergence of competitive software will force Microsoft to pay more attention to

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developing new features in IE.

However, competition could compel the company to use aggressive tactics to protect its Windows operating system monopoly, he warned. Microsoft's manoeuvres against Netscape ensnared the software giant in a lengthy federal antitrust suit. Microsoft was found to have violated antitrust law, but was spared from a break-up of the company.

Andreessen said he doesn't expect Microsoft to change its way of doing things should it detect a threat from Safari and Firefox.

"If I were [Microsoft] I'd take another look, and I would see how I could screw with other people's businesses with this monopoly [I] have," he said.

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