An antitrust lawsuit against Google, initially focused on its internet search monopoly, has evolved to address its potential dominance in artificial intelligence (AI). Federal Judge Amit Mehta aimed to curb Google's search stronghold without hindering its ability to compete in generative AI, an emerging field where chatbots are gaining importance. Mehta acknowledged the challenge, likening it to gazing into a crystal ball. The Justice Department had sought severe penalties, including forcing Google to divest its Chrome browser and banning all exclusive deals for default search engine status. However, Google retains Chrome and can make non-exclusive financial deals. It will also share some search data with competitors, though details are pending. Many experts, like Alissa Cooper, find these remedies "hollow," arguing they lack significant intervention. Analysts fear the ruling might not prevent Google from leveraging its vast search data trove for an AI advantage. With chatbots like Gemini and ChatGPT now challenging traditional search, experts suggest the judge viewed AI as a distinct battlefield, trusting new competition to address market issues. Tim Wu, a tech advisor, questioned if Google could use its past tactics to dominate AI. Mehta's decision does extend the ban on exclusive distribution deals to AI chatbots ("answer engines") and establishes a technical oversight committee. However, Wu and others, including former FCC chairman Tom Wheeler, argue the judiciary is ill-equipped to regulate fast-moving tech with outdated laws like the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Wheeler asserts that Google already controls the data, reach, computing power, and money crucial for AI competitiveness, rendering antitrust cases insufficient. Google maintains it is not the AI pacesetter, citing OpenAI's ChatGPT, and plans to appeal the verdict and penalties. The case is expected to reach the Supreme Court by 2027-2028, a timeframe critics deem "a millennium" in terms of innovation.

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