NFL’s Calvin Johnson and Rob Sims Talk Cannabis: It’s ‘A God-Given Gift’

Two battered former players who never had an alternative to opioids for pain have launched an cannabis business so others will.

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The NFL and cannabis have been in the headlines this year, from punitive measures imposed on players to players themselves entering the industry. During the 2019 **Benzinga Cannabis Capital Conference** in Toronto, Primitive co-founders and former NFL players Calvin Johnson and Rob Sims, explained why they entered the cannabis business, where the NFL can improve its drug policies and what excites them most about the industry.

Calvin Johnson, It’s a pleasure. So you’re here today to talk about your new venture, Primitive Cannabis. I’m curious, how did you get into cannabis originally?

I got into cannabis from different personal dealing with pain — I played in the NFL for nine years; growing up and making catches only to come down on the hard turf — all that impact. I knew there was a better way to deal with all the injuries and pain than taking opioids and other things that doctors prescribe. I take a holistic approach to my body. When I played, I used holistic doctors. I just wanted to do the best thing for my body when I was trying to recover. This plant is

god given – it was always here on earth. It's a gift. There are so many medicinal qualities to this plant that we haven't even tapped into. That's what our company is all about – collecting that data to create the best and most consistent product.

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We're here with Rob Sims, former NFL player, who recently got into cannabis. How did you get into it?

Personal experience led me to cannabis. In 2008 I tore my (pectoral muscle) right off the bone. I ended up having surgery and it ended my season. After the surgery, the doctors brought me a bottle with about 40 Oxycontin. The directions were to take it whenever you have pain. Being 25, having a couple dollars in my pocket, being in the NFL, having a lot of time on my hands while not playing, I started taking these pills for pain. But very soon I started feeling this tug on opiates, I knew I must have been able to find something better, for me and my partner Calvin Johnson. We banded together to find a way to improve our lives, now that we are done playing, and the lives of other people who are active.

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You mentioned that you use CBD for pain, but you also for recuperation. Do you see the potential for CBD for athletes? We know that the agency dictating is restrictive

There's a drug policy in the NFL and those policies are in place in a lot of professional sports. It'll probably be that way as long as it's a category 1 drug, but there's a lot of benefit to these drugs. Just CBD – take out the psychoactive THC part of it – just keep the pain killing and the inflammation killing part of the CBD. It's great, and I can attest to it. It's why I'm here."

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Roger, what would you say to convince Commissioner Goodell to allow cannabis?

Cannabis is safe. That's what I would say, and that's all that needs to be said. It's safe, it's been around for thousands of years, we've gotten away from it in the last, I don't know, eighty to 100 years and it's time for it to come back. So, we started our company in Michigan. Michigan is a great place to have a business, we have a great market. It's early in the market, we've hit it at the right time. We're a vertically integrated company – we have growing, processing and retail. We're about to open up our first grow, ten thousand square feet, and we have plans by the end of the year to open up our campus. It's seventy thousand square feet of indoor growing space along with processing. We have 22 acres behind it, and we believe we can fit an additional 750,000 square foot greenhouse. Also, we have some dispensaries around the state, so we're really excited about the future. We have an amazing opportunity, and you know we're going to bring some of the same things we did in football like passion, desire, motivating people. We're going to make sure that we bring that into our business and really build some special.

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Last one: tell us a little bit about your company why you started your cannabis company in Michigan.

I started my cannabis company to help my community in Michigan, where I've made home. The people here have supported me for all the time I've been there, and this is a great way for me to give back to my community, in other ways than philanthropy. Cannabis is a great healer, it's been around for for forever and people have used it in the past. Before it was regulated, it was a healing agent that people used for

thousands of years. So, I think that slowly but surely people are realizing that. The stigma is lifting, and we’re starting to see some beneficial evidence of that.

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