

'Need to get this deal bro': Kickboxer dubbed 'Superman' pleads guilty to drug trafficking



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Highlight: Kayne Clarke dreamed of global titles and being one of the best kickboxers in the world. He now faces years behind bars.

Body

Professional fighter Kayne Clarke - who goes by the alias Superman - had aspirations of winning global titles and becoming one of the world's best kickboxers.

But the 36-year-old Abu Dhabi-born fitness trainer - described by Inside Sport as a "martial arts powerhouse" - could now face years behind bars after he pleaded guilty to trafficking tens of thousands of dollars worth of cocaine.

The Victorian County Court on Tuesday heard the Cranbourne North man is accused of supplying half a kilo of cocaine - analysed as having a purity of more than 70 per cent - to co-accused Bilal Jussab Mpinganjira, who went on to sell the drugs to Victoria Police covert operatives.

Documents tendered to the court state that in late 2022, Mpinganjira unknowingly began communicating with a covert police officer, who asked the drug dealer if he knew any "connections for rack".

The documents show Mpinganjira messaged Clarke on August 8 last year, asking him whether he had been able to source a kilogram of cocaine.

Clarke then messaged a third person, referred to as Cisco, in an attempt to secure the drugs, telling him he needed the cocaine "ASAP" adding that "[we] need to get this deal bro' whether we make money on this one or not".

After an initial deal for the drugs fell through, Clarke was able to source 500 grams of cocaine from Cisco later that day, the court heard.

"I do not want to let this guy [Mpinganjira] [down] then we loose [sic] out big time," he is alleged to have texted to Cisco. "He's a [big] connect."

About 4pm the same day, Clarke and Mpinganjira met at an address in Oakleigh, where the kickboxer handed him half a kilogram of cocaine for an agreed price of about \$82,000, the court heard.

He then dropped Clarke at Hunky Dory Fish & Chips at Eaton Mall in Oakleigh. Mpinganjira was arrested 15 minutes later.

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Mpinganjira is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to major drug trafficking between December 2022 and August last year, the court was told.

On Tuesday, the court heard from Clarke's defence team that he was "exceptionally talented in professional kickboxing" and was "undefeated" in his class. They also said he was a martial arts expert with a black belt in karate.

"He was hoping as he progressed in age to have a number of world titles, and he was hoping to be seen as the best in his area of lightweight kickboxing," a defence barrister appearing on Clarke's behalf told the court.

Clarke is well-known in boxing circles and has a strong online presence, with thousands of followers on both Instagram and Facebook.

He told his followers about a knee injury in May last year that had dashed his hopes of competing, while he recovers.

"I ain't done yet, and we are still working. More coming soon," he wrote, before signing off as Superman.

The court was told Clarke's brother had died before his offending and the athlete was trying to pay off a drug debt for his sibling, which had exceeded \$20,000.

Defence barrister Nicholas Papas KC told the court Clarke's brother's debt was a "partial motivation" for him becoming involved with the people linked to his brother.

But this was rejected by prosecution, who told the court that Clarke stood to make a substantial profit from supplying the cocaine to Mpinganjira.

Clarke's family and friends filled the courtroom on Tuesday. His mother wiped away tears throughout the hearing.

Papas said Clarke regretted his actions and felt "acutely" the suffering he had caused his family.

"The picture I seek to paint of this defendant is one of relatively unsophisticated and naive involvement in very, very serious offending," he said.

Judge Trevor Wraight said while Clarke may feel responsible for the distress he had caused his family, he appeared to lack remorse about the implications his conduct would have on the wider community.

"That's why we have the big maximum penalties because, ultimately, if it wasn't for clients like yours, you wouldn't need half the judges in this court," Wraight said.

"All the offending, armed robbery, aggravated burglary, domestic violence has this underlying feature of drug use, which only can get sourced to the street by transactions committed by people like your client."

The maximum penalty for trafficking a commercial quantity of a drug of dependence is up to 25 years in prison.

Clarke had his bail extended and will be sentenced on October 22.

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