



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey get over here, my name is Jeremy and this is whistlekick martial arts radio. Let's roll with episode 216 and our guest Shihan Chris Casamassa you might remember him from a little movie called mortal kombat. At whistlekick we make the world's best sparring gear and here on martial arts radio we bring you the best podcast on traditional martial arts twice each week. As I said I am Jeremy Lesniak the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. Thank you to all the returning fans and welcome to you new listeners. Do you host events especially martial arts events? Well we wrote a book how not to hold a martial arts tournament. In it we tackle the ins and outs of marketing tournament seminars and any other martial arts events you can think of. We talk about the proper use of social media and other digital forms of marketing as well as the convention. Unlike most marketing books, we tie it together with the unique challenges of the martial arts industry. Find it on amazon or sign up for the entire course full of templates time saving forms and a lot more at karatetournamentbook.com. Nearly everyone loves movies and for the majority of our listeners and our guests, martial arts movies are an opportunity to see the pursuit that we're also passionate about brought to the next level. For Shihan Chris Casamassa though everything is at that next level. His time at competition, his pursuit of acting, his writing, his teaching all of them exemplify our motto never settle. He's worked with the best and he's acting had him side by side with legends, including some past guests in this show. Through



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

it all, he's maintained an open mind and a willingness to continue working as hard as he ever has. Let's welcome him, Shihan Casamassa welcome whistlekick martial arts radio.

Chris Casamassa:

Thank you, Jeremy, happy to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm happy to have you here, looking forward to the stuff we're going to get into. Listeners we had some great conversation beforehand and that always gives me a good idea of how the whole, rest of the conversation is going to go so I'm really looking forward to this. I think we're going to get into some good stuff. But if you would because it's really the best place to start where martial artists, we all like to know about each other's history. How did you get going as a martial artist?

Chris Casamassa:

I grew up in it, my father Lou Casamassa is the one that's founded our system and style of martial arts which is called red dragon karate so I grew up you know knowing nothing else and I started when I, formally training when I was 4 years old although my dad tells me I was running around the dojo a lot sooner than that but that's kind of how I got my start and you know my dad got his start. When he was in the military, he was a us marine military police officer and they sent him over to japan where he fell in love with the martial arts and he's got, my dad's got black belts and 02:53 martial arts so it's pretty amazing but his very first one that he got was in judo and he was I believe one of the first five Americans ever to be promoted to black belt in japan at the kodokan and he got promoted by a 03:08 Kano who is the son of the founder of judo so he fell in love with the arts there and just studied and kept doing his training and you know we're doing that, you hear the terms mixed martial arts you know very common nowadays but my dad was actually mixing martial arts for anybody who'd even thought of it and bothered doing it and is one of the early pioneers of American karate which essentially became mixed martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, growing up with a parent who was an instructor in a 03:44 did you have a choice about training or was it just kind of expected?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah here's the cool thing about my dad, he gave me a choice and he taught me a lot of things so when I first started reason I said I remember it for because that's when he said listen if you're going to start then you've got to do this until you make black belt so that was my you know he didn't care if I started or not I mean I guess he assumed I would do it



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

eventually but I wanted to start younger than most people at the time you know in the late in mid 1960s there weren't a whole lot of kids training in martial arts. You know it's mostly adults where at today that whole dynamic has changed, it's mostly kids and there's not so many adults but the choice he gave me was you can start but you can't stop 'til make it a black belt and once you make it to black belt then you can do what you want. But it took me a long time to get there you know it took me 6 years. So, I started when I was 4 and it made me a black belt when I was 10 years old. I actually even failed my very first black belt test which is the story I love to tell my students because you know it's hard and to earn a black belt especially at a young age is a difficult thing and you know there is those people who believe that kids shouldn't be black belt and some that believe they should that's probably another debate for another time but you know when I made it, the first time I tried it, I like I said I failed and that I assumed I was going to pass because my dad was my instructor but little did I know that wasn't going to be the case so you know at that time you know I failed my test, I had to wait the entire year to retest again you know black belt testing back in that day was once a year, if you made it great and if you didn't well then there's always next year so I first tried at 9 years old failed and when I got it I was 10 years old and I fell in love with it you know at that point and my dad was really my hero growing up and he gave me a great opportunity to be around and to see and experience all the things that he was doing and

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I lost you there for a second, you have said that your father was your hero growing up?

Chris Casamassa:

Yes, yeah, he sure was and you know he was in his day one of the most amazing martial arts guys I had ever seen and being my dad of course I'm a little prejudiced on that but you know like I said, I had fallen in love with the martial arts and when I made my black belt I just really decided that I was never going to quit and kept doing it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it like growing up you know knowing, it's hard to compare of course you know knowing nothing else than being a martial artist but certainly being around it and being around your father and the people coming in and out of school you could probably have some sense of what it was like away outside of arts. Were you ever tempted to stray?

Chris Casamassa:

To not train?

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yeah

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah, when I took one year off when I was 17, 17 years old because at that time I'd been training for 13 years and I was second or third degree black belt at that time so I had the powerful combination of being a black belt and being a teenager so now I think I knew it all I thought I could do it all and that I didn't need martial arts to do anymore so if there's any teenagers listening right now, listen, you guys think you know everything but I don't know if we can curse but you're going to hear it cause my dad was a marine you don't know sh* and the older I got the more I realized how much I didn't know so it was probably one of my biggest regrets taking that one year off although it was good because it showed me the value of what it was that I was learning and doing and how important it was to accomplish the things I wanted to accomplish in my life so it was a good eye opener in hindsight so that I may try and never wanted to do that again.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was there a particular event or incident that pulled you back in the training?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah you know what here's the funny thing, my friends that I had made in training kept training and they all got their next degree and passed me up and pretty much from my whole life I was used to be in the number 1 guy in line and I came back and I was like 7, 6 or 7 in line and that really struck a blow to me and I was like this sucks I don't ever want to be in this position again and the year I took off it actually took me three years to catch up to get back to where I was and to get back to my number one spot in line so it really was a pride thing for me you know I'd like to be the number one guy in line that we do [08:31](#) start the class and do all that but that wasn't the case when I took the year off and I really I wanted to explore and again I was 17 so I didn't know what I really wanted to do and even when I realized after a year I really just missed it and I wanted to get back into it and it's just my love for the art.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What did you miss, like can you articulate that up for us a bit?

Chris Casamassa:

I can, I missed first of all actively training and staying active is beyond anything that you can just for your, for the mind's sake like to take a year off you know I had been training 3 or 4 or 5 days a week for what, 13-14 years straight and then to take a year off and do nothing, like the first couple of months, I was like this is pretty cool but then after that you know



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

martial arts what I found is it's one of those things that if you don't use it you'll lose it no matter what your age is like you'll always remember the experience and you'll remember you know mentally the things that you could do but then you try and do them and your body gets out of shape pretty quick and you're not necessarily able to do those now when you're young, you know 17-18 or even in your twenties you get that bounce back where you can back in shape really quick but when you get into your thirties forties fifties that timeline starts to get longer and longer so I also found that when I was training actively my mind was sharper and the ideas that I had and got to do things you know whether it was college or high school work just it allowed me to focus better than without the training, you know when you're physically active your brain gets stimulated and so it really helps, it really helps which is why you know to this day I still encourage people of all ages to stay physically active and to keep trying to engage their bodies in a way that will stimulate their minds

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure, I think we've got a pretty good idea of who you are and you know listeners I'm sure you're getting a sense as to the depth to which martial arts has taken our guest today. We talk a lot about stories on this show and I was wondering if you might tell us your favorite martial arts story.

Chris Casamassa:

My favorite martial arts story?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I'm sure you got a ton of them

Chris Casamassa:

Well I do actually have a ton of them, but I think I just told you my favorite martial arts story and that's growing up with my dad training me through there but I've got some TV and movie related favorite stories that I could share with you. Yeah, I was in the TV show walker Texas ranger with Chuck Norris and I actually got to fight him or fight with him on screen in his TV show which was really kind of cool because he was one of my icons growing up him and Bruce Lee so to be able to actually do a fight scene with him was pretty cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you remember the title of that episode or the number or something so we can find it and maybe put it in the show notes?

Chris Casamassa:

I think it's called, showdown at el diablo or something like that



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'll look for that.

Chris Casamassa:

Fighting him was actually cool because you know chuck Norris knows my dad and you know my dad knows so many people just from being in the arts for so long or being one of the early pioneers but him and chuck Norris go way back and you know Ed Parker was a good friend of my dad's before he passed and just so many legends so to be able to do a fight when I was going to actually do the fight scene with his double but it was cool cause he was there that day and he was like oh hey I know your dad so he was like hey I know your dad so I can't wait to beat you up on screen

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it like getting beat up on screen by chuck Norris?

Chris Casamassa:

Oh, it was awesome man it was great, I mean you hear all the chuck norrisms and things like that the legend that is chuck Norris so to get beat up by him was actually an honor.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure [12:59](#) was that the only time you got to work with him on that show, or did they bring you back or did he beat you so brutally that it wouldn't have worked in the story [13:11](#)

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah and that one I was just a bad guy day player on that one so that was a one and done but hey it was still a great experience.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure, outside of martial arts does time and life leave you any space for other passions?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah well, my two favorite hobbies are snowboarding and mountain biking so and now I'm getting up there in age so golf also has become a good hobby and so it's hard but I'm a black belt in the arts but I'm a white belt in golf and it could've been parked there for a number of years it's pretty challenging game that's for sure

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

It is yeah, in fact there probably is a lot of correlation between the way a lot of us view martial arts and the way people view golf you know seems like that the more you know the more you realize you don't know. Mantra seems to hold.

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah. That's true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What is it about snowboarding and mountain biking that are in common and maybe relates to martial arts.

Chris Casamassa:

Balance. Absolute balance that's for sure. Snowboarding, I fell in love with probably 20 to 25 years ago now and I skied, like you I was actually was born on the east coast. I was born in Pennsylvania and I skied pretty much my whole life and then one day I saw this snowboarding thing and it looks so fun. And you know one of the triads so I got a snowboard and just started to fall literally on my rear end every two feet. I couldn't stand for the life of me and I was thinking, I've got great balance, why can't I do this and it wasn't just a little trick that I finally ask somebody, hey, why do I keep falling? In the martial arts, you know in a base stance they teach you bend your knees and kind of push your knees out and your hips in a little bit, if you do that when you're standing on a snowboard it literally makes you fall. I had to retrain myself from a lifetime of experience of this is the way you get your balance, to this is not the way you get your balance in the snow board so it was a great challenge and to actually learn I took a bungee cord in my knees together because the closer in your knees are the easier it is to get up and stay up on the board and it feels like you're surfing on the snow which is pretty awesome but I had to break a lifetime habit of pushing my knees out and sitting my butt down to maintain balance in versus the way to actually do it on a snow board and I had to do that for the first 2 or 3 times and I finally created that new habit and I just kind of fell in love [15:57](#) balance and things like that, uphill and downhill and mountain biking is just, I like [16:06](#) golf is a really [16:06](#) but it's a good mindset game that's for sure but anything that's an adrenaline rush I mean I'm an adrenaline junkie I would say

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay fair enough, one of the questions that I personally love to ask is not a positive one it's about some of the rougher parts of like, one of the things I've always found is that martial artists have this ability to persevere in a way that the general population just doesn't, if you're willing I'd love for you to tell us about a time in your life where things were difficult



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and how you were able to reflect on your martial arts training whether that be the mental aspects or the physical aspects to get past it?

Chris Casamassa:

Well, let's see a recent one probably from about 7 or 8 years ago was a tore my Achilles' tendon and two things really helped, cause now [17:07](#) ever done that I'd injured a knee you know when you're in a activity or a profession that requires you literally to be on your feet and to move now you've taken that ability away I was really, I got depressed and because my whole livelihood was just about I mean it wasn't my livelihood wasn't taken away from me but my ability to do what I do and I've been very blessed physically as far as you know I've gone through an entire lifetime of martial arts with nothing more than bumps and bruises, your typical sprains and black eyes and bloody noses. But for an injury like that it was very devastating and I did it to myself I did it I was, I over trained and I went to go compete, it was hurt and I knew it was hurt but I didn't know the extent of it and while I was competing in the middle of my routine it snapped and put me down and once, as soon as it did I knew, I knew it happened it felt like someone had hit me with a baseball bat in the back of my leg and I actually looked back and I thought someone had hit me with a bo staff during my performance and when I saw well there's no one there then I was like okay so this thing has snapped but you know mentally it was a tough, tough blow because I couldn't walk you know I had the crutches and endured the whole thing so what pulled me through that, there were two things that pulled me through it, when I tore mine David Beckham the pro soccer player I think it was him also tore his Achilles' tendon like a couple of days before or a week after I had done it and for something like this I had interviewed a bunch of different surgeons and got referrals because again being my livelihood I didn't want to have just any operate on my Achilles' I want it back and I want it better than it was before if that was possible you know I was going to do my due diligence in research and find a way to make sure I had the best surgeon. I found a great, great, great surgeon that came highly recommended from a bunch of different people and so he did a great job on the Achilles' and then the rehab place that I went to was also known for helping gymnasts and Olympic athletes get back on their feet after injuries so the combination of those two things really helped me out but in the interim in the mean time when my inspirations was David Beckham cause I told my both the surgeon and the physical therapist, I said look if you guys are as good as people say you are, you'll have me back doing what I do faster than David Beckham gets back to do what he does so I was kind of like, I challenged myself and I challenged my surgeon and my physical therapist so that we all kind of pushed to get through there and then really just the mental focus of being in the martial arts is what saved me because like I said I was, I was really bummed out, I was really upset and if I hadn't been training in martial arts, if I didn't have that belief that I can get through this and overcome the adversity that I had been dealt, then I'd probably wouldn't be back but now



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

you know I'm back and that Achilles' on my left side is actually stronger and feels better than the one on my right side and I'm back doing, I can do literally more things now than when I was in my thirties so I think that's a good lesson of perseverance and sticking through, I think that's what we're trying to get through I think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah without a doubt. How long did it take you, how long from injury to being back let's say 98%?

Chris Casamassa:

Well, they told me it was going to be a year and that was the other thing when you get news like that you can't do martial arts for a year you know again I was like f that, there's no way I'm taking a year again if you go back to my story about when I took a year off before when I wanted to now I was almost being forced to take a year off, I go we're cutting that in half, 6 months I said if you guys are good we'll do it in 3, 90 days out of the boot out of, cause they cast you and they put a boot on you to make sure that you're do, and my surgeon bless his heart like he knew that I wasn't going to listen to his direction so after he did the surgery rather than just wrapping me up he put a cast on my foot and ankle so that I couldn't move it cause he's like I did a great job on you and you aren't going to mess it up and they inverted not inverted but they lifted my foot up and cast it so that I couldn't press down like as if you would press down on a gas pedal and he kept it that way for 6 weeks on purpose cause when I woke up from the surgery I'm like you didn't say that you're going to put cast on it he's like but I heard you talking and I knew that you'd be trying to do stuff that you shouldn't be doing so we're going to make sure that our surgery sticks which was I'm glad he did cause he was right I would've done it but I was back within 3 months I was back on the floor without my cast without the boot, I wasn't jumping and kicking at that time and I would say probably by the end of my 6th month I was back to that 98% in there so we really cut the return time in half.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's impressive and you chalk that up to your martial arts dedication?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah, my mindset, my focus, once I get over the initial shock and depression of just being you know literally disabled and not been able to do it, it was the mindset and the focus in just [22:44](#) being in the martial arts that helped me through that and again I had a great team, I had a great support team, my family was very supportive, my students, and the other instructors at the studio were very supportive, if I didn't have that kind of support I couldn't have done it. The physical therapy, the team over there they were phenomenal and you



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

know my surgeon is you know he's an artist and he really did a great job in repairing that Achilles'

Jeremy Lesniak:

Obviously, your father as your first instructor and your father has been a huge part of your life or huge part of your martial arts and maybe you wouldn't have even found martial arts without him, but if we take him out of the mix and I ask you who has been the most influential second to him, who would that be?

Chris Casamassa:

Two people actually, one the guy who became a close friend and mentor of mine, his name is Steve fisher out here in California and he's probably one of the biggest influences in my life besides my dad and the one of my biggest inspirations besides my dad was probably the same person that inspired you know most of the rest of us that are in martial arts today and that is Bruce lee you know watching him do the stuff that he did on in movies and on TV was a big inspiration he literally created a whole generation of people that got excited about the martial arts so I think besides my dad I think those two people had probably had the biggest influence on me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're right about Bruce Lee obviously he is still the most influential martial artist alive, no I'm sorry, not alive on the planet despite not being alive, what was it about you know as someone who is a big fan what was it about Bruce lee for you that made him so influential?

Chris Casamassa:

Well I think I'd never seen anybody do what he did before and just his energy the way he performed on screen was really something that for me anyway just got like you couldn't wait for it to be over so that you could get up and try that

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, was seeing him on screen part of what inspired you to pursue that?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah I think so I think it was, you know watching him do that and like I said it was really just influential as far as the excitement factor I would watch him and just get excited to get up and do martial arts and I was already doing martial arts so imagine how excited people that weren't doing martial arts and just how popular he made it for like I said an entire generation of people that had only heard about it but have never done it and here I was doing it and studying it and watching this guy and then be like wow men I want to do that, I want to try



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and do that which again I think came from martial arts, like you watch somebody do things like that on screen and if you don't have the right mindset you think it's not I want to try that you're mindset is I can't believe he's doing that I could never do that. That's at the wrong mindset to have but being in the martial arts I was like I can't wait to try that I can't wait to get up and see if I can do that so yeah watching him do that is really what inspired me years later to want to do films and movies and TV shows.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, we just heard a lot about Bruce Lee so I'm going to just in case he would be the answer to this next question let's cross him off the list if you could train with anybody anywhere in the world alive or dead, who would that be?

If I could train with anyone?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, anybody you haven't

Chris Casamassa:

Who would it be, anybody that I haven't I would actually well going back to my roots and using influence that I have I'd like the ability to train it would have been cool to train with the founder of judo, Dr. Jigoro Kono.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's such an amazing martial artist and fortunately you know we've got a bit of history on him you know I mean certainly more than others and anyone that hasn't read up on the founding of judo we talk about a bit on the show and actually a lot the foundation of judo creeps into some of our Thursday episodes you know we've done one on the history of rank on belts and of course that cracks back in the judo so his fingers have made it into just about all of our martial arts in some way

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah very influential

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about competition, was that ever been a part of what you've done?

Chris Casamassa:

Oh yes, yeah yeah yeah I competed professionally on tour for just about 10 years on the north American sport karate association pro tour commonly known as naska, I was a 4-time



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

number one open forums champion 4 years in a row and kind of like Seinfeld I decided I was going to go out on top and retire from competition actively in 1893, 93 somewhere around there but yeah so that was a big a big part of my life for a number of years I wanted to take and started competing locally like most people and I got the competition bug again being that adrenaline junkie that I am you know I started competing locally and really I'm really competitive you know, you know you go to tournament and you win and you go to the next tournament and you don't win and that's if you're hyper competitive like me you're like this is not acceptable so you go back and you practice and you work harder and so I got bit by the competition bug and started from the local southern California competition circuit out to the naska circuit you know that's the big fish in the little pond thing that happens to a lot of people when they compete but fortunately for me again whether I'm just stubborn or persistent I don't know you know I was winning all of the tournaments on the local here in southern California [28:54](#) naska and got killed in my first few attempts out there and so I was like this is also not acceptable and started practicing more and more and I found good mentor, I don't know if you ever heard of a guy named Stewart Kwan

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, I'm not familiar with him.

Chris Casamassa:

A lot of people that compete are familiar with him in the mid late 80s, Stewart Kwan, Georg Jung, Cynthia Rothrock were the gods of the tournament circuit at that time and Stewart was like local guy in southern California so I wanted to get somebody that was better than me to coach me and train me and he helped me a lot and really inspired me to get better as far as competition goes and that was it so I was out there and got on the pro tour and started having little victories here and there. It wasn't consistent, my first four years on tour and then fifth year things started to really pop for me and ended up in the number one status and of course with my mindset I was like okay I'm number one I'd like to stay there and so I competed and stayed there for four years in a row

Jeremy Lesniak:

Impressive

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah it was time to move on you know and then you know I was again opportunity and preparation equal luck right everybody says you're so lucky you did this, and you're so lucky you did that I really I was just prepared and the opportunity was there I was in the right place at the right time and the battle of Atlanta I think it was the 1992 battle of Atlanta that I won the weapons grade championship and that night in the crowd there were producers



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

from a TV show that they were putting together which ended up being a show called wmac masters and they'd ask me and a few other guys and girls who had won that night if we wanted to be in a TV show and we've been you know at that time a lot of people had approaches to do this project to that project and none of it really came to any [30:53](#) but you know I said yeah that would be great yeah I'd like to do that and [30:59](#) from 6 months go by nothing and we know we're still competing and being out on tour and then one day we got phone call and says hey we want you to come to universal studios in Orlando we're going to shoot a pilot for the show and we shot the pilot it was me, hakim Alston, mike bernardo, herb perez and a bunch of other people who were the top competitors. [31:28](#) wmac masters that was on fox I think 3 years, and so it was experience TVs and movie shows just kind of kept going from there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hmmm, the listeners, we have listeners of varying ages so you know I know your project, I mean there are some things you've done that I'm quite a fan of and

Chris Casamassa:

Thank you

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well thank you, I mean certainly some elements of my childhood that brought to life and got me up off the couch you know saying I want to try that of course of all the things that you did were physically possible, so but I'm guessing we have some listeners but may not be connecting your name to some of your movies so I'm wondering if you might just kind of indulge me and you know cause I can't go out there and slap them all and say here's what you need to go watch you know we don't have pre requisites for listening to episodes but talk about some of your projects and not just to list them out but what it was like working on them because we have an opportunity in talking to you that we get to know what it's like kind of behind the scenes and maybe you can share some of that stuff with us.

Chris Casamassa:

Sure, well first of all thank you for saying that I inspire you because that really is one of the things that I try and do nowadays is if I can inspire a new generation you know watch me do what I do and they you know hey that's exciting I want to try that or I want to do that, that's great and what you said to me countless times when I do seminars or when I go to ** conventions and events or people say you are the reason I started martial arts. I mean that is such an honor and such a cool cool thing to hear somebody say that it really just fills my heart with just love for, to continue to do what I do but to answer your question I think the



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

biggest project that I've done where people recognize me the most which is crazy cause I was wearing a mask is mortal combat where I played the character scorpion in the mortal kombat films and also in the TV show, in the web series again one of the few characters that's been in almost each incarnation of the franchise has been going on which also has been an honor and privilege and the people that have put those projects together I'm forever grateful and thankful for so yeah, if you haven't already googled it, you google my name Chris Casamassa scorpion from mortal combat. The other cool thing, that other cool project I did was batman where I got to actually wear the bat suit and I doubled through George Clooney in the movie batman and robin so whenever you see him kicking or punching in that movie, that's not him that's me and so that was really cool too, just to be able to wear that suit I mean, so much history and stuff goes on with that you put that suit on the first thing that you do when you have the suit on is you find a mirror and you look in it and you say I'm batman. So really that was a blast, that was the first giant budget film it was 100-million-dollar film that we worked on, that project, so to work on a film of that scope and that magnitude was actually pretty cool. So those are probably the two biggest projects where people where people recognize me the most and of course I had masks on in both [34:59](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and was that giving you a complex at all say here we want you in this film but we're not going to show your face?

Chris Casamassa:

Yeah a little bit, a little but I mean I've also done a ton of projects where I've got to show my face, I got to fight with Wesley snipes in blade Andy got to fight vampires against buffy and martial law with Sammo Hung and VIP with him I understand all were not wearing a mask so those are you know that's all pretty cool too. But yeah for a little bit there's like alright if there's a mask character role I'm pretty much guaranteed that I'm going to get it

Jeremy Lesniak:

What you know now I'm guessing some of the listeners who may not have known your name prior to listening are probably sitting there saying whoa you know and then we've probably rocked them back on their heels a little bit. What might you tell people, what don't, for those of us which is almost all of us that have never been in a movie that have never done a fight scene in a movie, that have never had to translate martial arts to martial arts on screen, what is the biggest misconception, what don't we know?

Chris Casamassa:



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Oh, two things. One I'm going to, I give, right anybody who's listening and that wants to pursue film and TV work I'm going to give you the same advice I was given all the way back in the 1990s which was great advice and it when I heard it, it totally resonated with me cause until I heard it I didn't really understand that concept but once I [36:34](#) the advice was given to me by a great guy by the name of pat Johnson who is in the industry, I mean this is the guy that was responsible for all the action in the first 4 karate kid movies all the first ninja turtle movies of course mortal combat, batman and robin like this guy has put together more fight scene and more box office probably than anybody and he gave me some great advice when I was first starting out he said Chris want you to understand that you are a great martial artist he goes but on film they can take a great actor and make him look like a martial artist but they can't take a great martial artist and make them look like an actor so take acting lessons and when I heard that I was like that's pretty profound and then if you look back and you research even going back to you know one of my early idols Bruce Lee he took acting lesson you know there was a whole thing of him where you know he had to be able to speak and read and show emotion on screen that goes beyond your martial arts training so that's the, probably the best advice I ever got and it was true you know and one of my favorite movies for martial arts besides anything Bruce lee did was the movie the matrix and if you look at that movie, Keanu reeves he did such a great job and you believed that he can actually now he did you know take some training and do some martial arts but you know whether you love him or hate him he did a great job of acting that role so he makes you believe that he's the guy from the matrix and I always use that as the example of that advice to do where they can take an actor and they can make them look like a great fighter, great martial artist. The other thing is in this, in the industry of movies and TV shows, it's not who you know it's who knows you and if you are ever lucky enough or fortunate to get on a set on a movie set or a TV set, my advice is be nice to everyone because you never know where those people are going to end up. Some of the people that I met on some of my very very first projects ended up becoming really big directors and producers, and through the courtesy and discipline that I learned in martial arts you know my dad taught me treat everyone with the respect that you want to be treated with you know. My goal was to be kind and nice and good to everyone, and people remember that you know I would get phone calls years later to work on other projects where they say you know we worked with you on this project the number of years gone we just thought you were so nice, we thought you'd be good for this project. So being kind and being nice to the people that you meet along the way is also probably that's the number 1 and number 2 piece of advice I could give anybody who wants to get into the business.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thank you for sharing that. We've heard similar things from some of the other actors that we've had on the show you know it's yeah, I mean we spend all of our time training for



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

martial arts but if you want be an actor, you're not and actor martial artist you're a martial arts actor you got to, refine those chops. Let's switch out of movies for a second, books, are you at all a fan of martial arts books?

Chris Casamassa:

No, I don't think so, define martial arts books

Jeremy Lesniak:

You can define it however you want I mean it's an interesting question for me to ask because we tend to get a lot of polarity. People either are big readers and they find that they're able to pull in a lot from the books that they read you know around martial arts philosophy teaching things like that into what they do as a martial artist and then we have others who some folks just don't read and in fact I'm one I don't read a lot but a lot of the people that we've had on this show say you know I just don't see a good translation between martial arts and capturing it in words.

Chris Casamassa:

I would tend to agree with that, now when I say I'm not a fan of martial arts books I you know, how to books and things like that for martial arts I think because it's an art form and it's a skill it's hard to learn from a book so some of those trying to learn martial arts from a book mean you could but it's always good to have a mentor and a coach and someone live that can see you do it. That being said I love to read, I constantly read because one of my core philosophies is if you're through learning you are through and I never want to stop learning about anything so I'm constantly reading and trying to expand my knowledge. At least now for the next, this next chapter of my life on the business side of what we do, there's a great book that I'm reading now by a guy named grant cardone called the 10x factor or 10x which talks about mindset and working 10 beyond what you [41:45](#) of multitasking which shows that humans aren't really supposed to be multitasking and you [*41:55](#) comes from computers and doesn't apply to humans and the human mindset so those are two really great books that I recommend for anybody who wants to read and expand their mind and or just anything some really powerful stuff there I believe so I believe reading is essential to growth cause it does stimulate your mind in the same way that exercise helps to stimulate your mind. [42:18](#) answers your question

Jeremy Lesniak:

It absolutely does, thank you. I told you the questions are vague, it gives you the space, go wherever you want to go with it because

Chris Casamassa:



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Turning left [42:28](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey that's fine, just you know loves the ocean unless you're in one of those silly cars that can has a motor in the back and you can float

Chris Casamassa:

Right

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's, what are you looking forward to you know goals are there things in future something coming down the pipe that you're just looking at you're saying I'm super pumped on this?

Chris Casamassa:

Yes, my programs that my help, that I'm trying to help kids whether they're in martial arts for not in martial arts. I have, speaking of books I have a book coming out in September called busy proof fitness which is a book for parents, not a guide for them to help the battle against bullies and bellies and make their kids feel like a super ninja. There is an epidemic in the united states and really all around the world of childhood obesity so for the last ten years it's been min mission my path my purpose to do what I can to help in that epidemic and I've got a few programs that are out there that have helped you know hundreds and thousands of kids to do it but my goal is to help a million kids get fit healthy strong and confident through you know regular exercise and of course I'm trying to inspire a new generation of people who aren't doing martial arts to get them involved in the martial arts and one of my core programs that we have licensed schools around the country is called kicknfit kids, which is a 6 week program for kids where they train 3 days a week for 30mins a day they do some martial arts some stretching some strength training they're [44:06](#) at a fast paced fun class for them to inspire them to want to get fit and healthy and we run these transformation challenges for them to help them do it and we've got 72 locations that are using kicknfit kids around the country and if anyone's near their computer right now they could go to our website which is kicknfitkids.com shameless plug right here k i c k the letter n f i t k i d s.com to find the location nearest them and if school owners are listening and they want to become a licensed location there's a link there for them to get more information on that to help us win the battle against childhood obesity and at the same time with bullying because bullying is such a big issue. There was a study by Davis and Nixon back in 2010 I think that said 92% of bullying happens to kids based on one of 2 factors, their looks and their weight so that's a pretty staggering statistics and if I can help change that in anyway then I'm going to do everything in my power to try and do it so the book will give parents a guide of



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

resource and things they can do and look at to help their kids at home. Kicknfitkids and bullet proof fitness will be kind of my 2 main thrust moving forward until I reach that goal of reaching a million kids across the country get fit healthy and strong.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Those are great programs and of course if someone isn't near their computer right now we'll have this stuff all on the show notes whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com and let's kind of continue that plug time that commercial time we call it, if someone wants to reach you, social media other websites you know let's have all of it.

Chris Casamassa:

Well I'm easy to find, you just put my name in any google browser and you find a million ways for me. I'm on twitter of course @realmkscorpion I wonder why I got that handle. Twitter, Facebook you can just type me into Facebook there's a bunch of easy places to find me Chris Casamassa on Facebook my website is my name chrisCasamassa.com. Red dragon karate is our, my baby we've got 12 locations here and southern California. I oversee operations now for my dad who started our company back in 1965 this is our 52nd year in business so we've been around for a pretty long time so I'm actually easy to find through social media or on the web

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool. Well hopefully, people will check out all of the things that you've got going on and if they're anywhere near one of those locations will check you out you know maybe give you a shout on social media. Thank you for coming on the show, I certainly appreciate it.

Chris Casamassa:

Well Jeremy, thanks for having me it's been pretty cool I like your interview style.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well thank you thank you very much and maybe I couldn't trouble you for one more thing some parting words for well I guess me and everybody listening.

Chris Casamassa:

Parting words of wisdom that's, it's a heavy request there but I'll do what I can. Here's the thing, never give up like it's that's it that's one thing I could tell everybody. Never give up on your dreams on your goals on your hopes on your desires stay focused on them and don't just give it your best give it 10 times your best so that you can achieve whatever it is. Everything that I ever wanted in my life, every goal that I've ever set has been achieved by me not giving up you know I wanted to compete in wanted to be the best competitor in the



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

world but I didn't start that way, I ended up that way because I didn't give up on it and I sought up that hope that I needed to get there and I stayed persistent. Being in movies and TV shows was something I always wanted to do, but I didn't start out at the top, my first role was in scorpion you know I did 6 7 8 low budget movies where I was a background guy for this and the extra for that and I worked my way to it because I wanted, I didn't want to give up on my goals and hopes and dreams and if you are prepared and the opportunity presents itself then you'll have that opportunity you'll have that chance to do whatever it is that you want to do. Just like now my goal is to help and empower a million kids worldwide get strong get fit get healthy and get bully proof and I will not give up until I reach or exceed that goal so persistence and focus are probably two best traits that you should never lose and never give up on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Mortal kombat holds a special place in my heart, I actually use the theme songs as my music for grand championships competitions for a couple of years speaking with someone who is such a hallmark of the franchise well it's an honor but then to find out what a kind and solid person and martial artist he is, what's better than that, thank you Shihan Casamassa for coming on the show over at whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com you can find all of the show notes from today some great photos links and even a video of my favorite mortal kombat scorpion movie fight scene, can you guess which one it is? Find whistlekick on social media at whistlekick on twitter Facebook Instagram and everything else. You can also check out the shows Facebook group [whistlekickmartialarts radio](https://www.facebook.com/whistlekickmartialartsradio) behind the scenes. Don't forget the book, how not to hold a martial arts tournament, its available on amazon or get the full course with tons of timesaving templates and tracking documents stuffs that's guaranteed or honestly, I give you your money back guaranteed to help you make more money at your next event, you can find all that at karatetournamentbook.com. That's it for now until next time train hard smile and have a great day.



Episode 216 – Shihan Chris Casamassa | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com