



Episode 211 – Improving Martial Arts Events | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey what's up everybody its episode 211 of whistlekick martial arts radio. Because, I'm Jeremy, I'm the founder of whistlekick and that's why we call it whistlekick martial arts radio. I'm feeling a little bit goofy, I'm fresh off of an entire weekend of training. We're going to talk about that, where I went, why I went and some of the take always for those of you that might be attending similar events or some advice for those of you that put on these events because there's a lot of lessons to be learned.

Remember you can the show notes we'll have some show notes, we'll have some links from today's episode over there, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You can find all of our products at whistlekick.com and links to everything else that we do from there. There's a lot, there's more in the works. Oh man, the new thing that were working, ooh. I'm so excited, I can't wait to talk about it but there are stuff that's got to happen before we can talk about it so, I'll just have to leave you with that teaser.

So, what did I do? Over the weekend I was in upstate New York. Herkimer, New York at the Herkimer county community college. Now, why was I there? Cause its summertime right now. It might not be summer when you listen to this but it was summer when I went, its summer when I'm recording. I was there for the 35th installment of the



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super summer seminars martial arts event. And as much I love alliteration that's not why I was there. I was there because it was my second time. See, in 2015, some friends of the show specifically Master Adam Grogan, encouraged me to attend this event he said hey, come check this out I think you would really dig it. So, I grabbed my friend master earl smith who's been on the show and his wife, the three of us drove out there and we had an amazing weekend of training and meeting up with people and it was an incredible time.

If you know anything about my schedule, my calendar, if you kind of stalk the calendar at whistlekick.com or you check out the stuff that is going up locally at martialartscalendar.com. You'll see that there are quite a few camps that I've been to this year. This is, I want to say, this is my fifth one. And there's several more in the agenda over the next few weeks. Seems that we stuff a lot of those in, in our short new England summers.

Honestly, I love getting into class. I love training in that way, but I also love these weekend events because you get to know martial artists as more than people who train. You get to know them as human beings, as individuals. You get to build a relationship with them in a way that you wouldn't generally be able to and you know, a few minutes before and after class. And you get exposed to a lot more people, a lot more stuff.

I've had a lot fun doing these events and specifically with this one over the weekend, I came back more dedicated, more passionate about my training because I'm connecting dots and I'm seeing the way things are going, and that excites me. I saw a lot of the people that I've made friends with the last time. Quite a few have come on the show. I'm not going to name them because I didn't think to make a list before hand and I will leave someone out. But, if you go back to the first, probably thirty, forty episodes, you'll see quite a few names in there that I met and I believe I mentioned in each case that I met at this event. I don't want to throw anybody else's event under the bus. I don't want to say that this is my favorite because they're all different. And there are different things about each that I love, but there's something particularly different about this event and that's what I wanted to talk about today. I wanted to hone in on some of those differences because it is a special event, it's an event that has a lot of return not just attendees but instructors and it seems that its continuing to grow and everybody there seems to have a good time. And I'm not used to seeing a lot of that at least not at this level at the other events I've been to over the years.

The main thing and I think the one that really sets us apart, the one that I can put my finger on is the barriers between the instructors and the attendees are almost non-existent. In fact, the majority of the instructors are taking other people's session. And that is huge to me. It's



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not hey, here are your instructors and you know, lots of bowing and lots of titles and rank and all this. I'm not picking on that because that stuff does matter, you know, I have a tremendous amount of respect for people that have put their time in. But when you have different people from all sorts of different arts, from all over, not just the country but countries, because it's an international event. Everyone just kind of drops the formality. And not that it's disrespectful, but the respect is tempered a little bit with that formality and it means that everyone there is more willing to ask questions, they're more willing to share and to learn and that's what comes out of this event. The amount that I've learned in the two times that I've been, greatly exceeds the other events that I've been to. And it's not just because it's diversity of instructors or the amount of instruction, it's because the people that are getting up to teach were just students in the last session. They'll be students in the next one. If you checked out the episode, in episode 179, I talked about the difficulty of teaching at an event like this after coming back from another one, and these guys just, and women, everybody, really just knocks it out. Financially it's a good value, I had a great time you know that's I mean, those are the reasons that why, why I like this event That's why I went back.

How could it be better? Unfortunately, it's a list that plagues everyone that ever put on an event like this. People complain about the food and you know, it's held at a college and they do what they can with you know, what we're paying them. Things could always be cheaper but I think that, in this case it's the value is there. And for me, I would like another day. You know another half day of training you know maybe, we all rolling Friday for lunch instead of Friday for dinner. But that may change the culture of the event so, who knows? You know I'm certainly going to go back, none of those are hard complaints.

The last thing I want to leave you with is my take always. The bits that I've pulled that I think about when I'm putting on an event or when I'm looking at offering advice to someone on their event because this thing does run so well. The first thing, I think the most important thing is every event has a culture to it, a vibe, an environment, whatever you want to call it. And if you don't dial that in, nothing else seems to work right and if you don't form the culture intentionally it will form without you. Sometimes it's good if you have the right people, if you don't have the right people there, that culture, it's not going to go the way that you want it too. In this case, the culture comes from the way the event brings in instructors. They teach, they train, they have a good time, there's a social dynamic to some of the event. And that puts people on a more leveled playing field rather than a you know, instructors and students desperate [07:51](#) culture. Whatever event you have, you've got to look for your niche. This event offers a really affordable all in one training package, it includes the food, it includes your own dorm room and the training and your shirt and the whole thing and it goes really well because of that. A lot of the events that I've attended when people



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have to get their own room, and they're taking care their own food, it takes a lot of the attention away from their training and again it breaks that level playing field. Everybody staying in a dorm at this event. Everybody is eating the same food that they're probably not thrilled with.

Well, instead of some people bringing a bag of lunch and sitting in the corner and some people going out to a restaurant which kind of creates this exclusivity, you know we're all just sitting at these college cafeteria tables and mingling around. You've got to listen to the attendees. If you put on an event and you go to put it on again and you haven't talked to people that came the first time, why not? They have feedback for you, maybe they're not going to reach out with it especially if its mildly good or mildly bad. People tend to complain when they're really upset, some will pay you a really good complement. But for the majority, the eighty percent of that feedback in the middle, you're not going to hear it once you ask. You can send out a survey, emails, call people on the phone, ask them when you see them, and don't be defensive. If someone has feedback, if someone's willing to open themselves and tell you what they think, thank them. Because even if you disagree, it's their opinion and if it's their opinion, it's probably someone else's opinion too. Each time you put on an event, each time you do something, try to make it a little bit better. Aim for fifteen percent change. You want to be careful really big changes, sometimes you have to but if you're making those smaller fifteen percent shifts, chances are you're going to come up with some stuff that's good, some stuff that's bad and the event can keep moving forward. Don't get wrapped in the way you've always run things. If you've put on an event and it's been the same for the last twenty years, it's probably time to change things. Because what is easy and convenient for you, is often boring to other people.

Lastly, and I've seen the full gamut of this at various events be they, tournaments or seminars or camps, remember the customers. If you put on an event, and people are paying you to be there, you're serving them. Don't make them feel poorly about their decision to come and spend money with you because they wont comeback. There's a humility that I think is instrumental in putting on an event to recognize that those people have put their faith in you that what you're offering is worth their time and their money. We live in a busy world and most people don't have all the disposable income that they want. So, when they choose to share that with you, it deserves your respect towards them.

So that's where we're at. Remember you check out the calendar for the event whistlekick will be at, at whistlekick.com. You can check out the events that we know of, all the events people are submitting over at martialartscalendar.com. Please go check it out, help us add more, add more. Were really trying to build this up, it's free, it's always going to be free, it's free to look at, it's free to submit to, there's no advertising on it. Were



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just trying to help people know about what's out there because I love this stuff and you probably do too.

That's all for today until next time. Train hard, smile and have a great day.