



Episode 183 – Mr. Iain Abernethy | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome to whistlekickMartialArtsRadio episode 186 and thanks for stopping in. Today we hear from Mr. Iain Abernethy, a well-known mats podcaster and expert on their practical application of karate. Here at whistlekick we make the world's best sparring gear and on mats radio we bring you the best podcast on the traditional mats twice every week. Welcome, my name's Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host as well as the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. Thank you to the returning listeners and welcome to those of you tuning in for the first time. You can find our show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com which is also the best place to sign up for our newsletter, as a thank you for joining you're going to get our top 10 for martial artists in exclusive never before, never will be released episode. It's got great stuff, stuff you've probably never heard anywhere else. our newsletter that's gonna keep you up to date on what's going on here at whistlekick, tell you about upcoming show guests. In fact that's the only way you're gonna find out about the upcoming show guests and we even roll out discounts on our products from time to time. Speaking of show guests who do you want us to talk to? We've talked to somewhere around a hundred martial artists so far, I think actually over that but we're always looking to bring you new people, new perspectives. We work hard to bring you a diverse set of guests from different styles, different locations. If there's someone you're dying to hear



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from, let us know we'll see what we can do. There's a form on the contact page at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you can use. Mr. Iain Abernethy is not your typical martial artist, in some ways he is very much like other guests we've had. He's passionate about martial arts, he's dedicated to his training and he's determined to give back to the practice that has given him so much. But in other ways she's so focused on what he does, so intent on spreading knowledge that other martial arts including myself are just blown away. He's someone I've wanted to speak with for a long time and now it's happening so enjoy. Mr. Abernethy welcome to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com).

Iain Abernethy:

Thank you for having me happy to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I am happy to have you here, we've tried to do this. We tried to do this once before and it didn't happen.

Iain Abernethy:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Lost in the depths of email. [00:02:35.20]

Iain Abernethy:

Well I appreciate you reaching out and then I'm saying I'm glad to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm glad to have you. Now listeners may know you from the fair amount of content that you put out whether it's your podcast or the writings I mean there's a lot of you on the web, good stuff and I appreciate it. You know it's I think my line of demarcation is if I am going to make the time to read somebody's martial arts stuff, it's gotta be good stuff and your stuff passes [00:03:15.00] cause I'm checking it out.

Iain Abernethy:



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That's very kind of you to say, I'm pleased you find that to be the case, that's great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But how did you get started you know I mean you're out there, you're doing all this stuff but you have some kind of origin story [00:03:28.09]

Iain Abernethy:

My superhero origin story

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Iain Abernethy:

No, I am. I started as a child around about 11 years old, a few friends at school we're going to local martial arts school. I decided that I wanted to do martial arts you know. I had seen recently around that time Enter the Dragon had been on the TV over here so as a result of that every kid in school's got home made nunchucks and you know everyone's going kung fu crazy and I remember going down the local library to try and learn something more about you know this the martial arts and so I've got a lot of martial arts books out and every single one of these books that you know you can't learn martial arts from a book. So, okay right so I need to gotta take formal lessons obviously cause I wanted something that beside and I wanna be good at. I'm quite a quiet shy kid, didn't really do any other sport or anything like so to go to a class was a big deal for me. Parents were you know my brother was really active played soccer and all that kind of stuff and Iain did [00:04:36.25] sitting around and read books so they we're delighted at this notion [00:04:40.16] finally found something he wants to do. So, my dad drove me to through the nearest class it was a class that my friends were going to which is about 14-15 miles away from here. Very first class I got dropped I got punched in the belly and hit the ground. I got wounded during the drill that I didn't perform correctly and the friends that I was going with there was a drill in the very next week they failed and quit. So, the start was a, it was not a good one. When I was again leaving the class the one where I got dropped on the instructor at the time that was covering my class that night that day he said to me look I'm really sorry I couldn't spend much time with you today so if you come back next week you know [00:05:24.03] when you come back next week I'll spend some more time with you so I get back and my mum says you know how did the class go you know so I hated it, didn't enjoy it you know I mean it wasn't for me and she's like really disappointed so she says look maybe go along give it another try and he did give me a free class and he did say you know come back next week so I felt guilty really almost obliged went back the second time while the gridding was going



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on, this instructor took me to one side, went through a few things with me and that was it the [00:05:51.07] you know so I've been kind of going back you know to that dojo forever since really so that's kind of how it got started initially.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's quite the 180-degree flip from you know class one to two, do you remember what happened? What was that difference that bug?

Iain Abernethy:

I did not, genuine I think what it was it's a very clear image in my mind. We were doing, so you've got your lunging punches I don't know if all your audience will Japanese martial artists or familiar with the term [00:06:27.09] punching with your lead hand forward and then you've got your [00:06:32.02] punching with your backhand forward but while I'm doing this I messed my feet up like most beginners do you know you can't straighten your arms and your legs go, and you can't straighten your legs and your arms go. So, I'm trying to remember where these things are supposed to go and then the instructor just said just change your feet he goes and bend your leg a bit more and he goes that's it. So, I didn't know the one that goes that's it and it was just suddenly [00:06:51.23] ah I can do this you know I'm just admit some progress so I think the first class I was left confused and beaten. But on the second one there was beginnings of I can see this making progress but going back you know I was nervous every class. You know I'm remember it distinctly every class I didn't wanna go and there was a part of me that like you know didn't wanna go but I just kept forcing myself and forcing myself and as time went on and then you make progress and I think for me that was probably yeah looking back one of the first times in my life where I've decided I want to do this. I put the effort in and I can see myself making progress and that revelation that you know you can do that you know you can apply yourself to something to make progress that's a very addictive feeling I think and I think you know one that you know whatever it is now 35-36 years later still I'm shaking off.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well alright yeah you know it's always interesting to me that the difference between those that start martial arts and continuing those that don't because I started so young I don't remember. I you know I was young enough that I did what my mother told me to do and if she said go to martial arts and keep going I would say okay cause I was 4 and we've talked about that on this show once or twice before that my instructor said after me they would take anyone under 6. So, I ruined it for a number of others but when people can remember what worked and what didn't work I think that's really valuable for the instructors out there to know hey this person clicked this person didn't so we can be all become better instructors.



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Iain Abernethy:

But the one thing that I took from that you know what I mean so all these years later was because that initial thing, where there was a guy called Allen Bangs he was just first dan at the club it was like an assistant instructor that the main instructor the guy called Doug James he was now ranked 8th dan I think he was 4th Dan at the time but I'm now and he's long since given up martial arts but I still keep in touch with him and talk to him occasionally but when Allen had said to me you know like come back next week and I'll spend more time with you, what he signaled to me there is you know all this there's an interest in me developing you know so I've try to instill that the same for the beginners as well just to make sure that they feel look you know you're really welcome here I want to see you do well I'm invested in your progress and try and communicate that back to them in the same way that Allen did to me so the feeling that you belong cause I remember there's a lot of scare if you step in the dojo for the first time I think some of us forget that you know we've been there that long and it's just home from home we forget the first time we stepped in to this strange environment where people are speaking a different language sometimes dressed in funny uniforms where people are gonna kick and punch that allow you to do that [00:09:40.29] it can be terrifying. So, I think anything we can do to make people feel look you know you're welcome here and we want to see you do well here and we want you to be part of our group. Anything that we can do to achieve that I think helps keep the door open.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely I agree. So, as you aged and you kind of found your niche in martial arts I think you know 20-20 just hindsight and we can look at what you're doing now and clearly, you've found your place in the world within the martial arts but I'm guessing that didn't happen day 2 so where did that happen at what point did you say this is where I wanna dedicate my life?

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah the in all honesty very quickly you know even as I get as a [00:10:24.25] I knew this is it and the first one I can see this is one of the things that I don't do anything by heart so [00:10:33.21] blessing under curse it can be a problem as much as it can be a great help but when I've decided you know I like this I want to be good at this this is my mark that really last now I think the first time I can remember thinking this was I was at the back of my parents car and I was working out how if I pass you know most of my gradings going forward by what time would I get my first dan grading the black belt and would that enable me to go to university of further education or not? So even then in my mind and I'm not recommending anybody do this but that's what I did I thought what's more important to me more important than my academics and my career even at that young age was I want to prioritize getting my black belt. Now as it was I left school at 16 and I chose a job and the job that I chose I became an apprentice electrician the job I chose was because it would enable me to carry on train. I picked that job



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specifically because it wouldn't interfere with training so my whole career was around it, as part of that training there was an academic component we'd be sent in college every week and I've passed everything with merits and distinctions. So, I'm told by the people that you know I work for look you know you can go on and you can do higher diplomas and maybe you can go [00:11:52.17] degree and in electronic engineering and this is something you could consider and I said what nights would that be and they said Thursdays [00:11:58.23] you know so everything about me from day 1 was, I knew this is what I wanna make my mark with. Now so whether that's I mean as it is it worked out, if it didn't work out it would have been incredibly dumb. But looking back that was something to speak from day 1 but that's me through and through you know I can't, [00:12:23.22] where that comes from I'm not self-aware enough to know but when I've decided I wanna do something, it's gonna get dumb and that means I have the same when it comes to things that you know I need to let go of from time to time. You know like for example if I read a book on a topic I will read every book on that topic you know until I'm satisfied that I've got it, understood as I wish to understand it is I think that just kind a natural played out through the martial arts cause that was the first thing I went no I wanna be good at this, I like this, I wanna be really good at this.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We've heard from a number of our guests and admittedly I'm the same way when something interests me I tend to become consumed, is it that personality type tends to find martial arts and do well you think? Or does martial arts cultivate that kind of personality in children?

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah that's a good question [00:13:19.08]. I would think it's probably a bit of both. If you think about in training it's on the few things that it rewards fastidious attention to detail and it's something that we can all make continual measured progress out as well. So, looking at the people that I train with it's one of the things I love the martial arts I get to spend and I say it all the time at seminars the thing I love about this is I get to spend time with what I call my tribe. You know these are my people you know they like the same things I like. They are as obsessive and enthusiastic about exactly the same things that I am. So, I think there's probably an element of it being an initial attractor I think but definitely I think the martial arts supports that as well, it rewards that kind of personality type I think and that kind of relentless pursuit.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And of course, we see some people that become all consumed and then burn out, whether it's in martial arts or other things, how do we stop that?



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Iain Abernethy:

Yeah so, I'm definitely guilty that too, you know that's I've said this since a long time it takes more discipline for me not to train than it does for me to train. So, I would do you know dumb things I'm full of cold I still go to the gym, injured I found a way around it. I remembered the doctor, I had a shoulder injury I got the doctor and he said now you really need to rest that, yeah and I know I will and he goes no Iain seriously you really need to rest that no I'm fine well and then I'm not going to you know and then of course that for me what happened was I just got older so my body just would play ball anymore I realized that if I just push and push it's one thing doing that in my twenty's and to a degree in my early 30s. You can't be doing it in your mid 40s cause your body just goes, it's not happening. So, it took a long time for me to learn that you know the way I was training was [00:15:19.07]. It was injury inducing it was, sometimes it didn't took the enjoyment out of it you know it became an obsessive chore so I'd like to think I got a little bit better, I would balancing that now simply because I haven't got that little bit older I know there's my body saying not today then I have to listen to it otherwise it will be okay, you didn't listen so we're gonna keep you out of action for the next week or weeks you know so I guess growing out of it is the only way we get better at it. I mean and again you know if people could tell me that any good training regime needs that balance that you need your sleep and you need your rest and all that kind of stuff and I could say that now and but I know that if there were anything like me they would just, people would just ignore that and do what you know if you're obsessive about it, you're obsessive about it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah and we've had a number of folks on the show that have said that very same thing and I'm as guilty of it as the next person and of course yeah and that less intense to come with age where we're physically forced to start making some changes, to the way we train and quality of training perhaps and quantity of training.

Iain Abernethy:

Well I think that's what I find you know with the certain things that I do them now and I think that I'm doing it better than I've ever done it but I can't do it for as long and that's the big difference, the judo training was a revelation for that as well. So training with the judo guys and they are all super fit guys in their early 20s and at the time I'm in my mid 30s and there was that realization that I just I can't keep up you know what I mean I just there's no way I can possibly keep up with this you know so and I think the training is better [00:17:00.15] and see when I look at one of my you know Peter Consterdine he's of the main teachers these days he's a 9th Dan, 70 year old he still trains like you know a mad man but his training is very it's a hard and intense but it's very scientific and very well measured so there's certain things he just won't do any more you know and not to keep it functioning so I try and follow his example



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really cause you know if I'm I mean people say to me you know I bet you'd love to be as fit as Peter at his age I think I love to be as fit as him now. Never mind of his age you know just because again he's trained smart, so he's training hard but smart you know certain thing he won't do any more like he won't kick or punch in the air and stuff like that [00:17:44.11] damage your joints and things so there's a wisdom that comes to in the way that he trains so I try and copy a little bit of that too I think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you could roll back a couple of decades and you know tell your younger self some things that you've learned now, what would you say? Cause we have younger folks listening to this show and

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah, but I know I wouldn't listen so based on that premise you know I know for a fact that I wouldn't have listened but I think if you give examples I think the one things I can write, if I couldn't get a technique down the sensible thing to do of course is go okay, I'll work it as trying to prove it as much as I can and then okay I finish training now, get on with the rest of your life that was [00:18:30.10]. If it wasn't quite right I'd do it again and again and again and if it still wasn't happy when I'm forced to leave and train I'm obsessing about it, I'm not happy about it it's almost depressing me a little bit, it's dragging me down, I can't wait to get back to the dojo so I can work on it some more and see and that's looking back that's not psychologically healthy you know so that's definitely something that I've left in the past I can have a bad session now yeah well it was a bad session but it was still a session and I couldn't do that when I was younger and I think training would've been more productive and more enjoyable if I'd just been able to do that thing okay I'm done now, good or bad or indifferent I'm finished I just wanna leave it. So, I think the main bit of advice I would give me is you know yeah imply yourself why you're in the dojo, work hard when you're in the dojo but it's not the be all or end all of your existence and when you leave you know put it aside and go and concentrate on something else you know cause I didn't do that I think that was the main. I don't think psychologically it was healthy for me to be that obsessed with it you know especially when it turned negative and I was berating myself of not getting a particular thing right or not being able to achieve a certain thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Were you really hard on yourself?

Iain Abernethy:

Oh brutal, absolutely brutal yeah. Which is again, which is an odd one because you know that didn't come from anywhere I can say it from instructor was always you know it's hard but very supportive,



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family always very supportive but I think it's that side of me that was very harsh on myself in a way that definitely worked but I'd experience that in all kinds of things I think if I was training there was it would bring an intensity to it so there's the like you know I'll get it almost like an eternal conflict, I'll get mad at myself something wasn't physically achievable and I despise my own weakness you know for not being able to do certain things yeah and then when you know if I achieve something I feel good and then it's the next thing, next challenge. So again, that's the negative side like you mentioned at the start you know I throw a lot of content out there well that's the result of that mindset it's like you know get it done, finish the project, on to the next thing which again can be positive but it can also be negative and back then it was negative more often than it should've been I think. So definitely the big bit of advice I would give myself is just to chill out you know your training will just be as beneficial, you'll just do as well and you don't need to kind of berate yourself in the way that you're doing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah there's a mindset I think that sometimes forms with that negative self-talk and I'm speaking from experience here that you know you can work yourself into a hole, that starts to have physical manifestations, you know you tell yourself I can't do this or I suck at this or however you would term it, you do that long enough and you actually stop being able to do the things you could do.

Iain Abernethy:

Well that's it but I remember this is like that getting that was something see again I can't remember exactly where that came from as well, this idea that positive self-talk was important. There was Loren Christensen from Oregon you know he'd wrote, he's written some fantastic martial arts books but way back when he written a book called the way alone and it was a small book by [00:21:49.24] but it was on ways in which you could train on your own. So, I buy it from this mail order martial arts supplying wheels but then you can't wait cause these books gonna show me all of new ways in which I can beast myself even when I haven't got a training partner you know. So, the book comes and there was a section in on you know visualization and mindset and it was I read it oh makes a great deal of sense so I think that was my first introduction to that idea of keeping the mind positive. But even then, at a young age I would twist it a little. So, I would tell myself it was positive and but it wasn't looking back it wasn't you know so you'd do things like you know I can do this and then I push myself into the ground as a result you know so that would eventually when I got a bit better at that the internal self-talk thing got a lot better. I never really got down on myself or like you can't do this you're useless, that wasn't really part of it. I knew I was progressing at this, I knew I was getting good at it but it was that dissatisfaction you know I always want it to be better than I was which again in itself is not a bad thing but if you concentrate so much on it to the point where you're pushing yourself to an unhealthy degree, I think that's when it crosses the line and becomes a bit of a problem.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Has your attention on different aspects of martial arts changed with time and with age?

Iain Abernethy:

Oh yeah, definitely I mean and originally I wanted to go to the martial arts cause I wanted to learn how to fight you know as young kids you're getting [00:23:28.11] thought that was part of the reason as well as the and I can look at it while I do it Bruce Lee style that you know I wanted to learn you know this is something I wanted to learn to be able [00:23:39.07] So that self-defense side of it was always a key, was always there and that's still there but I think obviously competitively I did little bits when I was younger, the whole club did every competition was there we entered it. It was never really where my heart was but I did it and then you know as you get that I became really interested in the kind of practical application side of things and during my kinda 20s that was the driver and as I've kind of gone you know late 30s you know mid 30s onwards I've started almost like full circle a little bit and start to coming to realize that there's lots of many other benefits that martial arts are where from. The kind of practical application of self-defense skills so now I'm also enjoying the art side of it for you know [00:24:29.01] for its own sake I'm starting to enjoy and the culture a little bit more I'm starting to appreciate it a bit more. The demarcating the skills I use to fight with the fellow martial artists and to enjoy that fight and then keeping that separate from the things that I would use for self-defense purposes so I've got a much broader view I think of the martial arts now than originally had and I'm enjoying exploring all those various aspects still keeping them very much separate. I don't like to contaminate one with the other but I've definitely developed a broader view of what my karate or what I want my karate to be about.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You kinda rolled over competition there you know saying you did it and you've sounds like you did a fair number of them but at what I believe that the words you used were your heart wasn't in it.

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

What do you mean by that?

Iain Abernethy:



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So the club that I was in as soon as it was accomplished everybody went it was part of the club [00:25:28.19] we've got the clubs so it wasn't like you know I don't wanna compete you just everybody competed it was just part of it, the question of whether you want to do it or not was never asked you just did it you know but it was never thought about either but when I was training for, I thought this isn't what I started karate to do so there's like little things I can remember like I was training with one of the guys and we're doing some pad drills but we're doing them in a competitive way and I throw [00:25:59.27] kick at the pad and my partner looks at me and says that was too hard and you know and to me I just thought there's not such thing as too hard you know I mean I want kicks that are harder and harder and harder. I don't wanna be taken power out of my kick you know I feel this particular dictate which I didn't get into the martial arts for anyway so that was always that there as in I've not really prepared to spend the time to train to get good at this but I'll just compete in it anyway, you know my heart was else where I also this is just again part of my mindset I found it too restricted you know so in points karate you know it's not the gripping and the locking and the choking and the ground work and all these kind of stuff and I was aware that you know the only reason you're good at this because the rules say you're good at it. If somebody changes the rules tomorrow you're no longer good at it so it didn't strike me as being a real skill, I'm not saying it isn't but I'm just saying it was an artificial skill it was a man-made skill in a way that combative skills had value irrespective of what rules that people happen to pick. So, it didn't just jell with me a whole 27:03 of other reason. The weird thing is later on when I started training to judo to supplement the karate I did a few judo competitions, this is in my early 30s and they those I really enjoyed because I think I had been able to better compartmentalize you know okay this is sport competition, fighting, game play and I was better able to kinda separate it off but it early on I wasn't really able to do that, this is not but I think now if I had the mindset now way back then I'll be able to yeah okay this is competition and this is competition that I just keep that separate from everything else. Whereas at the time it just didn't interest me really, didn't jell with me. 27:45 I was always happy when I won a trophy or a medal or something you know what I mean that was always nice but it was never where my heart was.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When I compare karate to Judo I you know I got a back ground in karate and very little time in Judo one summer but when I think of the main difference is that karate has a huge body of knowledge that is not applicable in competition whereas judo has a much smaller chunk would you agree?

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah yeah well I would but again like all things I'll have the caveat it depends on where you trained so I know a plenty of school that you know still do all the traditional judo 28:25 to a degree of striking as a result and all that kind of stuff but certainly the club that I train at that was a great club really good people great instruction but they were a competitive club that the whole 28:37 doesn't really was to



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produce people for competition so they were very good with me and you know obviously they knew that wasn't really why I was there but and for example of that when they change the rules to say like grappling is no longer allowed we just stop practicing it overnight well you know as you know in the karate thing we go well okay elbows, head butting, knees are not allowed in competition but we will do them anyway at least most people do. So I'd say 29:07 that's true but I guess it depends on the club.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hmm makes sense.

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah yeah and you know the judo cause it fits well in terms of you know they both use a kyu dan grade system, they both train in gis, they both use the japanese language so it fitted well with the karate. There was still a lot of it that was not applicable, that doesn't transpose all so for example what the judo certainly did was it improved my throwing a lot gave me a lot of nuances. First time my judo instructor watched me throw he said it looks like 1950s judo. So I went well it's actually even older than that but I get what you mean he says like he said outdated you know I'm throwing like a karate can throw. So it was good to get that modern training methods and stuff, that really helped with some of the throwing concepts but certain things didn't really apply like the deliberately taking to the floor isn't something that on a self-defense side of things isn't something I would do and all of the defenses cause I was in judo you when you're on the ground you lose by elbow locks, chokes or strangles are getting pinned on your back so the common defense is to flip on to your belly and cross your arms on your self-defense wise, that's suicide but I still was able to go okay I will just put all that to one side and enjoy the game in judo and then later on of course when I would brought it back to the dojo there was probably about I don't know 10% of what I learned would sit well with the karate, the rest of it you know didn't cause it's designed for you know beating the judo, carrying the judo competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, so much of what you do is intentional, I'm wondering if Judo was a choice over say like traditional Japanese jujitsu?

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah well this is what I came from was so one of my big influences, one of the teachers was Geoff Thomson written like loads of you know self-defense books. Excuse me. Worked as a doorman in Coventry for the best part of a decade, you know this guy knows what a real situation involves that's why I went to train with him, he used to kind of refine the way I was training for that side of thing. While



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I was training with Geoff, he was telling me those he was striking you know great real you know Geoff's a judo dan grade 2 he says you know striking's great the next thing you need to be developing on is getting you grappling up to the higher level he says so he says I recommended and I seek out judo that judo was the art he recommended over the Japanese jujitsu, simply because they test it more, they fight more generally you know what I mean so I had a student who was also a judo instructor, I went to talk to him and he said to me well you know it's not me you wanna kinda learn anything from if you wanna do judo you wanna train with Mike the instructor. So that was how that connection made so I would go and train with the elite level guys their private early morning sessions and I would do the club sessions in the evening as well so I did that for you know a few years. I still love to be doing it but same things there's only so many hours in the day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Iain Abernethy:

So yeah so, it's mainly I went to it because my instructor told me to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm noticing a pattern.

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah yeah well he said yeah that's one of the things that you know Geoff and 32:21 always liked about me he says you know I could tell you to do something and you just do it and he says you know sometimes I had problems with others where he'd say you wanna do this and then that go well 32:31 as where with you, you just go so yeah I have a natural rebellious trait I don't like generally taking instructions from people but when I know that instruction's for my benefit I'm prepared to put my ego to one side and go oh this person knows what's better for me in a way that I don't. So you know if I have respect for my teachers then I'm always able to go okay, you know better than me so whatever you say is what we're doing cause you know this better than me and I've seen the quality of people to produce so my ego needs to shut up and I need to listen so I've always been pretty good at doing that. Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Which is a skill that a lot of people don't have well you know there are certainly a lot of people where they're rebellious you can especially as kids we're growing up where parents telling us what to do,



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teachers in school telling us what to do, coaches on after school athletic he was telling you what to do in here martial arts where quite often the instruction doesn't have a visible fast forward a visible benefit, why are we doing this cause I told you to right I mean that's the methodology of a lot of martial arts instructors, do you teach in that way.

Iain Abernethy:

No, and I wouldn't respond well to that kind of instruction for me as well. So there's a subtle difference there I think, so if I went into a dojo and so much that just shut up and do it well I would say no no I need to understand why I'm doing this you know what I mean what's the point of this you know I'm not prepared to shut up my intellect you know for this but I've always had instructors who have been pretty good at saying look we're doing A and B in order to lead us to C and when they've done that then they've gone right for A you need to do this. You might not fully understand it, you might disagree with it, you might not fully understand the benefits this is gonna give you but I want you to do it and at that point I've gone oh okay I understand the broad lay of the land, I understand where we're supposed to be headed but explain to me what the general intent is and now I will follow the instruction because I respect the view, I know where they're gonna lead me. I would find it difficult so I'm almost like I'm submitting to their instructions on the basis I know I'd benefit from. I think one of the problems we can sometimes have in martial arts is a bit 34:44 over the self-defense side of things if we encourage people to just go alright, just shut up and do because I say so self-defense wise that is encouraging a terrible mindset you know so we in the dojo we say look shut up and do whatever the biggest fastest hardest hitting guy in the room tells you to do it don't ask questions just keep your mouth shut and do what you're taught that encourages that a kind of submission which in self-defense purposes is what you condition your students to do is shut up and behave the instructions of the guy that's intimidating you. So I don't certainly don't teach that way in my dojo we all laugh we will joke people will make fun of me for good reason but in terms of and I want that kind of almost that informality but when I say alright this is the drill we're going to do every single one of my guys will do exactly what they're being told because they know I've got the best interest. So I'll give them drills that to do that they won't like doing and but they'll still do it anyway because they know my best interest is hard. So they're doing it because they know I'm trying to help them, they're not doing it because I said look just shut up and do cause that it's something I'm not particularly comfortable with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I wanna unpack that a little bit because that's something that as you're saying it makes a ton of sense and I'm not saying this early you're the first person to come up with that correlation but I haven't heard it before. how did you stumble on that and how do you earn the respect of new students that come in?

Iain Abernethy:



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Yeah well, I think it this is where I'm really lucky, I've had like 4 or 5 kinda main teachers and they've all just been really good men, they've all been really nice guys so you know when I went in to the dojo I was always made to feel welcome, I'm made to feel part to me it was hard work and I was pushed. So it's the same kind of thing so when someone comes in, new student comes in made up a big greeting with a smile I will tell them you know this is everybody that's here and I'll pair them off around the dan grades and he'll look after you and hopefully straight away that the impression that we'll get from this well he's a nice guy. You know he's helping me out here, he's trying to put me at ease, he's doing the right things for me and hopefully that kind of earns the respect that will benefit both them and me if it's shown rather than flat out just kind of you know look I've got the black belt on so I demand it you know as I also hate something culturally about that, I don't know if it's a Northern England thing as well but we haven't, there's a natural tendency to rebel against someone that puts himself in authority without good reason you know someone's in authority because they are seeking to benefit those that they have authority over I think that tends to get quite well respected, I think if someone just goes look this is my position and my status and you have to accept it it's not well regarded in my part of the world. So that's again, that's one of the reasons that I don't like my students to call me Sensei for the same reason and I know this is different in different parts of the world but if I was to say to my guys no I demand that you call me sensei or shihan or whatever else there wouldn't that wouldn't come across as me being arrogant and demanding a false respect so it's one of these things that's cultural to the area as well I think and also they see that as well or see people from other parts of the world refer to themselves as master this or master that and there's the assumption man that's arrogant and think that's not arrogant it's just a different nationality, it's a different culture, it's a different way of doing things. But in my part of the world that you're after you first them on equals is basically what you're trying to be.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting, that's I'm wrapping my head around that cause that's an intriguing one and of course listeners you noticed that excuse me, Mr. Abernathy was introduced as that and we had a short discussion about it about the why and how we were gonna get around that because you know this is episode 180 whatever I don't even know yet and I haven't broken that protocol you know I haven't introduced anyone by their first name. So it's intriguing to me.

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah well that's what my students call me, and they know they call me Iain and that's what I asked them to do and I've never called any of my senseis, sensei either I've always called them by their name cause that's what they've requested from me and obviously I'm not sociologist so I don't know the culture but I would think my guess on this is here in England we have a long established class structure you know that's so you know where you were born into a certain class and you will remain you of that class you know there's a famous kind of even comedy sketch on it as well you know this idea that everyone should



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know their place so and I think obviously is that's gone you know as we come in a more well moving towards the best meritocracy we can manage I think therefore there's still a hangover in people's mind and culturally. So when somebody goes you will refer to me as he almost comes across as I am lord such and such it just comes across as very arrogant. So again but I'm not saying to anyone it is elsewhere is I certainly know I would always get trouble a lot with the teaching and the seminars and I know people will you know quite 40:11 they call each other sir and master this and sensei or Sifu and it works within that culture that but and I'm sure everybody who's listening to this that the ease from you know certainly in the North cause that's where I live, they'll be able to say yeah that's true we don't do well with titles it just doesn't fit with the culture but I accept that that's not the same in the world over.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Does that have any carryover to rank or are people there resistant to belt colors?

Iain Abernethy:

No no belt colors are okay, dan grades are okay but even then it's a preferred to be understated I mean so you know if I was to introduce myself to somebody and I went you know so I said oh this is Iain he does karate and if I would say drop in the conversation oh I'm a sixth dan but I wouldn't you know what I mean that would be done there but so 41:05 know you you might have the stripes on your belt but it's just it's never really mentioned you know so it's a strange one I even go one step further than that in my own dojo as well. You know typically in dojos people will line up by rank in mine and I always did that in my dojo we don't we just line u wherever we want to be. So it's a little bit more egalitarian and part of that is because I want the lower grades training next to the higher grades cause they almost it rubs off by 41:32 so I found it to be a more practical way to do it is when they're doing line work and things if the green belt is next to a dan grade he's twice as fast as they are it encourages them to move quicker. So I've broken with this idea of having people lined up by rank in the dojo to, they're aware that all the dojos do that but we don't do that and certainly in the way that everyone's threat in the dojo they're all treated as equals nobody of a higher rank will be treated differently simply because they have a higher rank but it's just simply when it comes to things like instruction and pairing off for sparring and all that kind of stuff then it will be acknowledged on the basis of the skill but that wouldn't go any further than that. It is an interesting one, it's one of these things that I wished someone would look at. It's probably such a nuance thing you know that no one no sociologist or psychologist will ever choose to examine the difference in the way that Dan grades and ranks are perceived around the world is so but I believe it's in other place I mean as I understand it you know in certain parts of the world on your business cards and stuff you'll write you know I'm Sifu this or my name is sensei or whatever. I believe in Japan as well that's even considered 42:44 they don't do that other people call you but you don't use it as a rank in the same way you wouldn't like a doctorate or a 42:50 or something like that so I think it's just you know these cultural things, it's interesting though.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

It is and you know as I'm hearing you talk about having your students line up wherever they line up I can see the benefit to that but when you start talking about running drills I have witnessed the benefit of that and that's something that when I teach I, I'm not gonna say that I go out of my way to mix people up out of their lines but I will absolutely not force them to get back in to them because you're absolutely right, having lower ranks next to higher ranks, there's a lot that happens there. not I mean I don't know how many people listen to this show forget what it was like to be a white and a yellow belt or whatever low ranks you went through but you're spending a lot of time looking around saying am I doing this right if the only people right around you are not doing it right that's just limiting your progress so putting you know when I'm trying to get somebody to learn a new form I will stick them between two other higher ranks they're gonna progress that much more so you know there's a good way to kind of balance that if schools, owners, instructors listening are ready to go the full monty so to speak and have everybody line up willy nilly you know have them train that way.

Iain Abernethy:

I think there is a... it obviously certain times you know if they would all doing different combinations for example and it's no good if somebody in short ones and somebody in long ones cause you have people crashing into one or the other so I can understand certain times you need to order it cause for what you're doing but generally you know I'm a great believer if we do anything we have to say okay why do we do this and the answer just because is never a satisfying answer. It's not one I would accept so I don't expect my students to accept it either. So when we did the rank thing you know I did just noticed that okay when they line up wherever they line up and it also it balances other things out too because exactly what you said there for example this week I remember where one of the our beginners was next to the black belts when the black belts when they're doing a bit of kyeon the black the white belt when he did his turn did it wrong I saw it I'm just about to walk over and the black belt notices that with the corner of his eye that the beginner's done it wrong he quickly correct him and sort him out you know so that for the it's just as you say nice that there's the correction on hold and again for the ethos of the club there, the beginner then feels well this higher grade is helping me he's going out of his way to help me out. It's not just the guy from all of them care about my progress you know so he's quite nice and then also for the higher grades it gives them a chance to kind of pay something back so it just contributes towards a healthy family feel in the club as well I find. I'm not saying anyone who does it differently is doing it wrong, I'm just saying that definitely works for us in the way that we do things you know it might not work for other schools but it works just fine for us.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Well and I think it's important you're underscoring that, that different ways are okay, it's not right it's not wrong but one of the things that I feel very strongly about is that we need to expose ourselves to the different ways so we can have those 46:06 and say I wanna try that or that makes sense to me because of XYZ makes us better.

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah I know absolutely definitely you know this I agree and believe I doing that and this again where I've been really lucky all my instructors and colleagues that you know all of them did so if I expressed an interest in something they'd be right okay let's get I know a guy who teaches that we'll get him and then he'll share it with you you know so right back 46:33 talks about this as well and when he's talking about 46:36 his two main teachers 46:39 he goes they shared 46:41 petty jealousy of all the masters instead and when introduced me to people that they knew so I could learn the methods at which they excel well that was my experience of learning and I think sometimes what happens in the martial arts because people are so desperate to keep students or build their empires, what they'll do is they'll will try and wall the students in you know, our way is the only way and anyone else who differs with this is doing it wrong it's almost cult like in its thinking and its counterproductive like one of my teachers Peter has this line where he says if you build walls around people the first thing they want to do is climb over those walls so I'm part of a huge association and part of the reason it's you just people know that they'd benefit from being a member but there's no restrictive practice we let them go out and explore and find things and if they can find a way of better way of doing things then that's great and I have even got that built into my grading system part of my aim for my students is as they get better they should need me less and less and less because they should be capable of learning and thinking and developing things for themselves. I never want Iain rule to exist you know cause if I do that I failed you know I want to be able to give my students a step along the path and share with them what I've got but I don't want to kind of try and preserve 47:54 or anything like that I want them to move on and explore and what if they agree or disagree with what I put forwards and that, that's healthy I think. It's like Mac Arthur said you know General Mac Arthur he said if everyone thinks the same somebody isn't thinking so any environment where you're in where these dogma is not one that generally tends to be quite healthy it's certainly one that won't progress it will stagnate sooner or later.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and of course every single martial arts style if we wanna put boxes around for prefer to things as styles at some point somebody made them up based on the things that they had learned from other people.

Iain Abernethy:



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See this is it, but it's amazing how people talk and what you know keeping the purity and things like this you say and that a part of that I can only sympathize with some of the group because what people are saying is look this guy was a master and he created this and who am I to challenge what they put forward you know and I get that you know what I mean again you don't want 48:55 arrogance of what I've been training for 2 years and I reckon I can second guess the grand master but I always liking it to the progress in science you know so you've got if you think of North physicist looks back at Newton and goes the fool he didn't understand quantum physics you know what I mean no one does that they go because of what he did, he did all the ground work for us and we were able to pick up that work he'd done that work of genius and build on it and by building on it we're seeking what he sought he wanted to understand the mechanics of the universe so in physicist's and look at that they are building on Newton's work not in a way that disrespect him but in a way that honors it. So when I look at the martial arts I'm trying to do the same thing I respect all my teachers, I respect the founders of what they've given me because without that you know I'd have to try and reinvent it all myself you know they've given me these works of genius but I don't serve them and if I just go around okay I will stop you know I served them by continuing that process by taking the information they've given me and move forward so I get that sometimes people think that innovation is somehow dishonoring or making something impure but that's certainly not how I see it and I doubt very much that the founders of our styles think that way because as you rightly said they created the styles none of them passed on exactly what they've been taught so we're just following their example when we're trying to improve upon things as we go.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right you mentioned Funakoshi earlier I can only imagine if he were to step into a dojo today and see what we're doing he would see differences, he would see dramatic differences even among the schools that claim we're doing it the way he set it down.

Iain Abernethy:

Well see here is the interesting thing with that one you see so this is what I without this weird thing where people - tradition the word has a meaning right so tradition means adhering to a long-established procedure so what people think of as being traditional karate isn't. It's cause one thing that traditional karate did the true traditional karate was it evolved and Funakoshi himself said time's changed the world's changes and martial arts must change too. Alright when he talked about the names that he given to 51:10 he talked about I had no illusion that these names would not be permanent and he talked about so Funakoshi's often refereed to as the founder of shotokan and in Funakoshi's book karate-do my way of like he said I have heard myself and my colleagues referred to as the shotokan school I strongly object to this attempt of classification and he went on to say that he viewed that all karate was one he didn't want to see it divided into style. So we see that in Funakoshi that he was happy to train in



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other things and he was happy to see martial arts evolve. He was aware that what he was producing wouldn't last forever and he didn't want people to kind of preserve it and stylize it so there's the tradition and I think that's what we should be following because that's what ultimately the future generations who practice karate will benefit from if we it's like anything else you look at any you know in Northern England I'm looking out the window and I can see forest and trees and hills and all of that stuff that's living there all every living thing that I can see out the window at the moment that's growing and changing as I'm looking at it. the only thing that remains exactly the same is dead things, you know once it's dead it remains you know that's it the tree will remain is until rots so it needs to be the same in the martial arts the need to be growing and evolving it shouldn't be static or preserved and I'm like cause the ultimately it will die if we do that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You mentioned earlier you know your desire that your students never practice Iain rule but you do right and I practice Jeremy rule and really I think if we get right down to it everyone's individual approach to martial arts even if you're training in the same school and have the same experiences under the same instructors it's gonna be a little bit different cause our bodies our different than what we're bringing in for our personal experiences are different our interests might be a little different and

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah no I agree absolutely definitely and that's how it should be I think. I mean this is Shuhari model you know the you know the way we're supposed to learn the martial arts that we copied diverged and transcend so unfortunately what we tend to have is copy copy copy being what put forwards generally so and it's not a free for all either I think the idea is that the student comes at the dojo or like 53:32 I have 30 plus years more experience than them so they'd be wise to listen to what I've got to tell so in the early stages is they have they don't have experiences they're not qualified enough to be able to make informed judgments about the way things should be done. So in those early stage is there's a place for just do this copy this, okay this is why we're doing it but do this. But after a certain point you know we have to accept that okay now they've got their own experiences their own knowledge, they're own ideas about how things should be done and so what in my grading syllabus if you like we time they're in to the dan grade they start to acknowledge that then I want to see things that they've created and rather than just say okay copy what I have done so I wanna try and build it into the process that developed this idea of being able to think for themselves or critically look at everything and look at me and what I've taught and then as they say 54:27 move on. So their karate if I've done my job right should be different from my karate.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Can you offer some examples you've mentioned that a couple of times as that people get into the dan grades the black belt ranks that you're expecting them to think for themselves and develop their own stuff, what do you mean more specifically, what might that look like?

Iain Abernethy:

Well I'll give you a couple of examples so if you give a basic one first, one of the things that in the low grades they 54:55 both in terms of their kata bunkai and we have separate grappling sessions that'd be taught and set number of throws that everybody has to learn. Now as you said you know everyone's got different body types and different preferences so every time with the dan grades I stop saying I want to see this throw or that throw or the other throw for gradings it will be I wish to see X number of throws demonstrated with a striking finish a self-defense finish a ground fighting hold whatever the so the student is then, I'm not telling them what throws I want to see them do I'm saying I want to see throws you show me what your throws are so there maybe ones that I've taught them but it's based on their body type or there maybe ones that they've learned from somewhere or from someone else. To give an example of this at once that we have to do a set number of leg locks for example for one grade and one of the girls said would this be okay for my grade and it's this really bizarre, it's really beautifully rolling leg lock thing oh wow it's really cool. So I thought yeah that would be great for your trading you do it really well where did you learn that, she went YouTube. So you know so even then you know since seeking out information and bringing it in so that's one. And either one that with regards kata applications, we have set drills that I developed for every single one of the kata we practiced but once they get higher up I say look I want you to do this set drills but I also want you to show me what we call second reapplications which means I want you to look at the movement again and you tell me what else it might be. So that's my way of checking that for them they might go you know Iain I think you've got this wrong, I think there's the better way to apply this movement you know what I mean so it's that kind of thing that we encourage them to kind of start showing us their own things and their own thinking and I think it helps keep the students for longer, engaged as well more you know keeps them going for long because they don't feel which I know I have heard some people say they know certain dojos and they'll do 30 years training but what they really do in this 3 years 10 times you know it just becomes repetitive. Whereas when you're able to say okay go out into a big 56:59 world and find stuff and we will acknowledge that stuff we will reward you on the grading syllabus for going out into a big 57:06 world and thinking for yourself I think it encourages them so some examples of what it would look like.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay were you always encouraging of that?

Iain Abernethy:



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Yeah I was always encouraged that way but my own teachers did that with me you know so I it's it was just a natural extension of it but what I did was because I formalized it, I formalized the informality into the grading system because you know I want them to be able to think for themselves but again it's not a free for all from day 1, cause the you know if John a yellow belt tells me he wants to do a certain technique this way well I don't care that's wrong you know what I mean I want you to do it this way but at a certain point when someone's been training for 10 years or so which is out on average how long it takes our students to get a first dan. If they've been training for 10 years I haven't done my job right if they don't know what a good technique is at the end of ten years. So if they'd be able to say well you know you do the throw this way I like this variation you know that's fine. I even encourage that with 58:16 to a degree as well, I've got to do them exactly as we want them doing for the low grade/ For the higher grades they're allowed to the phrase I use is add in their own dirt so they'll keep the broad general outline but will go I'm gonna insert a strike in now you did a punch but I'm gonna do a 58:29. Again it just allows to become their karate so we've got that common 58:34 but we all branch off it in different ways.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Their karate I think that's an important thing for people to understand. We're talking a lot about I mean this is kinda been the recurring theme of our conversation that individuality that development of your own personal path. Do you get into the... please go ahead?

Iain Abernethy:

No no I was just gonna I think it's really really important that to say for that that they have that. I know some people might like the idea of I want to practice something pure, unchanging, but that's never been what the martial arts is been, it's an illusion so you know I would encourage people that there's a lot more fun in a living breathing evolving martial arts than an illusion of the pure one. So that that's what I was just going to add, I'm sorry for interrupting you were about to say something.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No no no you can interrupt me this is your episode. I am merely a guy on the path. One of the things that we haven't talked much about today is kind of the philosophical side of martial arts and I can imagine that you have dedicated your life to this and you become so passionate about it without some views without some notions on the personal development aspect which is something that's really important to me and I'm just be interested to hear your thoughts.

Iain Abernethy:



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It's really important to me too. So for example we our club name the name of our club we call it Abernethy just in Karate-do so that's Abernethy's actual combat karate-do and some people go why have you got the do on the end, surely you're a karate jitsu group but the reason I keep the do is this idea of not a big part of what we do is that personal development because and I wasn't always that way there's goes a point where in my martial development that I really didn't care for that it just seemed an irrelevance to me, show me how to punch and kick harder, that's what I cared about but you start to realize actually that most people thankfully will live in a time and I've certainly living in where I live you know the violent crime is relatively rare so there has to be another reason for training other than my desire to keep myself safe from crime. I joke about at seminars, I'd say nobody wants to be sitting on the death bed you know, a hundred years old saying well those 60 years in martial arts were complete waste of time cause no one tried to stab me you know what I mean there needs to be something else you're getting from them and if you think of things like so I always say that the martial arts it should be both life preserving and life enhancing there that the if a martial arts approach ticks these 2 boxes, I'm interested in it. If it's only just one or the other I'm not interested in it cause there are approaches to try and do one of either. So for the life preserving side of it. there's the self-defense side of it and there's just to keep them fit and healthy. Most people listening to this are not gonna die through violent attack it will they will die because of they smoke too much or they drink too much or they eat too much, or they don't exercise enough you know that's the big killer you know is a in the modern western world. So the martial arts hopefully mitigate about that and again but there's no point of living to be a hundred if we hate every second of it you know the whole point it needs to be life enhancing to which is where the philosophical kind of side of it comes in for me. But just like with the practical the physical side of it, I think it needs to be demonstrable. So often people say you know you do the martial arts it develops character well my first question is well how, show me how what's the mechanism? and because I think sometimes it gets wrapped up in esoteric sounding words and you know pop philosophy and martial arts have riddle with mix of connection to zen and temples and all that kind of stuff but I think if you're going to the dojo and this is like what Funakoshi said if you're going to the dojo you know working hard it develops a tenacity in you which I think can be very useful in everyday life. You learn about goal setting, you learn to deal with disappointment, you'll learn to keep and even keel in when your pressure's on. I think those kind of things are absolutely you know arguably way more beneficial that your ability to kick and punch hard because you'll use them every single day of your life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How might we better foster that kind of a mindset in students as they're coming up it's that something that just kinda comes with being in the environment or is that something that you have learned or ways that you encourage it?

Iain Abernethy:



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Well I think you need to live it, I think if you're sitting around it's like anything else if you're talking about it you're not doing it you're talking about it so I think it's better to live it. We gotta be careful to the dojo so just it doesn't become like a pseudo church you know whereas you know we'll okay we'll sweat for 10 minutes and we'll talk about philosophy for 20 minutes you know that's not to me that wouldn't work. I think you know the big if the martial arts is done right and then there's the student will quickly realize you know look that the me of 6 months ago is fitter and is sorry the me now you know I'm fitter and stronger than I was 6 months ago. I'm more competent than I was, I've got more confidence than I did have. I've had to that grading and that was a bit scary but I stepped up and did it anyway. So I've learned that I can overcome fear and therefore when I need to ask a girl out on a date or ask my boss for a raise or change career, I'm used to doing it, I'm used to feeling what fear feels like and I can I know I don't have to listen to it, I don't have to become it. I can listen to its counsel but I don't have to follow its dictate and I think if we have that it those experiences in the dojo they'll naturally spill out in everyday life I think. I mean I like it's one of a big part I do like to read loads of books on religion and philosophy and all those kind of things cause it's just it's an area that really interests me. But I for in the dojo I just want the students to live it, I want them to you know feel that yeah that was hard but we did, that was scary but you you know would did that. That took a lot of hard work over a long period of time but look what you've achieved, look what you've become you know. I think if we can get the students to experience that it naturally well like I see it I can do that and it's not just as Funakoshi said you know it just doesn't end in the four walls of the dojo. They can apply to their everyday lives as well he said so. Occasionally reminding people that that can be useful I think, just you know like if we do it like move away with drills and some of them we do is just absolutely horrible and when they've done the drill you know they absolutely terrible you know what I mean.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Such as?

Iain Abernethy:

Yeah, you're able to just did well it like that is so physically intense so I've gotta give one that 1:05:37 we'll do things like that students will break into threes, one of them will put pads on so focus mates. We will wrap the belt of the third student through the belt of the student that's going to be punching. So, then you go okay you've got like a 2 minutes full on do not stop punching, it's impossible to keep full intensity for 30 seconds never mind 2 minutes you know so the you're asking the physically impossible and he says why are you hitting those pads what the students with the belt can do is he can pull your left you can pull your right cause you're effectively on a leash. So your legs are burning your trying to get this pad you've been pulled in all directions your heart feels like it wants to burst out of its chest, your shoulders are on fire you know you've got these 2 people 1:06:18 around you encouraging you you know keep on going, keep on going, keep on going and when they finished the fall in a big heap on the



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floor and they hated every second of that drill and if I as the instructor at the end of it, well done you that was really good you know you fall through that there's a lesson for them there and if the feels say half way through the drill that they kind of throw the towel you know even that's a positive thing. You say well you know look it would've been better if you kept on going but the fact that yeah it was that hard that shows that you're pushing your limits, you're just exceeding all the time 1:06:49 is all part of it so next time maybe we'll do better but at least you gave it ago, at least you tried to step up. So, things like that I think and be encouraging for people and commit and feel more powerful and more able and ironically, we expose them to the weaknesses in order to get that to happen.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's where the lessons are I mean it is humanity we tend to learn much much more when we fail.

Iain Abernethy:

Oh yeah, I am I agree, it's and then they it's always I think again which goes back to the mindset thing it's trying to avoid using like negative words around it as well. So if everything's a success so like it with fighting when we're doing like the fighting stuff I always say the techniques blocked or countered or something like that all it's giving you is another opportunity to do something else so that's the mindset you wanna fight with. If he stop says great it's giving me something else, it's eternally positive mindset you know all that I am going to win and I am going to dominate and I think it's the same for the life things as well is if something goes wrong you or doesn't work out the way you intended if you go great this is opportunities to learn this might lead me to better direction, I haven't considered that possibility before. I'm gonna be stronger because of that trial or that tribulation I think if we can approach everything in that way that's when we've been like truly positively if you see what I mean. So, we're may not achieve the goal but we achieve other goals and we learn every time that we can you know but keeping that mindset I fail what can I learn from this you know that's negative in itself but if it's just okay that didn't work now what, what's gonna work next. I think if we can get that in to students that's a healthy attitude to have for everyday life. You know that high need for achievement and that law of fear or failure you go those two things you know whatever you choose to apply yourself to you'll go far.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think you could almost wrap up martial arts training as learning a whole bunch of ways to not do things.

Iain Abernethy:



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Yeah well I like Edison that's what an example he's got when Edison was apparently whether this is true or not I don't know but it's a good story when he's inventing the light bulb apparently gets interviewed and he's had 300 plus prototypes of this thing some of which have blown up and some of which have caught fire and some of which you know just the whole kind of things so this guy says how is this electric light bulb going there which is a laughable idea, I fancy using electric to light a room you know just use a lamp so how is this electrical light bulb thing doing and he said oh well I've had 300 prototypes and they say what does it feel like to fail 300 times to which Edison replies having failed 300 times I've successfully proven 300 ways that don't work.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, right.

Iain Abernethy:

Whether that's true or not it's a good story you know it's when I like to recount at the dojo yk and I say it to the students all the time better than a thousand times in the dojo than once in a reality learning a big part to learn in what works is learning what doesn't work so if you do something dumb and it ends badly you go okay ain't doing that again and that's progress right there. It's not the kind of progress our ego will like but it's progress.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No no for sure. This has been great, you've gone deep in the philosophy we've talked about you and in where you've come from. This was every bit as fun as I expected it to be so I really appreciate you coming on and I'm wondering if you might grace us with a one more thing you know.

Iain Abernethy:

Of course.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You've offered so much advise to the people listening but we kinda like to wrap up with a bit of advice so imagine you're at the front of the electoral hall and all of the listeners are sitting in chairs hanging on your every word and you have to say something poignant before you walk off.

Iain Abernethy:



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Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What might you tell them.

Iain Abernethy:

To enjoy, to make sure they're enjoying their training cause if they're enjoying it they'll keep doing it and then they'll get good at it you know what I mean so that's what I would say, make sure they're enjoying that's the most important thing you can do to make sure you're gonna make progress in your martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Mr. Abernethy teaches a number of seminars throughout Europe but he does get to the US from time to time. I'd suggest you check his seminars schedules and see if you can make it. I certainly have plans to attend and if karate is not your style, I think you should still check it out. there's is good stuff in there regardless of what you practice. Thank you, Mr. Abernethy, for coming on the show, over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you can find the show notes with a bunch of photos, links to his social media and a link to his website. Which is how you get to everything he does including his great podcasts. You can follow us on social media too, facebook, twitter, pinterest, youtube and instagram, the username is whistlekick. You should also check out our facebook group whistlekick Martial Arts Radio behind the scenes. Do you have a favorite episode of the show? If you do I'd like to encourage you to find it on our website and share it with somebody. Our download numbers are going up and that's because of you, thank you I really appreciate that. It's because of everything that you've done as listeners that this show continues to grow. Thanks for your time until next time train hard, smile and have a great day.