

It was a brilliant performance by Stockton, California's Nick Diaz (15-6) as he routed the highly regarded Japanese MMA star Takanori Gomi at Pride 33 in February. The huge upset would send notice to the Mixed Martial Arts community that Diaz was back in a big way.

Unfortunately for the (Cesar Gracie) Jiu-Jitsu black belt and professional boxer, the win would later be declared a no-contest by the Nevada State Athletic Commission after their tests revealed a high level of marijuana in his system.

"I feel it was done out of ignorance. The win was taken away from me because I smoke weed and that's stupid," said the 24-year old Diaz. "I'm a fighter and a martial artist. I feel martial artists and all artists in general could benefit from smoking weed and we should be able to smoke it all we want."

Diaz has proven himself in the past by impressively knocking out Robbie Lawler and most recently besting Josh Neer, Mike Aina and the aforementioned Gomi.

"I already know that I'm the best fighter in the world on a technical level. It's fine that they took the Gomi win away from me. *^^^ them!" Diaz said. "I know that I won. It's only going to make me strive harder to be the best."

Whether you call it marijuana, cannabis, chronic or ganja, it's clear that the stigma associated with the use of the herb still prevails. Obviously, the "Reefer Madness" mentality still exists in the minds of many individuals. Why else would any commission bother testing for a drug that no one in their right mind would consider performance enhancing?

Diaz sees this as a personal attack on his freedoms.

"I don't know why they're trying to keep marijuana out of the sport. The worst thing they can do is to try and attack me on the issue," Diaz continued. "I'm a fighter. I fight back. I'll speak out as much as I want on the issue. I believe in fighting for my rights."

When handing down their judgment, the N.S.A.C.'s commission's chair Dr. Tony Alamo reportedly stated, "I was there at this fight and believe that you were intoxicated and... that it made you numb to the pain. Did it help you win? I think it did." That assumption, ridiculed in pro-smoke circles as ludicrous, was used to justify a \$3,000 fine out of Diaz's paltry \$15,000 purse. He also received a six month suspension and had the win stripped from his record.

Diaz remains defiant and defensive.

"I'm not scared to make waves. If people want to keep me from making a living because of this then fine," he said. "I'm not scared to live on the streets if I have to. This is about being able to make a personal choice."

Nick Diaz: MMA's Pro Weed Warrior

Written by Ralph Gonzalez

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He's been hearing the same lectures for years.

"People say that marijuana is going to hurt my career. I say to them that on the contrary, my fight career is getting in the way of my marijuana smoking."

He makes no apologies for lighting up Stockton's finest which he considers to be some of the highest quality herb in the nation.

"When I go somewhere else you'll see some stuff that literally looks like a weed and they're hiding it and smuggling it," Diaz said. "I was in Hawaii and people are selling fake weed and treating it like its crack. It's kind of scary because where I'm from it's pretty much legal."

Diaz speaks of the free living mentality that prevails in Northern California.

"I'm pro marijuana, pro organic food, pro natural living. I don't need much. I'm just grateful to be healthy and alive," Diaz said. "I want the freedom to get high if I like. It's one of the reasons I fight. For freedom to do what I want. That's the bottom line."

Diaz's training regimen is certainly not suffering from his affection to T.H.C., he says.

"My typical day starts off with a thirty to fifty mile bike ride, then a five to seven mile run. After that I take a break. Then I go do a boxing workout and practice jujitsu five, six or sometimes seven days a week."

His message to those who vilify his lifestyle?

"People need to lighten up. They fine me, they try to stop me from becoming famous but you know what?" said Diaz. "It's too late. People stop me on the street all the time. It's almost too much at this point."

Diaz has reached a certain degree of fame that he feels has turned bothersome at times.

"I don't get paid like a superstar. I don't have an entourage or anything and I'm not some stuck up a*****e but for some drunk to be all over your face trying to talk fighting while I'm trying to kick back. It can get annoying."

Oh, and what about his opponent for Saturday, K.J. Noons?

"Yeah he's a tough fighter. I've seen quite a few of his fights. All the ones on Youtube mainly," Diaz said. "I'm going to try to break him apart. Tear him down. Make sure you watch."

As for his favorite smoke?

"I like different kinds. Especially the ones grown under the sun. The outdoor crops," says Diaz. "Those have real healing powers."

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All I know is that if Diaz wins, that'll be one heck of an after-party.

Catch Nick Diaz vs. KJ Noons for the EliteXC lightweight title on Showtime this Saturday from the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi, Texas. Also on the card will be Youtube sensation Kimbo Slice taking on Bo Cantrell and Jake Shields against Mike "Quicksand" Pyle. The action begins at 10:00 P.M. Pacific Time.

For more card info go to: www.elitexc.com