



Episode 221 – KickAI - Interview with Founder Jan-Eric Wargelin | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey what's up everybody! This is Jeremy coming back to you, episode 221 of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). We've got something a little bit different for you today, it's an interview but it's showing up on a Thursday because it's not an interview of the person. We're really talking about a product. So today you're going to hear a conversation I had with Jan Eric Wargelin and I'm doing my best with his name but it's a whole different language there well you'll hear more about that later and we talk about the product that his company Kick AI is about to release on to the world, pretty cool stuff. This is not just a product review or anything like that. We get into the nitty gritty of why something like this doesn't exist. I had a great time talking to him, we've got a discount code over on the show notes for you to check out we make nothing on it and it's really important that I underscore this a few times. We are not a pay to play podcast, there are a plenty of them out there. We receive no benefit whether you buy or don't. We receive no compensation for this guest appearance, I reached out because I like what they're doing, I think it's cool stuff and it's not going to be for everybody, built for a lot of you out there, it's a least worth considering so I'm going to step back and you can listen to our conversation. check it out. Alright listeners welcome to a kind of a special, a little bit different episode of martial arts radio. Today I'm bringing somebody on not so much to talk about them hopefully we'll get this guest back to talk about their martial arts journey in the coming weeks but we're actually on to talk about their business, their product. Obviously at whistlekick we don't make everything and we don't have plans to make everything so when I see someone that's has similar values they're trying to bring the martial arts



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world forward by bringing out a product that is better or completely different than anything that's available, I reach out to them and we talk and we have conversations and in this case, it made sense to bring this individual on and have them share the story of what they're making with you. Now I just want to be really honest, this isn't any kind of endorsement, this isn't any kind of formal support other than I think what they're doing is really cool and I'm supporting it in a personal way. So, Mr. Wargelin welcome to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com).

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Thanks Jeremy, great to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well it's great to have you on and I gave you that intro and of course I haven't said a single thing about what it is you folks are making so I would rather turn that over to you and let you introduce your product.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Sure, okay so we're doing a sensor based application to martial arts and namely taekwondo and we really want to bring data understanding into martial arts world so we're making a wearable designated to just kicking so it's not a general Fitbit kind of thing that tells you that you went running but we really want to kind of let you know more about your kicks and how you can train better in order to kind of get better in shorter times so a smarter training wearable data app.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, I know this isn't the name for it but is instead of a Fitbit it's a kick bit if you will.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah, that was actually our first project name before...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Was it really?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:



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It came up to, Yeah it was.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I didn't even know that.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah, yeah, we haven't actually talked to anyone like in public about it because it was kind of an inside joke with us founders but in my very first pdf it says kick bit version 1.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But of course, that's not the name so what did you change the name into?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah so, the product and the company is called Kick AI, where the AI coming from the kind of the small features that we're planning on the app.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, so I know we'll get into what it does but give me a little bit of history, why? Because this isn't something that exists. I mean I'm sure a lot of listeners out there have Fitbits or Jawbones or you know any number of other wearables that tell you your heart rate and your steps and how horribly you slept last night. But why did you want to make something for martial arts, specifically Taekwondo?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

So yeah, I'm a Taekwondo practitioner myself I just recently got my first Dan last December and I guess the story starts within that premise. I was kind of, pretty exactly 1 and a half years ago I was starting my kind of my preparations for my looming Dan test and unfortunately, I didn't have enough time on my hands to be at the dojang like as much as I've would've wanted so instead I hit the local gym which is kind of like next door from my place and I did some work on the heavy bag and just you know doing basic kicks. You know as martial artists I mean in the very beginning the learning curve is very steep you kind of see a result as you progress and for me at least I felt that like I was in a place where I couldn't anymore see how I was developing if or I was at all kind of putting the hours into the right kind of training and stuff like that so I had just actually recently bought a Fitbit and done some running with it and I was pretty excited about that also and started thinking about like is there a wearable for martial



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artists to kind of gather information from their kicking like really, really just focus on the kicks and I did some research well googling and I was kind of surprised that there wasn't any and that was kind of like the start of the project. I knew that I needed something, I found out there wasn't anything like that and because of my background on service design I kind of thought to myself that hey I got to do this so, that was kind of the first steps of Kick AI, then called Kick bit.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know what I love about this story is that you can swap out a very small piece to the story and it's the whistlekick story.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Okay cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The idea and if this episode goes live the day that I think it's going to, just the week before I would've given a little bit more because listeners were writing and asking you know tell us a little bit more about how whistlekick was founded and why sparring gear was the first thing that you did, so I love when businesses pop up from personal need that Idea that I want this thing and it doesn't exist and it frustrates me so fine I'm going to make it myself.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah, cool, yeah and I think it just adds so much more value into the kind of the whole thing like I mean I'm really thinking about the user, the end user in a way that like if this would've come from 07:40 or Adidas or something like that it would've been a whole different story I mean they're focused on just the market and just the kind of the easy box like I'm really like we at Kick AI are really focused on bringing real value to the martial artists community.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and martial arts is something that always been very subjective.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yes



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Jeremy Lesniak:

You know when we do our forms and we say this form is better than that form, it's subjective when we talk about the idea of even a sparring much of the time it can be subjective because you know human beings are involved and of course that's one of the things that Olympic that WTF or WT, we're supposed to call it now right?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The WT style Taekwondo is.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Not it's not WF which was one of the options, World Foundations.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow okay, that would've been even, somehow that would've been worse than WTF.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

I know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For those of you that may not know the WTF the World Taekwondo Federation, that organization finally after many many years decided that the acronym WTF was too close to the other acronym WTF and I'll, you know and I'll let you figure out what that one is if you don't know and they spent the last few years rebranding as WT World Taekwondo. But outside of that style of sparring where there are sensors and talked to anybody who's in that world and those are perfect either. We don't have much that's objective, you know we don't have a lot of ways to say this is getting better, this is better than that and maybe that's why what you're doing resonates so strongly for me. When I had my own martial arts school, one of the thing that I did is a test with my students was okay kick this bag as many times as you can in a minute. And then in a couple of weeks we'll retest it, can you execute more kicks? But of course, that leaves a lot of variance for is the quality of the kick good or the kicking is high you know there is a



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lot of still subjective stuff going on in there but of course when you're talking about sensors and math and physics, it's kind of hard to cheat that isn't it?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah that was like, that's like I mean obviously I was training by myself and like doing when I came up with the idea but immediately I kind of started thinking about the kind of the whole situation in the dojang like no matter how good you are as a teacher or how like well-developed your masters are it's like the training situation it's always like 1 teacher 20+ plus pupils and then you kick and you likely to get even one feedback from a training I mean not because it's a bad teacher but it's just because there's just so much going on and even if you get a good feedback like it's still subjective it's still visual, it's still like it has like, it's lacking real value which is something that we really want to change and I think it's like it's not just Taekwondo, it's not just WTF or ITF or Karate I mean, there's nothing viable in any martial arts at the moment. I mean in boxing there are some art technology kind of applications out there but nothing for the kind of the more traditional martial arts so in the big picture we really want to bring value to other martial artists also.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We're at an interesting time with both you know these fitness or this exercise or passion pursuits wherever you lump martial arts, wherever you lump Taekwondo, coupled with the technology, there are group fitness classes going on, long time listeners know that in addition to martial arts I'm passionate about cross fit and there are cross fit gyms where everyone will wear a heart rate monitor and the coach is not just watching what people are doing and encouraging them but also able to monitor their heart rate and know this person might be going a little bit too hard, this person maybe could push it a little bit more and it gives them an additional data point it gives them more feedback so they can do their job better and I'm guessing there's if not in the first version you probably have some plans for how instructors could coach classes with everyone wearing a Kick AI.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah definitely, that's like, that's the first thing on our road map as soon as we get this first, first version out I mean we have talked to a lot of coaches and a lot of high level athletes, other big athletes, other big coaches and the thing is that like they need data but they need broad data like we, it's not just a consumer thing that hey you did this, you did that and here's our kind of like virtual trophy for you. They really want to understand the big picture where really kind of like open to other platforms also like they need stuff from sleep, nutrition from like what, it's really all about that 1% kind of advantage and it's kind of a number of many things. So, we really want to be like providing really valuable data on the one end of the spectrum and kind of like connecting with other providers of the rest.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

So, what can this thing do so I don't even know what it looks like you know, is this a clip, is it an ankle am I going to feel like I've released from prison while I'm wearing this thing?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

No, that was like our first version obviously when we have done some 3d printing and like kind of like prototype, and it did look to be honest a bit like that so but yeah if you go to our site www.kickai.com you can see how it's going to like so it's really sleek and small and it's a bit like a, I mean go and check it yourself but it's going to have an ankle mount that you're going to wear with your standard WTF sparring gear and even your sparring shoes so it's you're going to slip it on, you're going to tie them and tighten the strap and then you're going to put in the sensor into a hole there and hook it in to your app and off you go you start kicking. So, we're going to have a number of simulations kind of like we really want to use these simulations in a way that you feel like then you really know what you're doing like there are simulations, digital versions of the stuff that you're really would do in a dojang we have reactions simulations, burst simulations and like pretty much we can digitalized most trainings that are really familiar to you from your dojang. Then you have after each training you get the feedback from your training which is something that like in itself would be really malleable and you can see your results from your training from months back and kind of like see graphs and charts where you're headed on your training like are you doing the right things and stuff like that and we're slowly starting to also like I said soon as you start kicking we're starting to do some very smart things on the app software side so we're kind of creating your own individual training for you at the same time so the more you kick the more we learn about you and more individual training tips we can give you so that's basically the thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, how about your background are you, I mean how outside of martial arts, were you involved in engineering or?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

No, no. I'm not overly technical guy but I'm, I've been doing digital stuff for I don't know over 10 years now. I'm a service designer, my background and a visual designer also so I'm also the guy, I'm also responsible of the branding stuff and I know it's but a good thing that the founders in our company are mostly my colleagues from down the road or colleagues that I know that where they can pull the best possible product so that's kind of our strength also I mean we have martial arts background but we also have strong background on all things digital so we don't, we're not we don't have to kind of ask people around how to do the stuff we really know how to do a stuff.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Great, and I'm sure at this point we've got people listening who you know some of them might be thinking that's kind of neat you know but then I know that there are others out there cause I know some of our listeners and I know that I was in this group when I first found out about what you were doing and their head is exploding right they're just, they're thinking okay this sounds amazing I want it yesterday so for them cause don't forget folks we'll link to everything whistlekickmartialartsradio.com lot of pictures, this might be the easiest website we've ever talked about, kickAI.com if you can't figure out how to get there, you probably didn't figure out how to get this podcast but you know we'll drop some stuff over there you can go direct whatever works for you. But if someone's interested you know is this available yet? How much and where did you get this great accent?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

So yeah, we are at a point right now that we are estimating that we will ship the first batches of our product which is pretty limited edition also still this year so we're looking at December right now and the product is available on presale on our site and it's really, really like I don't want to advertise it but it's really straight forward to pre-order it and it's also really safe as you don't get charged anything on until we have shipped and it's available worldwide also. The first, we are at the moment really focused on the android version of the software but the iOS software will come a few months behind that so we're really, really hoping that on December we will ship and again it's really safe to pre-order it like you will not pay anything until you have the actual product so it's not a crowd funding project as we are in pre-sales already.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great, and where's your company located?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

We're based in Helsinki, Finland.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, which is where that wonderful accent comes from?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Cheers



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Jeremy Lesniak:

We've been getting more and more international folks on the show and it's just, I think that's so cool, you know we're

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Okay cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Last time I looked we've been listened to in over a hundred and thirty countries and that just kind of blew me away, that was a little more than I.

That's cool

Jeremy Lesniak:

I had expected, yeah.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Like no pressure

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, not at all no, no pressure whatsoever. And just firstly as an android user thank you for starting on the android side and not the iOS side I always feel like I get shortchanged there are online products that I use that they say oh our Android version's coming soon and I think they're lying.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Like, something like kind of a no brainer for us to focus on the android just because of like the coverage like we really wanted to do that one first but fair enough iOS users, I am an iOS user also so we will really kind of focus on bringing it as soon as possible also.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You know that says a lot about the integrity of your company and your goals that the CEO won't even be able to use it right away.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

I will buy an Android

Jeremy Lesniak:

You will buy an android phone. I love it, I love it. So, let's just kind of start to wrap up but tell us about what the experience would be like, if I had this thing in front of me and I'm dying to get my hands on one and actually a great tangent folks, no money exchanging hands here just there's no, this is not a pay to play episode I know there are podcasts out there that let guest come on and pitch their products and they make some money or a cut. None of that is happening, none of that will ever happen with this show with martial arts radio that is incredibly important to me. If we're going to bring you something whether that's a story or a guest or a product it's strictly because we think it's something that you maybe interested in. So, let's pretend I had one of these, I had a kickAI and I put the strap on and I drop it into the holster and I step out on the training floor, what kind of things, what kind of information would come back from that training session and what information will be available in later versions?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah that's really important for us as I said, my background is from service design and end user experience so like coming from martial arts world I mean I think the whole user experience starts from the moment that you pack up your stuff and you go to the dojang like you have to kind of have some ways to kind of like from your big bag of protective gear and stuff like that you have to have this nice little kind of package which you can bring with you and kind of like unwrap it quickly and like wear it quickly and wear it with your sparring gear and it's really about that user experience if we mess it up there then it doesn't really matter what's on the app side really because people are not going to use it so that's really incredibly important for us also but yeah you wear it you start training you choose from your simulations or you do the kind of the free training mode which tells you how you did you punch on like how many rounds are going to do, length, pulse length and then you just do what you normally would do or you start to do our training simulations and the whole idea is kind of like give you a bigger picture of your training in order for you to kind of make it easier to do the right decisions on your training. But like we really, really focused on the kind of the whole package which means that like it should be easy to wear, it should be super easy to use because like I know that when my gear is missing and it starts ripping up and it's incredibly annoying to you know just do it with your duct tape and stuff like that so we really want to be this kind of like durable and easy to use as possible but yeah the whole thing is like you get data from your training that you can leverage in different ways. Of course, we're



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going to have stuff like leader boards and stuff like that so you really like if you just get data and you don't have anything to compare it with what's, there's not much use to that anyways so we're going to have leader boards and I'm sure our crew is going to use it so you can compare your stats to his because this is going to be so cool that Aaron's not going to say no for this.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, you'll be able to get data back on how many kicks you threw, how fast?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

How fast and then you're going to have like, we're going to have a way to kind of tell you that, was this round better than last round? and stuff like that so it's going to really push you harder on your training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I know the product's called kickAI but I could I strap this on to my wrist and track punches?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

The thing is that we're really focused on kicks because like there is stuff on the punching part already and we wanted this to kind of help out the kickers out there because they're really liking at this point 24:44 we do have some ideas on the punching also but that's not a whole, that's not too much of a big deal right now because we really know there's competition out there and there's good products already out there so we don't want to kind of like pretend that we know punches as well as we know kicks because we really do know kicks.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah, the thing is that like you ask how is it going to feel like, I'm going to just share you a personal experience like I mean as you know we have been doing this for quite a while now so first, or this version that we have now right now of our product I was super amazed I mean I know obviously what we're doing and I know what I'm expecting this to be but when I started training with this one it was amazing like I wore the thing and I started doing like basic sparring movement like WTF style here, have switching sides and stuff like that really like high velocity things going done at the ground level. The like,



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our sensor and the app, it didn't take any of that moment on the account but as soon as I threw a kick it showed me the speed so I was like yeah it's got to work like it's just I was so happy about it like it's like the most basic thing that it doesn't take into account like those fast things going on the ground level and I think as soon as you hit that bag or meat or whatever it tells you how fast how your kick like so I was like yeah it's going to work, it's going to work out great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool and do I wear one of these? or 2?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Well we have options for that like you can just order one and you will have plenty of features for that. Well obviously, Taekwondo being a two legged sport then you would be better off with 2 but we really wanted to give an option also to try out with one and you can later on order another sensor also so it's kind of well kind of like you can get into it easily with just one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, for people that they want to test it out and

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah sure

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know normally this is the point in a show where somebody says okay I'm interested and I want to check it out and then they go to the website and they find the price and they're scared away so how much is one of these?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah so, we're selling this for \$118 for single and \$229 for a kit but the price includes VAT from Finland so I mean obviously so because of EU legislation we have to tell the pricing including VAT also for overseas so obviously people from outside EU will have the price deduction of 24% from that and you will have to pay the taxation from your country obviously but it's just for EU legislations that we had to add that 34% of VAT for that.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

So, when other, in other words for American customers and the majority of our listeners are from the US, we're talking under \$200 for 2 of these

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah which makes it usable for obviously sparring scenarios and stuff like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Anybody that has checked out a decent quality Fitbit, Jawbone up etcetera knows that you're paying over a hundred dollars for one of those. So, you know honestly one of the things that I had a small list of checkboxes before I reached out to you and one of them was the price reasonable and honestly, I was a little surprised at the price I thought it was less expensive you know it was less expensive than I thought it was going to be and how often does that happen.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah the thing is that we really want this to be affordable also for the big masses on Taekwondo practitioners I mean it's a huge sport there's 80 million practitioners out there who are really like need this thing so we really want this to be kind of affordable to most of those people so I mean yeah general wearables they tend to be like really expensive and they like most of them just do the same general stuff so people have been pretty surprised at how low we are selling this right now so I'm pretty happy about the price point because I don't want to be in a point where I have to kind of tell people that yeah it's so expensive because like I mean yeah so it's a business it's a company but I really want this to be available to most people.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great, and is there anything that we didn't talk about, anything that we didn't cover that you want listeners to know any highlights or features or thoughts?

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah, I mean I think we went through most of the stuff right there but like I mean as a martial artist myself I mean just when I tell you again how excited I am about what we have achieved here and I'm super happy that like people from the kicking community martial arts community have taken this up so



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well. Like we have gotten a tremendous amount of generous feedback on this so we are just super happy to be doing this, it's a passion project and it's a dream and it's realizing so everything's great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well great and I appreciate you coming on and again folks check this thing out, I'm excited to get mine and kickAI.com or whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you know I'll drop some photos and you know hopefully Jan Eric will send some of stuff that we can you know press kit or whatever, whatever they do we can drop some photos in over there and you know believe me once I get mine I will be doing a review so if you want to wait, wait but this is a pretty cool thing and something that I think those of us like myself that are going to get in earlier are going to be pretty excited to play with and for those of you that are competitive I mean the sooner you get something like this, the sooner you can get some data and get better and man I've got some folks that are asking me to do some coaching for them and this maybe could come to a required piece so...

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Perfect

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thanks again for coming on, hope to talk to you again soon.

Jan-Eric Wargelin:

Yeah thank you so much, thanks for having us.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I had a lot of fun talking to Jan Eric and we talked a bit on having him back on the show I hope that happens. I know he's really busy right now, they are taking pre-orders like crazy. It's really exciting as an entrepreneur to see what other entrepreneurs are doing especially in the martial arts space. Let's be honest, there aren't a lot of us, really pushing the envelope on some of these things on the martial arts world, we're pretty traditional rather conservative sometimes, stuck group of people but anytime I see someone moving the ball forward I always want to offer them my support whether that's coming on the show or just simply sending him an email as I'm known to do and I say hey great job keep it up. If you want to know more about kickAI you can go to kickAI.com or you can check out our website whistlekickmartialartsradio.com see what we've got written up over there, check out the exclusive discount code that they gave us that again we don't benefit from, just trying to share and hook you guys



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up where we can. So, that's over on the website, don't forget you can find us on social media @whistlekick, you can find the whistlekickMartialArtsRadio behind the scenes group on Facebook we're all over the place. Check out our products at whistlekick.com. That's all I've got for you today until next time train hard, smile and have a great day.