



## *Fallen kickboxing champ KO'd for major coke racket*

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## Body

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A Melbourne kickboxer was targeted in a covert police investigation after he was exposed as a key cog in a cocaine trafficking racket.

Kayne Clarke, 36, pleading guilty at the County Court on Tuesday to trafficking a commercial quantity of cocaine.

Investigators latched on to Clarke after police unleashed a major covert investigation to snare drug dealer Bilal Mpinganjira.

The court heard a covert cop hooked up with Mpinganjira in late-2022 and asked the dealer if he knew any "connections for rack".

Mpinganjira told the cop he was the "connection" and he only sold coke in "quarter key minimums".

The pair, who messaged each other over several months, mainly discussed the cost of kilo cocaine blocks.

Mpinganjira also sent a photo to the cop of a kilo cocaine block with the caption '160kg per keg'.

The cop messaged Mpinganjira in July 2023 and asked if a kilo was still \$160,000.

Mpinganjira advised the price had jumped to "\$165,000-\$170,000".

The pair later agreed to do a deal for a kilo of cocaine at \$165,000 "first thing next week".

The covert cop, who asked Mpinganjira if '365' cocaine was "good quality", received images of two cocaine blocks stamped with 'fendi' and 'CJNG'.

The cop sent Mpinganjira an image of \$150,000 bundled up in five grand bundles on August 7 last year.

The covert operative told Mpinganjira he could get the rest of the cash "the next day".

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Mpinganjira messaged Clarke the next morning and asked him if he had been able to "source" the cocaine.

"My mate just confirmed for the keg but he needs it by 1pm latest, Mpinganjira said.

Clarke then messaged a "third-party" known as 'Cisco' and told the person he needed a "proper key by 1pm latest".

Clarke and Cisco exchanged messages that named several "connections from whom they may be able to obtain the kilogram", the court was told.

"We go ... the money ready. Now. Can you go work on it right now please," Clarke messaged Cisco.

Clarke then messaged Mpinganjira:

"Yes done bro, I'll go see my mate in an hour or soon when he's (up)."

Mpinganjira messaged Clarke back about two hours later:

"Hey my bro any update yet? His about to start off to head towards this way."

Clarke then messaged Cisco and told him he needed the kilo "ASAP".

"Need to get this deal bro whether we make money on this one or not," Clarke said.

The court heard Cisco confirmed he was "meeting his supplier in 15 minutes" but then said the meet "fell through".

Clarke and Cisco swapped messages with "ideas about where they could obtain the cocaine".

Cisco also told Clarke to "be patient".

"Bro its not about being patient," Clarke responded.

"Its I need a key now ... bro ... I do not want to let this guy (down) then we loose (sic) out big time ... He's a big connect ..."

Cisco told Clarke the deal was "no go" and "there's nothing around".

Clarke then messaged Mpinganjira:

"They only have a half key right now and they waiting for prod to get delivered from Syd so they will come but not today bro," Clarke said.

Clarke later told Mpinganjira he was able to get a full kilogram of '05 stamp' cocaine but he "wanted to test it first".

Mpinganjira told Clarke if he "trusted the source, it would be fine".

Clarke later said he could only get half a kilo and arranged to meet Mpinganjira at Oakleigh to give him the drugs.

The pair made the hand-off about 4pm before Mpinganjira dropped Clarke off at Hunky Dory Fish & Chips Eaton Mall Oakleigh.

Cops arrested Mpinganjira shortly later and seized the cocaine.

The court heard Mpinganjira was awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to major drug trafficking between December 2022 and August last year.

The person known as Cisco was investigated by police but "nothing came of it", the court was told.

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Police also approached Clarke at the fish and chip shop, walked him outside and arrested him.

The defence submitted Clarke was a kickboxing champ who wanted to be "known as the best".

However, an injury sustained while training for a major kickboxing bout derailed his dreams.

The court heard Clarke, of Cranbourne North, was a karate expert, professional athlete and sports trainer.

Clarke got into the cocaine game to help clear a drug debt for his brother, the court was told.

Clarke, who was only linked to the racket the day of his arrest, had his bail extended to be sentenced at a later date.

## Notes

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