



Episode 233 – Understanding the Space Between Movements in Forms |
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Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey what's going on everybody. I'm in the car, I'm driving. And I'm driving back to Vermont from a tournament which is fun. As long-time listeners know, I go to a lot of tournaments, I don't usually compete we usually have the whistlekick booth. You can tell from the video, if you're watching the video of this, yes trying to get more video going that I'm not in the kick mobile, the vehicle that is capable of carrying the whistlekick booth. I'm in my car, which is much smaller because I went to referee and support people. Just kinda have fun, right? Headed back but there is something came up at the event today that I wanted to talk about that I thought was worth sharing. Is the audio going out? The audio seems fine, were gonna 01:06 over there.

I wanna talk about forms. Many of you know that, I love forms, I love martial arts in general but I love forms, I love doing forms, I love working with people on forms, I love learning new forms, I love forms. But there's something that I've been seeing that I'm finally able to articulate well and I thought I would share it for those of you that were interested. When we start out especially when your new to martial arts and you're learning forms, you're spending a lot of time not just remembering the form, memorizing it, but learning how to manipulate your body. You know, at this point if you taught me a new form, I wouldn't have to spend a lot of time working on what a front kick is. I've done a front kick for a long time. Maybe I have to vary the height or the placement about it in some way maybe it's a jumping front kick, maybe it's coming out of a weird stance or a foot work, but I'm not gonna have to put the same amount of time in to not only learn the form but to make my front kick better. As you get



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better at martial arts in general, more and more of your time in forms is spent on things specific to that form, rather than general technique. But on the other side of learning any form, let's say you've spent a few years with the form, you know how to do the movements, you understand the application of the movements, which I think is important in any form, even if the application is silly, the application or bunkai as it's called in a lot of Japanese styles, sometimes it's kinda silly, it doesn't make a lot of sense, that's okay. Not all forms are designed exclusively for practical application self-defense, but regardless, on the other side of that is something else. And if you've ever watched 03:14 really good at forms do their form, you start to see it. And they start to embody this form, they start to present it in a way that you can see the battle unfolding, you can see all of these people that they're facing, and exchanging with and winning and on the other side of that, and this is what I want to talk about today, the place where, if you watch two masters compete, two exceptionally good forms, competitors compete and one of them is clearly better than the other, it is usually because of one thing and it's their ability to work the space between the movements. I'm not a musician, I once read or heard somewhere along the way, for some reason stuck with me that the best musicians in the world are not only playing the notes, there playing the space between the notes. And the best people that do forms aren't just doing the movements, they're intentional about the space between the movements. What do I mean about that, by that? You're timing in between your movements, isn't always exactly the same. There are times when you're connecting movements quickly, other times where its slower. Sometimes its intentionally slow. The dramatic elements in forms, don't usually come from throwing the technique, sometimes it's a really interesting exciting, dramatic, sequence but often times it's when people demonstrate their patience in between their movements that we see something that really resonates with us.

Perfect example, I'm not gonna say who but somebody who has been on the show, someone that I'm enjoying working with in her forms took first place in both her weapons and her open hand form today. And her weapons form was fast, it was good but she spent more of her time lately, working her open hand form. And there are some people who may watch it and think, there were some parts in there that were really slow. Cause in a sense they were. But while she was doing this movements slowly, it was very clear that there was intention and strength and confidence, to not only the movements, but the spaces in between. She didn't have to rush what was happening, she was presenting that form in a way that was very clearly winning whether you look at it as she believed she was winning her division or she was envisioning the battle that she was winning. The people scoring her form to be honest really had no choice because she owned that ring today and the way she showed them, that that was her ring was the confidence in between the movements. So, here's my suggestion, if this concept kinds of escapes you, if it's not something that you have someone on your end, that can articulate it better or demonstrate it, hopefully you do. There are some amazing forms practitioners out there, on the show, when we talk about amazing forms practitioners we tend to talk about Rika Uzami. She's an amazing competitor, does fantastic forms and she has mastered the space between the movements so you can look that up on YouTube. Rika that's her first name.



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But if you wanna start to work on this yourself, here's what I think you should do. Take your very first form. Do it a few times the way you're used to, then go through it and do it the way it seems appropriate as if its acting out a battle, that you're winning that battle. Do that two or three times. You're gonna have some high energy parts and some low energy parts, parts where you're moving fast, parts where you're moving slowly. And then after you've done that a few times, imagine that what you're doing is a fight scene at a movie. If you watch old kung fu movies, Bruce lee was fantastic at this, there were things he would do that more space in between. The famous parts that fight scene in enter the dragon, where he tastes his own blood, that's still part of the fight scene. It's part of the battle but its space in between. No, I'm not, suggesting you should step in the forms competition with a bloody face and taste your own blood, that would-be kind of ridiculous, but to go through it and imagine what would this look like if was choreographing it for a movie. Where is the high and the low, because you need that contrast to create the most dramatic effect? Maybe it's when you're changing direction and you look slowly. Maybe it's in some footwork where you step one foot in front of the other and you do that really confidently slowly and maybe in your style you try to keep your head levelled and you demonstrate that you aren't moving. When I teach forms for competition or rather when I'm working with someone on their form for competition, we talk about it as a show, a presentation, you're acting. If you are to get out there and you were to do your form in such a way that you're demonstrating the best way to do all of those movements for self-defense, that would be as fast and as powerful as possible through the entire thing. And if you've ever used your martial arts in some kind of a semi realistic situation, you know that the quality of your movements is gonna be compromised, they don't call, they don't come out as polished and perfect as we would like them to. So, the most applicable version of your forms isn't gonna be the most dramatic versions. So, we think about presentation. And maybe I'll do a whole episode on this.

If you want an episode on martial arts forms for competition and some of the common themes that I find when I work with someone when I help them adjust their form for competition, give me some feedback, jeremy@whistlekick.com or you can comment at the show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com or hit us on social media @whistlekick whatever works for you is great for us. But just remember, when you present your form, you're acting and the more time you spent acting and being confident in your acting skill, the better your results and yes there's a lot of carry over to the rest of what you do not only in martial arts, but in life. That's probably why I love forms so much.

So that's all I'm gonna stop rambling, I hope you like these impromptu episodes. I don't have any notes, I generally have notes. Remember the early days when I would script the entire episode, that took a long time but I like doing that too. Maybe I'll do another one of those again anyway, that's all I've got today. Thank you for tuning in and listening or watching, whichever the case maybe, I appreciate your time, I hope you have a great day, great rest of the week and get out there and work on your forms and see if you can make it better and by 12:56 make yourself a better martial artist. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.



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