

Marius Dohne - Earning The Right to Stand On Stage

Written by Adina Zanolli



South African, **Marius Dohne** seemed to come out of nowhere to win the Tampa Pro last night.

In the weeks leading up to the show, at best, he was labeled as the dark horse who could take the show if other more notable guys didn't show up in condition.

As the show got closer, and pictures emerged, people began to see him as a more serious threat.

Winning a pro show was a goal reached for Marius. Standing on the Olympia Stage will be a dream come true.

The flight to Tampa was sixteen hours, but the personal journey he made to get back up on stage was years in the making...

Z: I'm not real familiar with your background. Fill me in just a little.

MD: In my life, I sometimes can't believe how blessed I am.

I often find my thoughts and prayers with God, thanking Him for blessing me so dearly throughout my life - from school days, being the best athlete in nearly everything, to being so blessed with a great bodybuilding career.

AZ: Speaking of bodybuilding, how did you get to here?

MD: As an amateur, I was a World Champion and a Mr. Universe, becoming South Africa's first pro bodybuilder through the IFBB South Africa.

AZ: Tell me about your parents.

MD: I give all my thanks to my parents for a very religious upbringing. That made me realize it was through God that I received all these wonderful blessings.

AZ: From what I've been told, you've gone through some major obstacles along the way.

MD: I always thought that one day God might take all this away from me, as a test of my faith. I knew that if He did, I would be ready, and I would stay grateful for everything He gave me and still praise Him every day of my life.

AZ: Tell me about it...

MD: It all started three years ago in 2008, when I went for a life policy.

It got turned down. They said there was too much protein in my urine. They told me it was because of all the protein powder I was consuming.

They then made me fast from all protein powders for a week, which I did, and the test results came back the same. My kidneys were leaking protein, and I was denied the life policy.

AZ: What happened after that?

MD: They recommended I see a urologist.

When I saw the urologist, he did a scan on my kidneys and told me they were enlarged from working so hard to digest all the high protein.

He then checked my privates without a glove, which made me feel violated. I thought I had been sexually abused by a perverted doctor.

After that, I didn't say a word to anybody, and I ignored the problem with my kidneys.

AZ: But that wasn't the end of you problems, right?

MD: Fast forward three years...

I went to see a very well known doctor in Durban, Dr. Govender. He ran some tests on me to check my general health.

The tests came back and showed renal impairment, which means my kidneys were on their way to failure.

He started asking questions about whether I took a lot of pain killers, anti-inflammatory medicine, ate a lot of red meat or sodium, or have kidney failure in my family?

I answered yes to all.

AZ: So what did he tell you to do?

MD: He told me, ideally, I have to stop eating protein, stop taking anti-inflammatories and pain killers, and not put any extra salt on my food.

AZ: Did you follow his advice?

MD: Because I am a pro bodybuilder, I couldn't stop eating protein.

So he put me on a medication specially for renal impairment. He said we would try this for a month, and then do the tests again.

So what did I do? I kept the protein high, tore my quad again, and took anti inflammatories again.

When the test results came back, they showed even more impairment. It was evident that this was not something that would not just go away easy.

So Dr. Govender sent me to a kidney specialist who told me straight - I'm would have to stop bodybuilding and everything that's related to it immediately .

This meant I would have to drop my protein drastically, and never ever have pain killers or anti-inflammatories ever in my life again.

I was only allowed one portion of red meat a week and no salt. I had to cut back on the heavy lifting and go off everything.

AZ: How were you feeling at this point?

MD: I was devastated!

I thought *there goes my career – thirteen years of working toward my goal of winning a pro show, and now I have to stop!!!*

So close, but yet so far.

AZ: What else was going on in your personal life at this time?

MD: The same day I got the news about my kidneys, my girlfriend left me.

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Guess I was so stressed out and closed off about my kidneys failing that she couldn't take it any more.

I was more devastated that she left me than I was over the kidney failure.

AZ: So did you just give up at that point? What happened after all that?

MD: Next came the Jay Cutler All Access Weekend

To me, it was a harsh reality. That weekend was going to be my last appearance on stage.

I guest posed in front of over 2,000 people with Mr. Olympia, Jay Cutler, watching me from the stage.

Out of the 2,000 people in the audience, only five people knew about my situation. As I posed in the crowd, my friends cried because they knew it was my last guess posing ever.

AZ: What did being on stage with Jay mean to you?

MD: After the guest posing, Andrew Carruthers, Muscle Evolution owner and the emcee that night, asked the crowd if they wanted to see me and Jay pose down.

The crowd cheered, wanting to see their pro standing head-to-head with the best bodybuilder on the planet!

All I did was thank God for giving me such a highlight to retire to. I was so thankful to Andrew for calling Jay out with me.

After the pose down, Andrew allowed me to ask Jay any question I wanted.

AZ: What did you ask him?

MD: At this time, I had a lump in my throat.

All I could do was thank Jay for letting me pose with him without earning it, without standing on that Olympia Stage, which is my dream.

AZ: Was that the end of the conversation?

MD: After that, Jay asked me when my next pro show was.

Knowing I could never stand on a pro stage again, but also not wanting to cause a scene in front of 2,000 people, I responded, *in thirteen weeks, The IFBB PBW Tampa Pro.*

Jay asked me how I thought I would do.

AZ: Oh, that must have been tough to answer. What did you tell him?

MD: At this stage, I was close to breaking and crying, so I responded with *I just want to qualify for the Olympia.*

AZ: And what did Jay say?

MD: He said, *NO! You must go for the win!*

I just smiled and agreed.

AZ: So what happened next for you? Did you really just walk away from it all? Were you able to find peace?

MD: When I came back home, I started seeing all these tags of me and Jay on Facebook.

One photo stood out, and I E-mailed the photographer to get the high resolution picture to frame.

To say I was thankful was an understatement. I thanked God for that blessed evening and for that photo.

I promised Him that I will receive his new plan for me with open arms. Whatever He had in store for me, I would take on with my head held high.

Also at this time, my ex-girlfriend heard the news about my kidneys and asked to meet with me.

AZ: And did this turn out well?

MD: When we met, she gave me a necklace with a St. Christopher pendant and told me it was meant to protect me.

It's now my most precious possession.

That day she asked that we try again, and I was over the moon!

AZ: So this was the point you walked away from bodybuilding?

MD: I started my new life.

I started going to the beach more often, and not worrying about eating every two to three hours.

I was just enjoying life.

AZ: Now, tell me how George Farah got in the picture.

MD: At this time, I also E-mailed my coach, George Farah, and apologized that I had been so quiet and didn't send any update pictures.

I told him my situation, and got the surprise of my life!

It turns out that George worked in a pathology lab and told me he knows everything there is to know about blood and my disorder.

He told me his wife ran the hospital he worked in, and that he can help.

AZ: So what did he advise you to do?

MD: He put me on a diet, and told me to get Cystone and Liv 52, and gave me the name of a blood pressure tablet I must use.

He promised me that if I take all the above, and stuck to the diet he provided, my condition would improve.

AZ: Did you take his advice?

MD: I did what I was told, and followed the diet to the T.

It was very similar to a competition diet, apart from the fact that I had very low protein.

I took all my medication religiously and cut back on the training. I also went clean.

AZ: And what happened next?

MD: Over a month went by, and I was training at my good friend Joe Manjoo's gym with my training partner Dylan and my brother Riaan. I was there to have a look at their condition.

After I had a look at them, they told me to strip because they wanted to see my condition.

Now, to understand my frame of mind at that time, I didn't ever look in the mirror back then.

I felt I was merely a shadow of my former self, but I stripped down anyway.

What I saw that day surprised me. I was in awesome shape with good condition and thickness.

Joe, Dylan, and my brother all told me they knew my situation, but thought I'd be mad not to compete.

AZ: I'm sure that was hard to wrap your mind around after walking away from it. Did you think this really could be an option for you?

MD: I was quiet.

In my mind I was thinking, *if I looked that good on a low protein diet, totally clean and training lightly, what's stopping me from staying on the diet and just walking into the show???*

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But I told them I couldn't because the doctor said I had to retire.

AZ: Did they support you in this decision?

MD: Everybody looked at me and said, *correct, health first.*

AZ: So that was it? Over and done?

MD: I went back that night wondering what the harm would be if I kept doing what I was doing, but just walked into the show as is.

But then I kept thinking about Marco Rossi's advice to me.

He had told me he knew he had kidney problems and then decided to do the amateur Mr. Universe just one more time.

Although he won the Mr. Universe title, after the show, he fell ill and his kidneys failed.

I was eight weeks out, and I was surprisingly hard and standing on 270 pounds.

AZ: What made you decide to go for it?

MD: I E-mailed George.

I asked him if my blood tests were to come back positive, and I've improved, what would the chances be of me staying on the plan, but just adding some cardio and competing.

AZ: What did he say?

MD: He said if the tests came back and there was no more impairment or some improvement, then we could talk.

My mind began working over time, and I started doing cardio just in case.

By the end of the week, I was seeing drastic changes in my condition. People started noticing

and complimenting my improvements. Even my trainer Chris Scott was shocked.

AZ: And the tests?

MD: When the test results came back, it showed slight improvement, which Dr. Govender says is amazing, as we stopped the impairment and showed actual improvement.

This was HUGE!!! I E-mailed George and told him the good news.

He congratulated me and adjusted the diet and training slightly.

AZ: How are things now?

MD: I'm still on low protein, and George added more cardio.

George told me we can do this on one condition: that I stay within the protocol at all times.

Meanwhile, as this was all happening, and in the very same week as I found out the great news that my kidneys were getting better, my girlfriend was experiencing very funny symptoms.

We found out that she was pregnant!

So in the time I was off, I made her pregnant.

AZ: How do you feel about this? Are you excited?

MD: To us, it was a miracle! The second miracle of the week.

We didn't think we could have children, and having children one day was her dream.

I thank God for her every day, and now I thank Him for giving us such a blessing. We didn't expect it at all, but we are so incredibly happy!

AZ: What made you want to share your story?

MD: I hope my story not only inspires people with faith, but I really hope those who are struggling with faith will open their minds to what they are missing.

I also hope by sharing my experiences with you, that you guys will take care of your health and learn from my mistakes.

Get yourself checked every six months, and work closely with your doctor. In this sport it is a necessity.

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I believe that Dr. Kogilan Govender and George Farah saved my life, and they were put on my path for a reason.

My career is not over, but I'm not out of the dark yet either.

My kidneys are still far from normal, but we have done more tests. I'm happy to say they had improved again three weeks out from the Tampa Show

My next test will be after Tampa.

Thank you to Muscular Development for letting me share this miracle with you. Through this story, I hope to help more bodybuilders in the future.