

PEOPLE OF THE WEB

Playing Chicken

Jason Atkins is going to court to fight for the right to webcast cockfights.

BY KEVIN SITES, FRI SEP 7, 4:38 PM PDT

MIAMI - Ask Jason Atkins about the Michael Vick dogfighting scandal, and his reaction is anger and disgust.

"I just thought, you know, [he's] gotta be the worst criminal I've ever seen," he says.



'Girls and Guns' is among the features on Jason Atkins' ToughSportsLive Web site.

Animal rights advocates might find that response surprising, because Atkins's Web network, ToughSportsLive.com, features live cockfighting from Puerto Rico — which, while legal there, is banned now in all 50 U.S. states.

"Our ultimate goal is to be a cultural website," Atkins says of the site. "To produce and show the world's various cultural sporting events."

So far, those cultural sporting events mostly involve blood and bikinis. In addition to cockfighting (which is shown on LiveCockfights.com, a subchannel of ToughSportsLive), ToughSportsLive offers broadcasts of bare knuckles, no rules Brazilian jujitsu matches dubbed "Rio Heroes," and what Atkins says is a sport made for America, "Girls and Guns," in which women wearing bikinis accessorized with double-thigh holsters and high-heeled combat boots compete in a shoot-off of weapons that could easily outfit an American combat platoon in Iraq — everything from M-249 SAWs to Barrett .50 caliber sniper rifles.

Atkins, an ex-Marine sniper and former insurance fraud investigator, says he doesn't like hunting or fishing and isn't even a fan of cockfighting, but feels people have a right to see it if they want to — and his company has a right to provide it.

"I'm just here to show the world sports that have been around for thousands of years," he says.

He has set up a high tech production facility in Puerto Rico's oldest cockfighting ring, where the action is captured from different angles and the video transmitted over high speed fiber optic lines.

The site even features a slick documentary in English and Spanish. It shows how razor-sharp spikes are tied to the roosters' feet before a fight and offers a history of cockfighting, including a list of famous fans, said to include George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln.

Atkins fears that a 1999 statute outlawing the creation, possession or transmission of materials depicting animal cruelty could force him to block or shut down his cockfighting webcasts.

"Rooster fighting falls along the same lines as fishing and hunting." — Jason Atkins

Atkins says his Marine training taught him to take the fight to the enemy, so he has filed a pre-emptive suit on First Amendment grounds challenging the law, which has already been upheld in one federal case.

Animal advocacy groups like the Humane Society oppose Atkins's lawsuit. "The fact that animal fighting is permitted in other jurisdictions does not give anyone the Constitutional right to peddle animal fighting videos," the society said in a statement published on their website. But some legal scholars say the Florida case has merit on constitutional grounds.

Atkins says the 1999 law was enacted specifically because of the proliferation at the time of so-called "crush videos," sexual fetish clips in which women speaking in the tone of a dominatrix would crush kittens or other small animals with their heels.

In fact, President Clinton, who signed the law, instructed the Justice Department to narrowly construe the law to "wanton cruelty" associated with sexual prurience.

Atkins argues that there is no parallel between those kinds of videos and the cockfighting on ToughSportsLive.

"It's ToughSportsLive's opinion that rooster fighting falls along the same lines as fishing and hunting," he says. "It's funny that a human can kill an animal and it's OK in the United States. But if an animal kills an animal it's not OK."

Bruce Wieland, of the Los Angeles office of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA), thinks Atkins is deluding himself.



Model Teresa Noreen says had she known ToughSportsLive also features cockfighting, she probably wouldn't have participated in 'Girls and Guns'.

"I would say [cockfighting] is essentially no different from the crush videos, except this is even more exploitative because it involves gambling," says Wieland. "Essentially as far as the animal is concerned it's the same deadly result."

In the wake of the Michael Vick dogfighting revelations, which seem to have created a climate of zero tolerance for animal cruelty, Atkins faces a tough public relations battle — one he's says he's ready to concede if he loses his legal case.

"We've already made provisions within the website to be able to easily turn it on and off," he says, "so in anticipation that it may be deemed illegal we'll take it down."

While that may mean cockfighting broadcasts would be blocked in America, it probably won't end them elsewhere. Atkins says his company, Cloverdale Worldwide Limited, was created offshore in the British Virgin Islands just in case of issues like this one.

He also hopes to begin broadcasting bullfighting before the end of the year — that seems like good timing, now that Spain says it is dropping the national pastime from state television broadcasts for being too violent for children.

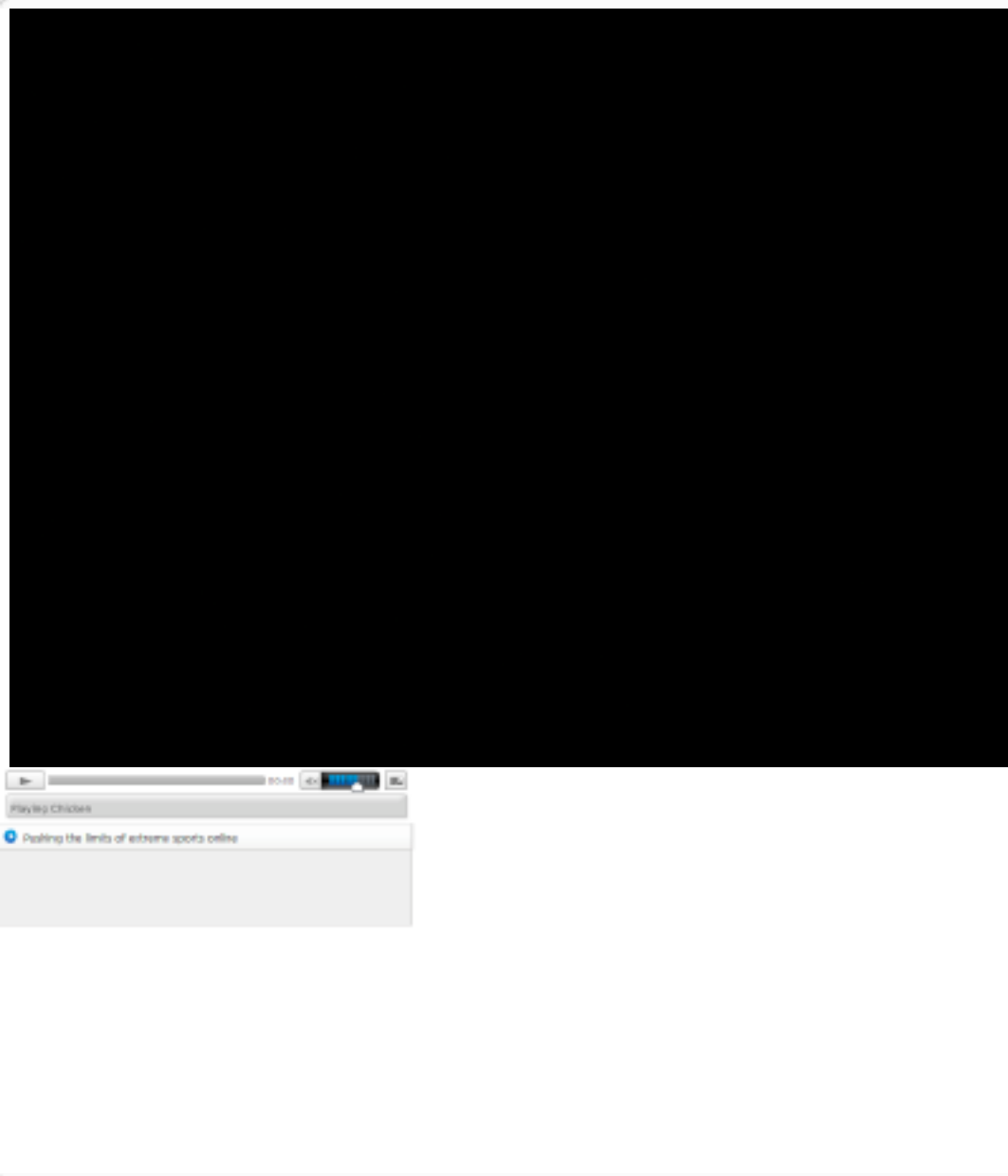
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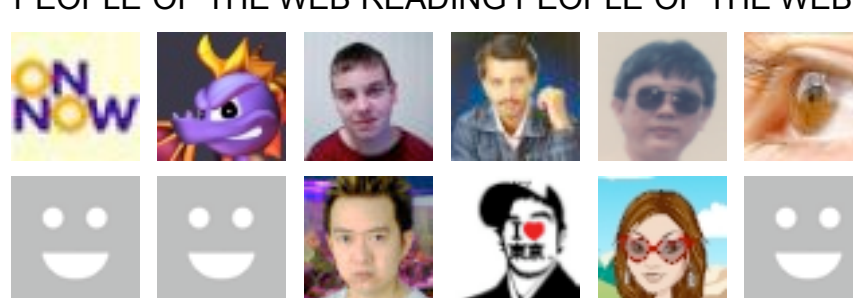
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COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

to harm any creature is an offense to God

jk poet
POSTED SAT, SEP 8, 2007 3:11 AM PDT

yeah and the clothes you wear and the food you eat are alive huh!!!! LOL

giltrodze
POSTED SAT, SEP 8, 2007 4:37 PM PDT

PATHS MAY BE DIFFERENT.BUT EVERY RELIGION TAKES US TO THE GOD. JUST RIVERS IN NO. MAY BE MANY. BUT EVERY RIVER FINDS ITS OWN ROUTE TO REACH THE SEA

yuvaraj s
POSTED SUN, SEP 9, 2007 2:45 AM PDT

THE COLOR OF PEOPLE MAY BE DIFFERENT BUT THE COLOR OF BLOOD IS ONE COLOR THAT IS RED.

yuvaraj s
POSTED SUN, SEP 9, 2007 2:46 AM PDT

RIVERS ARE FLOWING FOR OTHERS WITHOUT EXPECTING ANY RETURN TREES ARE GIVING FRUITS TO OTHERS WITHOUT EXPECTING ANY RETURN COWS ARE GIVING MILK TO OTHERS WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYRETURN THIS BODY ALSO SHOULD BE USED FOR THE SERVICE OF NEEDY PERSONS WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING.

yuvaraj s
POSTED SUN, SEP 9, 2007 2:51 AM PDT

please visit my blog, to see and comment on the corruption it local and federal courts, this could happen to your family. However I am trying to stop this .

April*
POSTED SUN, SEP 9, 2007 11:05 PM PDT

the man has a piont. It may not be legal here but its legal over there/ Hes not doing anything wrong. I do not condone such an act as cockfighting but in other cultures this is acceptable and I dont think its ok for us to push our beliefs on them. It would be the same as those guys trying to get us involved in cockfights, we dont like it so please dont try and force us to like it. and I dont understand a thing that guy is saying...about rivers and blood? we are talking about fighting chickens for craps sake

Zoe's mommy
POSTED MON, SEP 10, 2007 12:34 AM PDT

hi!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

roshani.rajput
POSTED MON, SEP 10, 2007 5:11 AM PDT

It,s disgusting to to make any animals fight for fun.

gale J
POSTED MON, SEP 10, 2007 9:14 AM PDT

girls n guns so cool

jeff hetzer
POSTED MON, SEP 10, 2007 10:27 AM PDT

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