

Associated Press - June 23, 2009

## Hollywood takes the stand in Santa Barbara trial

By GREG RISLING Associated Press Writer

Posted: 06/22/2009 03:55:47 PM PDT

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.—Jesse James Hollywood took the stand at his trial Monday where he is accused of orchestrating the kidnap and murder of a 15-year-old boy that inspired the movie "Alpha Dog."

Dressed in a black suit and striped tie, Hollywood told a captivated jury that he was a marijuana supplier in the San Fernando Valley about a decade ago, earning about \$10,000 a month in sales.

"My market was some of what I created, mostly high-grade (marijuana)," Hollywood said matter-of-factly about his operation where he tapped his friends and associates to sell pot.

Prosecutors contend Nicholas Markowitz was kidnapped by Hollywood and his cohorts in August 2000 just blocks from his home to put pressure on his half-brother Ben Markowitz to repay about \$1,200 he owed Hollywood for drugs.

Hollywood, 29, has pleaded not guilty to kidnapping and murder charges. If convicted, he could be sentenced to death.

Hollywood sat up straight on the witness stand, looking composed as he answered questions from his attorney for about 30 minutes, often with a "Yes, sir." Hollywood's supporters, including his father, were in the courtroom as well as Markowitz's parents.

Hollywood said he was friends with Ben Markowitz and he "was doing well selling marijuana for me." He confirmed the two had a falling out and Ben Markowitz had assumed an unpaid drug debt that Hollywood estimated to be about \$2,000.

Hollywood wiped his forehead a few times and asked for a refill of water at one point.

No questions had yet been asked about the kidnapping and murder. However, Hollywood's attorney, James Blatt, said during opening statements that Hollywood didn't direct anyone to kill Nicholas and wasn't present when the teen was shot and buried near Santa Barbara. Four others were convicted in connection with the crime.

The case drew national headlines and was the basis for the movie starring Bruce Willis and Sharon Stone.

Hollywood was set to resume testifying Tuesday.