

Rondel Clark Foundation Aims to End Extreme Weight Cutting Through Education & Regulation

MMA fighters and sports regulators get behind safety initiative inspired by fallen athlete

Sutton, Massachusetts – August 25, 2018 – The Rondel Clark Foundation announced the establishment of a new 501(c)3 charitable organization created to promote and carry out education and instruction regarding the safety of mixed martial arts (MMA). The foundation will focus on issues and policies related to weight measurements and related restrictions for MMA fighters, and will place special emphasis on the widespread practice of weight cutting and its impacts.

The impetus for the formation of the foundation was the tragic death of Rondel Da'twaun Clark, who died on August 15, 2017 at the age of 26 from weight-cutting related injuries three days after collapsing during an amateur MMA bout. A role model in his community, Rondel was passionate and committed athlete who performed at the highest levels across a multitude of sports. In addition to his exceptional athletic abilities, he was passionate about music, and was a songwriter, poet, rapper, and a published recording artist.

“Rondel had an extremely keen sense of morals and values in which everyone could trust. He could have been or done anything he put his mind to,” said Arianne Clark, Rondel’s mother and Foundation Treasurer. “Our core mission for the Rondel Clark Foundation is to make sure that athletes in weight-cutting sports are protected from coming to physical harm due to pre-fight preparations.” Ms. Clark concluded, “Rondel touched many people’s lives and was an incredibly giving young man. With his smile he could brighten up your day – that’s why we call him Sunshine, and in the spirit of his memory, we aim to make sure no other family ever endures what ours has.”

Weight-cutting is one of the most prevalent and dangerous problems in mixed martial arts today. Nearly all MMA fighters drain their bodies of large amounts of water in an effort to make an arbitrary weight threshold, measured about 24 hour before a fight. After the pre-fight weigh-in, severely dehydrated fighters face the impossible challenge of rehydrating their bodies and brains in a very short period of time before engaging in a highly demanding sport that requires peak physical performance. Extreme weight cuts not only hinder performance, but can potentially have short- and long-term effects on fighters’ health. In addition to Rondel, other fighters have died while trying to make weight.

“We at the CSAC know with certainty that extreme weight cutting by dehydration is a real and present danger to combat sports. This is an ongoing risk challenge for fighters and for the combat industry,” said Andy Foster, Executive Officer of the California State Athletic Commission. California’s “10-point Plan,” adopted to address and eliminate extreme weight cutting and severe dehydration in MMA, is the most comprehensive set of weight-cutting policies in United States MMA history. “The unfortunate reality is that in MMA and certainly

boxing, we still have athletes cutting large amounts of weight in unsafe ways. Our challenge is to educate, inform and create a set of standards that will prevent these life-threatening practices before they occur. The Rondel Clark Foundation will have a huge impact on nationwide adoption of weight-cutting policies and I'm hopeful there will be enough political will to have all commissions adopt similar rules."

The issue of weight-cutting and dehydration has come to the fore recently, and is now rightly being recognized as potentially being one of, if not the most dangerous aspect of mixed martial arts in particular. Being dehydrated by 10% of body weight is described in medical literature as "severe" dehydration that requires medical intervention. The Rondel Clark Foundation explicitly intends to end extreme weight cutting through education and regulation.

"Having made a dramatic weight cut of nearly 40 lbs while preparing for a fight back in 2016, I know firsthand the damage that extreme weight cutting can cause to an athlete," said internationally-renowned mixed martial artist, actor and community leader Dhafir Harris, better known as Dada 5000. "Weight cutting can easily lead to rhabdomyolysis, the rapid breakdown of muscle tissue that causes life threatening injuries or death, like in my and Rondel Clark's case." Harris collapsed and was rushed to the hospital after a February 19, 2016 fight in Texas. He suffered cardiac arrest, severe dehydration, fatigue, and renal failure during and after the contest. "That is why I stand with the Rondel Clark Foundation to educate, inform reform weight cuts to prevent these life threatening injuries," Harris continued. "No adult or kid should ever have to go through what we went through. The Rondel Clark Foundation will have an huge impact on the combat sports community and weight cutting polices."

About the Rondel Clark Foundation

The Rondel Clark Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit private foundation. The mission of the Rondel Clark Foundation is to prevent the practice of extreme weight cutting through education and regulation, and to help families who have been affected by extreme weight cuts. Tax-deductible contributions to the Rondel Clark Foundation can be made on the foundations website: <https://www.rondelclarkfoundation.org/>.

Press contact:

Steve Schuster
Board Member, Rondel Clark Foundation
steve@rainierco.com
508-868-5892