

# KEEP HIM ON YOUR RADAR

## Freddy Naidu is an Emerging Star

by Rachel Payne

**H**aving seen what Freddy Naidu has been doing over the past few years, I had the pleasure of interviewing him at the 2022 Mr. Olympia in Las Vegas, Nevada. Without a doubt he strives to be the best of his ability with every challenge he takes on. What he's been able to achieve in the health and fitness industries puts him on a trajectory of success that makes Freddy Naidu stand out above the rest. Read my interview with him to see how he got there and what he's planning next and make sure you keep him on your radar because Freddy Naidu is an emerging star.

### WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE'S DONE:

37 years old, Wrestled through college, 2nd degree Black Belt, IFBB Pro League Head Judge, NPC National Judge, Men's Physique Olympian, Promoter of the IFBB Pro League/ NPC Battle of Texas and the IFBB Pro League Texas Pro/ NPC Texas Classic, Mainstream DJ, Masters in Health Care Administration, Principal Agent Texas Star Insurance Group, Operational Excellence Manager at Texas Health Frisco

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**He competed as a bodybuilder turning Pro in Men's Physique, went to the Olympia, and was invited to the Arnold. Following the course of bodybuilding to its most prestigious shows, Freddy can certainly say he's been successful as a competitor. In the healthcare world, Freddy earned his masters, moved up the chain, learned the world of regulatory compliance and now works in a healthcare facility as a master project manager at Texas Health Frisco. He has not yet reached the pinnacle of what he can do in this field, but he's well on his way. Insurance is a family business, where he is a successful licensed insurance agent in the state of Texas. Freddy has also been a DJ for over 20 years to the point where he has created a demand and can select the events he wants to do. As both an insurance agent and a DJ, Freddy has found a level of success that has opened the doors for many more opportunities.**

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**What does success look like to you?**

Success is learning something new and being good at it. The only reason I can do so many things is that it didn't all come at once, but rather came at different phases in my life.

**Not everyone is good at mastering a job and finding a way to monetize that, what has been the key for you?**

Making the most of the opportunities available to me at different phases in my life is a work ethic that has been instilled my whole life. That philosophy, learning to become good at whatever I endeavor, putting a good team in place and monetizing it, is what I am good at. My mentor once told me, as a businessman, ask yourself, "What does your market need, and how can you make it better?" It's a tough question, but if you can answer that question and monetize it, you'll succeed. So, what does the bodybuilding world need? A DJ. I am a DJ at a time when the bodybuilding world is evolving. Gary Udit, Tyler Manion, JM, and Jim Manion, allowed me to come in and evolve as a DJ for this sport. Producing the music for these shows is what the bodybuilding world needs and at the same time opened the doors to me becoming a promoter. Bodybuilding shows were dry in my world and coming from the entertainment industry, I felt like we needed a spark, a new type of energy. That type of excitement and energy is what I have tried to bring to the shows I DJ and to the shows I promote.



**Your shows definitely have that WOW factor! At this point you have the show that is the largest amateur non-pro qualifying show in the nation, so where do you go from here, what's next on Freddy's agenda?**

I still feel like I can make my shows bigger and better. The Battle of Texas is a good show; 2022 was its 7th year - lucky 7 with 777 athletes on file. For me and my co-promoter, Sheilahe Brown, it's all about the athletes. We strive to keep the athletes in the honeymoon phase, keep the warm and fuzzies during the show, at the show, on the stage, off the stage, and feedback both pre & post show while at the same time making the backend of the show, vendors, and ticket sales, efficient. Tickets for our shows sold out.

**So what are you doing to promote your show? How are you getting the word out differently from other promoters?**

Digital marketing is one of my strong points; it's our superpower. We have a good team of digital marketers and while bodybuilding lives on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, I think it widely lives on Instagram so capturing that market where you can relate to your target audience versus printing fliers, tagging cars or going to gyms is a gamechanger. The multi-faceted approach that Sheilahe and I use includes Sheilahe being, I believe, one of the biggest posing coaches in the country. She's not the only Posing Coach but she builds a relationship with these athletes and lets them know, "Hey I have a show." As we get closer to the show, she's able to drive them in our direction. Combined with the marketing and hype of bringing in the big names like Marc Anthony, Jennifer Dorie, Angelica Teixeira, people that Texas haven't seen, that our NPC athletes haven't seen. Sheilahe and I are always asking, "What did we want to see when we were competing?" We also have the Texas Pro Show. We had a vision that we wanted the best of the best in the world to come to Texas. We want bodybuilding to stay alive in Texas and we want Texas to see what bodybuilding is. So that is our vision and we are working to improve on it every year with the goal of elevating it to the level of the Arnold Sports Festival.

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**Tell me one thing you're going to do at your next show that wasn't there already, because you seem to keep bringing it.**

Yes, we have a couple items that Sheilahe and I have put on our vision board. Our vision board can have up to 25-30 items and we will probably pull two. We don't change much, but each year we try to make some improvement. January - April is when we plan for the year and decide what we are going to pull off that vision board. It's not anything that we've done. It's things we've seen other promoters do and thought, that's brilliant. We already have this huge production so just adding a little more gives it that WOW factor. This approach has been working for us.



want to give away too much but I think what we have in place speaks to that. I think we'll have big supporters coming from the Dallas area, big names as well and they can relate to what I'm doing with the bodybuilding world. It's going to be huge!

**There's been other people who have talked about doing similar events. Back in the day there was an event called the Super Show. Big companies like Nike & Reebok came to the Atlanta Convention Center and they had the latest and greatest of every fitness trend out there. It was like the CES now and Dwayne Johnson talked about doing a big event but it just never came to fruition. I think timing was a factor there. Do you see your show being along those lines? Do you see it as a bigger EXPO with maybe more national brands?**

I can't say yes or no. Comparing it to the Rock's Athleticon or Nike & Reebok those are mega monsters. Can I be that? I think yes, but we have to start in a controlled, efficient manner, never compromising the quality of what we're going to produce. I think that should be the goal for 2024. Great prize money, more contracted approaches, we want the athletes to be rewarded with something unique that I don't think the bodybuilding world has seen. Respectfully, I can't compete with Mr. Jake Wood giving away a truck or car but I also feel keeping it special for the athletes would be ideal. I think they're going to like what's coming.



“My goal is to make the Texas Pro a flagship show that attracts the world.”

**Let's talk about that for a second, while IFBB pros are professional athletes, they are far from the level of a NFL or NBA player. They don't have merchandise, they don't have that same level of billing, there's so many of them, I don't know that they are all capable of having that type of billing. It's a tough task to build them up to that level. How do you see yourself playing a role in that?**

Absolutely, great question. When you think of the NBA or the NFL the world is watching. FIFA, the world is watching. I believe promoters need to see the need and have the mindset to make their show the pinnacle of that weekend, of that city, of that state. When you elevate your show to the level that all eyes are watching, then the shows will have the WOW factor or level of entertainment that will put the sport of bodybuilding on the level of other pro sports. Each promoter has to figure out how to do that for themselves; I use media, I use big names, I use influencers to make sure all eyes are watching us. At the end of the day, it's just a conversation. Everybody knows bodybuilding, everybody knows bodybuilding experts, everybody knows the big names. It's a conversation to say, this is bodybuilding, come check it out. Once shows elevate to that level and all eyes are on our sport, then the world will begin to recognize the Pros. Look at Chris Bumstead as a primary example. He is the most decorated bodybuilder in the sport, especially at the Olympia. The world is watching him and he's doing everything right so when you match up shows with a big name athlete, then the world is going to watch you. You have companies wanting to sponsor your show. Bodybuilding is missing that. My goal is to make the Texas Pro a flagship show that attracts the world. My plan and vision is to compete with the Arnold Sports Festival by 2024. That was the goal 3 or 4 years ago and we are going in the right direction.

**Do you ever see the athletes able to monetize NIL the way other sports are doing?**

Yes! I believe they can, but that includes marketing themselves and monetizing themselves. The physique can only sell itself for so long. The body fades but you have to stay relevant. Prime example, Jay Cutler, one of the most relevant and well spoken bodybuilders in the sport. I could listen to him all day. Mr Lee Haney, I told him when I saw him at the 2022 NPC Nationals, when Mr. Lee Haney talks, the world listens. There are very few people when they speak, the world stops and listens. You have to be able to relate to the masses. In terms of Chris Bumstead, I'm a huge fan, he's a good buddy of mine and in my opinion, @CBum is the merchandise. He doesn't sign with too many people, which keeps him very exclusive. I think that's what makes him special. I don't DJ a lot of shows, I DJ very specific shows to make sure that show is elevated. Not everybody can have me and that's OK. I'm in demand, Chris Bumstead is in demand. When you're in demand you can go to the buffet and have it all, but when there's a line waiting for something special in demand, then you can select the direction you want to go and how to grow with the opportunities.

**How many people are on your team?**

Our core team is 15. Our 2nd circle of the Battle Up Productions family is at 32 but we can expand up to 50.

**It's not just anybody that can be a good team leader in a way that gets the best out of each person. What goes into you selecting your core team? What are you looking for in them?**

In business, the biggest thing for me is I don't like to get blindsided or backstabbed. So I look for trust. To be on my team, I trust you to do the right thing and figure out how to fix it when something goes wrong. I'm looking for self motivators. I've always taught my teams that if they're about to call Jesus, that's when they're calling me. So I look for a core team that are in the industry, that are able to adapt and be flexible, plus people that are in the DJ wedding industry. I'm using people that I trust what they're doing. My wife and



best friend in the box office; Do I ever have to worry about money? No! Eyes are closed and they know what to do, they know how to sell. I have different buckets of people at different areas of the show, i.e. AV team backstage, a trophy team, a judges captain, VIP captains, and a general admissions captain. My core team is the directors of these different areas of the show and each of them have 1 or 2 people for that area which they lead. I taught them and I leave it up to them to know their responsibilities. I check in with them. Again, the biggest thing is trust. They're there, nothing is beneath them and nothing is above them. They know to get the job done! I learned that from Gary Udit. Gary has brought me onto his team aka the "A" team. We are from all over the country but we've been picked because we are all good at what we do and we come together to form this super team. I think I've built a team like that.

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**Battle Up Productions:** Aisha A, Kamil A, Freddy N, Sheilahe B, Tasha F, Zahra A, Tim S, Chanel P, Purvi P

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“With a vision comes a dream.  
You keep dreaming until it becomes a  
reality and then you are able to execute  
that vision the best you can.”  
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**The other businesses that you have, are on a similar trajectory of continued success? Where are you heading in the healthcare industry?**

The goal is always to expand and grow. I am fortunate to have a great group of leaders in these other businesses and like me they have the energy to move forward. I don't micro-manage them by any means. If I need to jump in, I do and we continue to be successful. Our trajectory is to continue to grow. I'm a fan of the healthcare world because I'm a people servant. I like to give back. My mom's a nurse retired, my dad's in healthcare, and my brother was in healthcare.

**How do you see leading change in that industry?**

As an Operational Excellence Quality Manager of a facility, I work on projects to make or improve areas so that anything I touch ultimately leads to patient satisfaction which could ultimately lead to reducing patient harm. Anything that I work with in the hospital relates in some way or touches each patient in some way that produces satisfaction and reduces patient harm. Even death. That's my vision, that's my world. I go to solve problems, remove obstacles, and make it better and the end customer, the sharp end of that triangle is the patient, which we keep safe. For me, the insurance agency is protecting loved ones and what they care about, their home, their auto, their life, and their commercial businesses. I make sure our clients have the best coverage. They can call me anytime. I had a customer/ client call me this morning and my staff knows to do that as well. I make sure everybody's protected. Texas is the biggest hail storm state in the country. We have five tornadoes touch down, my phones are going off. I'm not one to sell bare minimum policies or cut coverages. At the same time, it's always about honesty and if you were to come to me for insurance, I'd make sure you had the best coverage and you understand why you need that coverage.

**Will you get to a point when you could be on the board to make policies that affect change, is that part of your dreams? Are you looking to affect the greatest change with the largest group of people in the healthcare/ fitness industries?**

I haven't thought that far , I think that would require me to quit everything. That's a monster to take on, but I think that's a good take away. I never thought of it like that. I could, but I'd have to put everything on pause because you're telling me to build a brand and go up against a NIKE, which again is not easy. I'd have to go to work in the trenches and give up everything to do that. I have a vision board. So I think I can look at

doing that maybe one day with the right people and the right players. I also have a set of businesses that I have created but have not launched so I think that's my focus for now.

**Anything you can share with us?**

A business built on convenience. Everybody likes DoorDash & UberEats. Being in the healthcare world you asked me how we're going to affect change. We are launching a concierge service medicare medical care with a group of individuals so that if my daughter gets sick at night, I have somebody that can come see me at home. It's very referral based. It's very close knit and it's not for everybody, but I think I'm going to start with that because during COVID and having worked at Children's Medical Center and now Texas Frisco Center those beds were full and we had people in the hallways, in the ER, and people that couldn't get beds. Guess where beds are available? Guess where people can go? At home. So now I'm catering to a need and a convenience factor for a premium. I think that's the concierge medical model that I'm going for.

**That's one of your business, what else have you not launched yet?**

I'm going to stop there. I only talk about things that I have put to paper. Everything else I need to keep to myself for now, I don't want to give away too much.

**What one word or phrase defines Freddy Naidu? A mantra that you live by?**

Tough question. Visionary. As a DJ, I go to a lot of big concerts like I just went to Daddy Yankee. I've seen Diddy in person, I see a lot of major productions that are the NIKE's of that world. If I see something that I feel could add to the entertainment value in the bodybuilding world, I start thinking, "how can I do that?" I'm a dreamer. Who would have dreamt that I'd be DJ'ing the Mr. Olympia? With a vision comes a dream. You keep dreaming until it becomes a reality and then you are able to execute that vision the best you can.

**I think this is just the start of Freddy Naidu and I think you're going to continue on that upward trajectory for finding success in all the things that you tackle. You're doing such a fabulous job and it's going to be exciting to watch your star keep rising.**

Thank you, I'm going to try.

