



Episode 240 – Mr. Jordy Delage | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello everyone! Thanks for tuning in to episode 240 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio. My name's Jeremy Lesniak your host and today I'm joined by Mr. Jordy Delage a martial arts practitioner who took the huge life step of moving to Japan. Here on martial arts radio we bring you amazing interviews and wonderful topic driven episodes, 2 times every week and we thank you for tuning in. If you haven't checked out the things that we make at whistlekick, you can go to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). If you want the show notes for this or any of the other episodes [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). Those are the places to go you can sign up for our newsletter at either one of those sites and you're also gonna find links to the other things that we do on the web to support the martial arts thing, that you love the thing that I love the thing that so many of us owe so much to. Our guest today is a martial arts practitioner from France who chose to give it all up and move to Japan. Mr. Jordy Delage an aikido practitioner experienced a few let's say unpleasant experiences growing up and with these experiences that had a tremendous impact on who he grew to be and how he sees the world. Mr. Delage is also the founder of Seido shop an online Japanese retailer dedicated to aikido practitioners and enthusiasts. We're lucky to have him because he not only tells us about his history his childhood his path on the martial arts but he gives us an inside look at what it looks like to live work and train in Japan. Let's welcome him.

Mr. Delage welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.



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**Jordy Delage:**

Nice to meet you Jeremy. Looking forward for your questions.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm looking forward to answer, hearing your answers to the questions and let's start off quickly I know we're gonna talk about how all of this happened but it's no secret that most of our listeners are American even though I think last check we're up to like a hundred and thirty-three countries people are listening to us and but you have an accent that makes it pretty clear you are not from the United States so where are you coming from and where is your accent from?

**Jordy Delage:**

Well I'm from France so some people may think I'm just another French guy with a terrible English accent and some people mainly girls even from the US thinks it's cute so I'm gonna keep it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well but you're not actually in France right, now are you?

**Jordy Delage:**

No, I'm in Japan and naturally I've learned most of my English and my accent as well in Japan so it's kinda ironic because I've learned Japanese language before I learn English at school like everyone but I started speaking decent English after Japanese language so it's kind of my third language, my second one would be Japanese.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow okay so for anyone out there that might feel a little critical and say you know I'm having a hard time hearing him just kinda relax listen in I mean we've been chatting for 15 minutes prior to the interview and I'm having no problems and just remember most of us speak English reasonably well and here we have the case with at least three languages. So that always impresses me I struggle with a little bit of Spanish but I'm certainly not fluent and certainly don't speak 3 languages. Of course, we're not here to talk about language or geography or anything like that. We're here to talk about martial arts and I know we're gonna talk about how at some point we're gonna talk about how you got from France to Japan and why and all that, but let's roll all the way back, how did you get started in the martial arts?



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**Jordy Delage:**

Well let's forget about the few years of Judo when being just a small kid you know like I don't know in the US but in France like I don't know if 30% of kids do some Judo I when you're 5, 6, 7, 8 but I 04:41 with Aikido for quite 04:47 it was for a girl. Ironically, I ended up practicing with her only few times before she stopped and I continued so yeah, it's kinda 04:59 and at the time I didn't know about the different aikido styles or anything so I just practicing one of the closest dojo from home. I think France it's a tour it's a very small city I mean when you live in the US you have big and small but it's fairly small. It's and I was living in the country side like 20-30 kilometers from the city so I had to do like I don't know 30 minutes of bike for you to get there and it was with very it was a very small dojo it was like country side martial art practice but with a very nice guy.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay so you started for a girl, how old were you?

**Jordy Delage:**

I was 15 and she was 18 06:04

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay so older women and certainly I don't think the idea of doing something maybe a little bit out of our comfort zone is foreign to anyone listening when it comes to love. Here you are you've done some judo and it sounded like you stopped for a few years but decided you would try aikido because of this girl but then she stopped, what was it that you discovered so quickly in aikido that kept you around?

**Jordy Delage:**

Actually, though she was 3 years older than me and obviously I was 15 she was 18 she was a bit stronger physically than me but at a 06:48 she just put me down in a very gently manner and I thought what the hell why? And I just asked her why, why she could do that and she just told me aikido and she's practicing for like I don't know 7, 8 years something like that and 07:16 I liked the girl so I went there and I discovered more or less what she had done to me or later on I discovered that you cannot really apply control technique that easily and somewhat the only reason that it worked at the time was because we were playing and I was not attempting to really punch her but the idea of practicing a martial art that is only dedicated to I wouldn't say self-defense because it's not what it is but protecting yourself and others in various different ways that include psychology not only physical techniques. It was about learning how to analyze situation better, having better physical relationship with people what



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we call 08:36 in Japanese which is like harmonizing with people. I found that it was more useful in my life at the time to learn how to get along better with other people that I did like than trying to learn to fight or self-defense or anything. So basically, it was just improving my everyday life and I was a difficult kid so I think aikido just gave me some tools and a framework to improve the way I was interacting with people and pretty quickly my life did improve and that's the reason why I just stayed and continued practicing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't know about everyone listening but I'm gonna guess that most of our listeners are older than 15, we've all been 15 and I can't speak for everyone but I know that when I was 15 I didn't have a terrible amount of self-awareness but that's what you're talking about that you very quickly realize aikido was making you a better person. So, I find that interesting that you were a difficult child you had some needs and if you want we can talk about what that was when you say you were a difficult child but then martial arts quickly it sounds like dragged you out of that and made you a better person. That's not a story that I think a lot of us have.

**Jordy Delage:**

So yes, I think that when you're a teenager you can have a good or bad environment. It is very hard to compare between each other because it's all about how you feel about what you have and what was really amazing with my aikido practice that my teacher was a really guy really he was a teacher an English teacher in a difficult school with a lot of troubled kids and he had this way to challenge his students and give them what they need and giving to a student what he needs at those specific moment and time it's more on only martial arts. So, I want to believe that he acquired that through aikido and he was trying to pass that to his students. I was young so he was more in the process to saving myself, saving me than actually trying to teach me how to help others but that's what I felt with this teacher so I really think that whatever the martial arts you practice, the teacher what he can give you at a specific moment in time is the most important thing and that's what made me stay at the dojo because I knew I was in good hands with someone not trying to sell me any strange thing strange techniques or self-defense or anything. He was just giving me what I needed as a human being at the time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I know we have a lot of martial arts instructors out there and they're likely nodding their head as they're listening to this. I had a school, I don't know if you've had the opportunity to teach a lot of younger folk but I think that becomes a big part of the job, identifying people that need what you can offer even outside the martial arts and we've had quite a few guests on the show who had told some interesting stories around that. What do you think would've?



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**Jordy Delage:**

Well I think

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No go ahead

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah well I think it's a very interesting in my case because I never I thought of teaching for a few months few years but I thought I wouldn't be a good teacher so I decided not to go into that path but I became a manager because I create a company and I have people I have to deal with on everyday basis and I realize I had to do the same thing with the people that I manage everyday and at that point I just realized yeah maybe I was a bit foolish not wanting to teach because at some point in life you get older and you or you have kids and you have to teach them something yeah you can't avoid teaching forever.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a great point and of course employees are at time students that you can't discipline in the same that you can in martial arts.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah, I think it's a lot more difficult with grown up people than with kids or even I think more difficult than in martial arts because in martial arts they're here to learn something. They want you to teach them something. When they're working for you or with you, they don't really want you to teach them things, they just want you to manage them in the nicest way possible but if you're a good manager I think what your purpose should be is to help them grow. Even if they're 25, 30, 35, 40 we learn all the time and we can always get better so it gets more difficult with older people but it's kinda very interesting challenge.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah certainly. That gives us some context for who you are and as we move forward I know we're gonna talk about a lot of things we're gonna talk about the company that you founded that you've already mentioned or I'm sure we're gonna talk about how you made it from France to Japan and there'll be some good stories in there. What's your favorite martial arts story from your time in training?



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**Jordy Delage:**

Well I know people who listen that question expects it was funny I don't know something they can dream about. I'm not sure I have any of that in my own history but I have one or two stories that had a major impact on me. The first one it was not about fighting it was about controlling the situation and but not fighting for myself because my teacher did fight not my teacher a teacher that I knew. So, I was with this teacher, was a strong guy and some 16:22 guys were obviously looking for trouble was in the parking lot and I think he felt it at the exact time that he saw them just felt that something was just off and he moved toward them and he put one of them down straight forward without saying anything without any warning. I was like whoa we're doing aikido guy we don't just put down people like that and then what's happening and he just later said that dealing with any kind of situation as a matter of psychology and getting that right is the key to not only win a futile fight like that but also to implement a martial arts philosophy in the everyday life. So, at the time the point was the guy he put down was the alpha male of the group of 3 guys and taking him down first and fast just made the 2-other run away immediately and I thought that's not what I wanna do because I don't really like fighting but if you just transcript that to an everyday life situation where you have a group of people that is bothering you at work or anything. Taking the leader down first and fast might be the best way to save the two others so it was kind of a 18:03 it had a huge impact on me and changed the way I see martial arts. 18:14 second one shot one as well it was about the first time I think I stood up against a man. He was trying to touch a woman in the train. So, it's, it was in Japan so the risk was minimal, people can't fight 18:34 Japan is a very safe country, you're 100% sure the guy has no weapons nothing on him but it wasn't about that. But you know Japanese is a very rigid society and everyone minds his own business and as a foreigner I'm expected to behave the same way so I did it for years likewise I don't have the time 7-8 years in Japan and I don't know at that time I felt that doing the right thing is more important than doing anything else and I just stood up and pushed the guy out of the train and tried to have the girl to realize that it would be better if she just could act on herself not counting on other people because in Japan it's not gonna happen, no one is gonna help and the risk I had at the time was about my visa or being able to stay in Japan because when you're a foreigner here you have just to behave and be sure that you don't get into any kind of trouble or wasn't physically any danger but I don't know from that day I started to act on this principle everyday on every aspect of my life no matter what people think or no matter what the risk for me for the company or anything, ethic and moral comes first and I think it took me far longer than it should have because it's a very very important principle in life.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Jordy Delage:**



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But that's very short stories that are not funny or significant but I think that's kind of small stories that push people to evolve so rather than talking about something extraordinary I think people listening the show should just hang on to their own little experience and get something out of it, that's the most important thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The story of you pushing the man out of the train as he was trying to assault the woman, it sounds like it was a pretty simple confrontation, it doesn't sound like he fought back or anything it would just you just kind of took him and moved him off the train and the door is shut and...

**Jordy Delage:**

No, I think I scared the hell out of him when I pushed him because in Japan it just doesn't happen, you don't react, you don't act, you don't you just mind your own business and actually I think people in the train watching the scene at the time were probably as surprised as the guy I pushed, I was you really need to have this experience of living in Japan for at least a few months to understand what it means to really do something against the Japanese very rigid society.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What was the woman's response afterwards?

**Jordy Delage:**

She was sorry which is just crazy, cause she did nothing wrong but I guess she was sorry that she had to have someone to help her I don't know exactly, that's probably one of the thing I could never understand from Japanese culture is that all these Japanese people always sorry for things they're absolutely not responsible of and fortunately I really think that the woman would be in the same situation again and it would very likely happen, she would do nothing because that where I failed at the time I should have stayed a little and talk with her and try to make her understand that she has to protect herself or do something, maybe you could have helped I don't know but yeah just pushing the guy out of the train was not really meaningful for the girl. I don't think I the guy probably just forgot about it the next day was very likely drunk and I don't think I did anything good for any of them nor the guy or the girl but for myself it was kind of a revelation maybe in some ways just I did change the way I see the society rigidity or pressure you can feel everyday and so that as you have to behave of course but the most important thing is to do what you think is right so that pretty much all I got from that experience.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I agree, do what you think is right. Obviously martial arts is a big part of your life. I don't think anybody's come on the show who can't say that martial arts is a large part of their life. Outside of martial arts though are there things you're passionate about? Do you have hobbies or activities that you enjoy?

**Jordy Delage:**

Well somehow, I think that everything that I do or almost everything is more or less tied to martial arts in some ways. I'm doing video editing and then directing, publishing on YouTube about Japanese craftsmanship interviews. I'm also trying to help to the best of my knowledge, people doing research about Japanese traditional martial arts so it can be translations from Japanese or 25:33 Japanese. Yeah, it's pretty much all linked to martial arts, I like diving I do I got my license a year or 2 ago, I like sky diving, I'm thinking about taking a license to jump alone on my own but apart from that yeah, I think pretty much everything I do is linked to martial arts. I like 26:03 website in my company I'm doing half management of course and half website development, designing and stuff like that I do like that very much. Video editing and interviews and meeting people and try to make them say things they wouldn't say in a different situation because you know Japanese teachers and martial art people they're pretty old so if you want them to 26:35 something significant you have to push them a little and it is important to do it before they die at some point because they're all very old and yeah that's kind of human relationship with martial artist and teachers is also something I do like very much and that could be completely unrelated to martial arts because it's about human just being human talking to people and trying to get along with them but in my case somehow it all comes for martial arts except for diving and skydiving which are the two things I like doing that absolutely no relation with martial arts. Even though I think that trying to do some techniques in the water is funny as well as trying to do some techniques in the air when you're skydiving is funny as well, but I wouldn't sky dive with an aikido gears and everything because it's too dangerous.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, I'm sure there's something that if we spent enough time we could dig in and find the similarities in your mindset while you're underwater or falling from the sky versus when you're in the dojo, I bet...

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah there are some connections yeah, you have to be calm and challenge yourself and everything and that's something you do in martial arts but not only any people practicing a sport at some level I mean with a commitment will have in a way or another the same kind of thoughts we have in martial arts. The only difference between sports and martial arts inhuman evolution is that in martial arts we're trying to





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teach that, in sports at some level people just realize it but it's not something that is taught within the sports training.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You've mentioned your company a few times and rather than wait for the end because it's such an important part of your life, let's talk about it now. You founded a company at some point when you got to Japan so tell us a bit about that and how that's impacted your life and your martial arts training.

**Jordy Delage:**

Well, after 5 years in Japan two of them were half in France and Japan doing a Bachelor degree so I spent one year in Japan 2 years in France and Japan and then about 2 years in Japan and I realized that I wouldn't find a job that I could get along with and I wanted to do something that I like because until I started searching for a job I was just practicing martial arts or going to university and when going to the university I was doing a lot of martial arts so I want to do something I like, I couldn't find anything interesting in Japan and I said that there's something my father used to say and he has no earning whatsoever with martial arts but he did say a few very insightful things to me there are few times that I spent with him which is if you don't find a job then create your job, I think that's something that people can understand very easily because it's the US culture, it's not really in the European or French nor it's in the Japanese culture either there I thought okay I do website development because I like that and I'm practicing martial arts I have friends asking for aikido equipment all the time and I'm doing that for free so let's group that together and create a companies in martial art equipment online with aa nice website and make a little money so I can just make a decent living and continue practicing as much as I want. It turned out that it was a lot more successful that I expect it. So many things happened and in it was kind of crazy because it's not that I don't want to but I already can't give any name that this martial art business in Japan martial art equipment business in Japan is not very honest, they all talk about martial art values and everything but 99% of the shops here or brands are run by people who don't practice so they don't really have any strong connection with martial arts and they evolve from China, Pakistan anything sometime they just tell it's made in Japan when it had just been a little transformed in Japan. I realized that, I started meeting craftsmen in Japan, just very simple guys, 1, 2 3 guys in a small workshop trying to make a living. Usually old guys in the middle of nowhere and I thought yeah, I want to support these guys that I want to work with those craftsmen who spent their life polishing the art and trying to sell their products with absolutely no idea whatsoever of who to sell stuff they can make they cannot sell and they were being manipulated I think by many companies, not increasing prices for like 20 years, 30 years because yeah you know it's difficult and we keep our prices low and everything. No, I want to work with you, you set your prices, I don't care the price I just want good stuff and a good relationship with you I won't your products to be introduced in the proper way to Westerners and then my company swift from retailer of other brands to own brand which is I think I'm not sure about it because I don't



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know all Japanese brands, there's a lot but as far as I know I think we are the only brand with only 100% made in Japan equipment. The point is not to make money or sell a lot of stuff quantities or anything, it's really working with craftsmen and doing things right and everything and that part of the job, took me a lot more time than I would have liked at the time. So I'm not practicing as much as I used to and but I think I'm still being useful for the martial arts community I hope so and I feel like at least that what they say to me, I'm useful to these craftsmen for another way, new way to deal with businesses and not being just a production line of another brand but valued, being valued themselves by the brand who present them introduce them and I'd felt humanly speaking really good so I'd like to practice more but I also don't want to let down the craftsmen I'm working with.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What, you talked about the importing from China, you talked about the other things these actions that companies selling martial arts equipment that are owned by folks that don't train in the martial arts that disconnect there and it's something that maybe this isn't going to resonate as strongly for everyone listening but it does for me because as we talked we talked about you and I are pretty similar we started martial arts companies as an effort to support the arts and further our ability to as you said train when you want, of course I don't know about you it's not quite whenever I want, this thing got a little bit bigger, a little faster than I would've expected, you mentioned the same.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah, I get the question

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Go ahead

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah I get the question actually I don't think that made in China is a bad thing what's bad is that when you import from China, modify your product just a little bit and say it's made in Japan that's the problem and the question here is that do you inform your customers of what they are buying correctly without lying to them? And if so do you practice the right prices and everything and that's we live in a world with internet and everything where you can always find customers so you can do whatever you want as far as you have a decent price, cost performance you can sell your stuff. I don't think it's enough and there are plenty of way to repay your customers like doing what you do actually with this podcast. It's very good what you repay your customers, because you're using your company to produce and valuable contents for practitioners on my end as a foreigner living in Japan. It was kind of, it came naturally to me that



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supporting Japanese craftsmen and introduce them to foreigners, Westerners mainly in English and French was it's not like it was the right thing to do is that it was the only thing I could do. I'm a foreigner in Japan I speak French, a bit of English I speak Japanese of course and I see those guys and meet them and go to the bar and drink together, very very nice craftsmen. The only thing I can do that feels right is to introduce them correctly. The only thing I wouldn't do and I cannot support is Pakistan or India, Vietnam made stuff because of child labor and I'm probably against child labor so even if you do work with people who say they don't use child you never know in those countries and regulations are really too soft. So that's something I really can't work with but I have absolutely no issue with made in China, I work with some companies, importing from China to sell in Japan in very very good conditions. I just can't do it because I'm a French guy in Japan and importing stuff from China and reselling to Westerners would be not very honest for a foreigner living in Japan. I don't know if you see the idea.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I certainly do and what I'm hearing is a sense of stewardship, I don't know if that word's gonna come through the idea that you are responsible in a sense for what's happening for these products for the customers that are buying them and for their love of the martial arts for the folks that are making these craftsmen in Japan that are making these products. You have an opportunity to help everyone and a sense of responsibility because of that, that's what I'm hearing and that's something that I feel as well so I'm enjoying hearing that from someone else.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah you know actually I think that's a feeling that's something that is more alive in the US than in Europe. I think what happened after the typhoons who came to the US a few days, a few weeks back and people helping each other and everything and we don't see that much in France or in Japan it's and the Fukushima disaster was a very good example of that but people are not really helping each other because they don't feel any responsibility about others. That's kind of something people think that Japan works that way but it doesn't and the truth is that if Japanese act or react and you feel like they're really working together and helping each other, it's just because of the society who pushes them to do that but it's not from the heart and I don't know I've seen pretty amazing things recently in the news and I thought that's something that should ring or touch the hearts of most practitioners, especially Japanese, Chinese martial arts with those kind of Confucian values and everything that you have a responsibility at different levels in your own community for the people in your dojo if you're a teacher to the people you to the students and for me as a foreigner in Japan of course I want Japan to acknowledge me and accept who I am which is probably not gonna happen anytime soon but I also feel that I have a responsibility I chose Japan I live here I could just leave if I'm not happy I'd just leave. I'm critical about Japan of course but for their own good we're trying to help them not just to criticize for nothing just for fun and it's my responsibility here is Japan has good things to offer, France has good things to offer,



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Westerners have good things to offer and there are things Japanese do better than we do and the opposite is true as well, we do things better than Japanese in some extent. So, our duty as foreigners in Japan is to somehow because it's difficult but push Japanese people to think about what we do better than them and try to have them implement some of these things we do better in the west and I think of the opposite if you're a Japanese in the US or Europe you have to do the exact same thing and try to push the good of what your culture has to offer. All I see is the bright side of things you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely, we'll talk a little bit more later on about your company and if people are interested in checking out your products you know we've got some time blocked off at the end for that but of course I do wanna remind folks because this comes up once in a while. At no point do we ever have guests on who pay to be here, there's never a kickback whenever a guest you know benefits in some financial way from our listeners supporting them one nickel has or ever will come back to whistlekick and then that's incredibly important to me just to be objective and transparent about that.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah actually I'm keeping the name of the company for the end of the interview.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Perfect.

**Jordy Delage:**

If they want to check they have to listen to the end.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

They have to listen to the whole thing that's right.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Good, good alright let's move on I think we've got an even better picture of who you are now. We heard some stories and I want I'm gonna ask you for another one now. One of the things that's common amongst martial artists is our ability to persevere through difficult times. I'd like you to tell us now about a challenge some difficult part of your life and how you were able to use or reflect on your martial arts training to get through it.

**Jordy Delage:**

Well I think that's kind of the opposite that happens. What happened is that the difficulties I had in Japan kind of undermines my martial arts practice and then I'm never proud of that but that's what happened so I just can't deny it. The fact is that when you live long enough in Japan you realize that you will never be accepted as a Japanese people even if you speak perfect Japanese. I mean I get the phone call someone call for pizza and no one realize I'm not Japanese on the phone but when you meet people face to face then you just cannot hide it and that's something that just took me down for a few months, maybe a year or two. Until I met a wonderful guy Alexander Bennet which is a seventh dan kendo teacher from New Zealand teaching at Kansai University, an amazing guy, the best Japanese I ever heard and incredible martial artist. I did an interview but because I wanted people to hear what he has to say about living in Japan and yeah he made me realize and it was not long ago a few months that I don't feel good in Japan, I don't feel at the right place but it's not the fault of Japan, it's not because of Japan, it's because of me it's my fault it's because I'm not taking the things the way I should and I always have this way of seeing things but I couldn't apply it to myself and he made me realize that, that's and at the time you know I'm in a business where all products are aikikai approved, aikikai is the main aikido organization in the world. I'm training at the hombu dojo the world headquarters of the aikikai so I basically meet all the most important teacher in the world on a daily basis and I have this business-related approval from them. So, when a competitor complains, they just call the aikikai complain about me, not even about the company but me and at some point, I got in trouble with a few teachers and especially one of my own teachers on the mat after a class, I was like no I'm here to help the community I'm not here to make any trouble. I think he did a mistake at the time because he didn't hear all the points before coming to me and in his own way he did apologize a bit later but at the time it was like I don't wanna practice, I don't want to be on the mats if I cannot I wasn't in the mood of improving myself I was kinda fighting I wasn't in the good mindset for practice so I did stop almost stopped for a while I went to Kyoto with other teachers and it took me a while to recover from that and it's actually it rings a bell with the story I told before because when I started to do the right thing in my own opinion and no matter the cost it did cost a lot actually it cost for my business but it also cost for my practice and personally. Japan is a complicated country with a very rigid society and then when you are in close I mean really close to the top of your martial arts school, it's true in aikido it's even more difficult with koryu or school like 49:34 or school like that you just get evicted and you can't come back in aikido it's a little easier but still I don't know if it's because I'm not Japanese, probably Japanese people would have handled it a better way but I didn't so I don't think that's martial practice who helped me get through



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this it's my meetings and the interview I did with Alexander Bennett and a few other people I met at the time. I got help from other martial artists in Japan foreigners who went through the same thing before me, kind of glad and happy that it's part of martial arts even if we don't practice the same thing, Alex Bennett is the kendo guy and I'm in aikido but at some point we all face the same difficulties and we help each other and I think that's really very important so I cannot say it's really martial arts that helped me through this because it wasn't through practice on the mats but it's still martial arts because the people who helped me somehow did it because of martial arts yeah it's a bit complicated to explain but I think martial arts is a framework, you put whatever you want into it and the way of meeting different people with the same framework with but with different things attached to it is a very good way to improve yourself.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think that was very clear the way you explained it. If I was to ask you who the most influential person in your martial arts has been who would that be?

**Jordy Delage:**

Well that would be very difficult, I think my first teacher as I mentioned it at the beginning was the most influential people because he just saved me. I don't think I would have continued practicing martial arts without him and I don't think that I would have taken the right path without him but that was a long time ago and since that time I met a few people who were really significant to me. Some people that I admire like Alexander Bennett as I mentioned before for what he did and what he still do in Japan and I know they went through a very difficult time and when I admire how they got over that but I think if there was one person for the last 10 years who really did influence me it's Guillaume Erard, it's another French guy sorry in Japan, he's practicing aikido at the hombu dojo and daito ryu in shikoku and old martial arts which is the ancestor of aikido it has meaning and he's he has a scientific educational background, he has PhD biology or something that I can't really pin point really because it's very technical. I have also had a scientific background but not to that extent and he's a very challenging person. If he disagrees with you you're gonna know it, painfully because he has this way to be so much better than you at explaining that you're wrong but at the end of the discussion you think you're wrong even if you're right but it's very challenging we don't agree on everything of course and but for the best I think I probably managed to bend his opinion on few things I hope so because he did change my many things. Having someone playing Ping-Pong with you, tennis table tennis with a Ping-Pong 54:44 just you just roll the ball and you extend it back and you can have this play together when you're shooting something you get it back and you're shooting it again and I think if you're a martial artist or if you're not, whatever you do in your life you need someone at some point that is able to answer your inquiries, answer your questions, answer your everything you're sure about, you express your point you tell your point, you're sure about it and you have someone in front of you who can just destroy your whole



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reasoning, you need that, it's very healthy. I think for this reason alone Guillaume Erard has been the most influential people of the last 10 years in my life because he destroyed my reasoning so many times that I had to get better and better and better to keep up with myself that's very important.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And of course, I didn't put you up to this as consistent listeners to the show will know it just a few weeks ago we had Sensei Erard on the show and it was from the same listener that suggested the two of them obviously they know each other. I didn't know that at the time, I didn't know that until just a bit before I started interviewing Sensei Erard, not sure what episode number that was yet cause it hasn't come out yet as we're recording this but, it's always fun when those things overlap.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah, I didn't know that, I just learned that a few day ago so I was pretty surprised because I was thinking about this interview and but kind of answered before he even told me that he was on the show so I thought of changing my answer but that wouldn't be fair because it's really what I think. It's perfectly honestly that's the truth, Guillaume did help me and changed me a lot and I have the weakness. I want to believe that I did change him aa little bit as well. I want to believe that because if not it's kind of one way and I would have to repay him so much and I don't want to be that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh, after listening to you thus far and reflecting on my conversation with him I can imagine that you haven't had an impact on him as well. When I think about any teacher student relationship of course the students receive a lot from the teacher but the best teacher is always seem to receive a lot from the students as well. I know I did when I had my school I know that I still do when I have the opportunity to teach others. If you had the opportunity to train with anyone, anyone in the world any style, anywhere in time, they can be alive or dead, who would you want to train with?

**Jordy Delage:**

That's a funny question I think that any aikidoist, I don't know if there are any aikidoist listening but any aikidoist would expect me to say Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido but I'm not gonna say that for one very simple reason apart from the fact he wouldn't be very interesting it's because aikido has evolved a lot since the passing of the founder and I think there are plenty of amazing aikidoist around the world, bad ones but most are the good ones and I don't know I'm very happy with the aikido I do today so I don't know not really the aikido founder. I wouldn't get that much from him I think. So, I think I would say Kyuzo Mifune the judo 59:07 amazing teacher one of the founder students kano jigoro and I



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think I cannot be sure of that but I really think he was better technically speaking than the founder. If you want to know why I think that then you can watch Alexander Bennett's interview in my YouTube channel because he says exactly why I think that. Jigoro Kano was an amazing teacher and he has amazing skills but he wasn't that much of an amazing technician. Kyuzo Mifune was wonderful technician the videos we have him moving like a cat, it was unique in Judo history, we never ever saw that after Mifune and I would have loved training with such a magician because I really think that judo is not so far from aikido. It's really about controlling your open and center and while having contact with him move the best way possible to control the situation 100% and one of the very rare teacher or people I saw doing that was Kyuzo Mifune so don't matter if it's not aikido, training with such a magician because I really think it's like magic. It would have been wonderful and fortunately Kyuzo Mifune is not with us anymore so it's not gonna happen.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I know whenever we talk to folks who practice aikido the subject of competition takes a slightly different turn than when we talk to someone from karate or Taekwondo but for consistency I like to ask the question have you ever competed, what are your thoughts on competition?

**Jordy Delage:**

Oh, as you know no competition in aikido or I must say at least not in my style or any major styles but there are a few 1:01:31 doing competition in different ways. Sometimes it's only kata sometime it's also sparring a little bit, not myself. I did one year at Judo at university after having like 6-7 years background in aikido including 1 year at the world headquarter in Japan and I think I won 100% of the shiai I probably won everything but that wasn't fair I had an extensive background in aikido all of the guys were just beginners, it was so easy that they were just completely stupid and that's probably the reason I stopped doing judo. I wasn't interested at all into competition or orientation of the art. It was like you're starting judo you had some aikido background, you win all your shiai against judo 1:02:31 because that's how it is and they can't even put you in higher category because there are rules and you're a beginner and you don't have even a yellow belt it was like white belt and I had a few green belts or blue belts on my shiai and I was winning anyway. It was of course I would've lost in seconds with black belt judo cap but at that was kind of disappointing because I was expecting Judo to bring me something more and it was all about competition, but I stopped. That's my only experience with competition apart from the company because business is kind of a competition but that's a whole another story.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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It certainly is competition. What were you hoping to gain from your time in Judo other than competition? You certainly knew something about judo cause you've done it as a child so to go back to it you must have had some hopes or expectations?

**Jordy Delage:**

Yes, so honestly, I did stop aikido for the 2 years I was in at university in France. I did stop because I spent a few months at he's gonna hate me cause he's a friend so he's gonna hate me Christian Tissier's dojo. Christian Tissier is one of the most important famous aikido teacher in the world and a French guy as well, sorry again and his style was very demanding and the atmosphere wasn't for me so I did a few weeks there and then didn't feel right so I could have just picked another dojo who was in Paris so we have plenty of amazing teachers but I thought yeah I'm at universities still in Japanese we had Judo classes Kendo classes and why not so I did judo and kendo for 2 years and I avoided kendo competitions and I think I haven't done any competition in kendo not even one but I did in Judo. Well I think that in aikido we have a tendency to be too soft, too light, too soft taking 1:05:10 falling to easily, that's the problem when you don't like this competition. At some point, you just get used to kempo yourself 1:05:21 and then say oh yeah, your technique was good and if you have a bit of ego you just block the opponent and since you know what he's gonna do before he does it you can block whatever he does anyway, it doesn't mean anything but that's something that happen in aikido. So, judo was a good idea for that because in competition and not even competition when you, you're training your partner he never knows what you're gonna do and put things in perspective, help me probably feel a bit heavier physically in my aikido practice and not do foolish things like blocking for nothing or using my ego too much because I know now that if I were in a judo or kendo competition or just match shiai I would loss immediately. So, it just gave me perspective, made me I hope it made me better at doing aikido but not only doing, made me better as a partner, when I'm taking ukemi when I'm just hand, I'm giving something to the guy practicing actually practicing the technique and I completely lost this idea of being in an opposition competition against trying to stop prevent someone from doing the technique. If you want to learn something you have to be able to do it even if it's the wrong way. At some point, you need to progress by doing it a bit wrong and your opponents role main duty is to make it the hardest possible without making it impossible which is very difficult actually. It's probably the curse of aikido cause you need someone in front of you that is willing to give you everything and in a very smart way and if you don't have a partner like that you cannot practice technique you cannot get better and that's very difficult with competition, it's much easier to learn and judo and kendo gave me that so I'm very grateful for the time I had in Judo and kendo. I think I might do some karate or kendo again not judo because I don't like it so karate or kendo again very likely in the next few years.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Movies, I wonder if you have a different viewpoint of movies as an aikido practitioner or as a martial artist living in Japan you know here where in the US of course we're all about the big dramatic flashy martial artist films, do you watch those? Are those something you enjoy or do you see things differently?

**Jordy Delage:**

Yeah, I do and actually I'm not sure people listening will be very happy with my answer. I don't know if you could or not but if you wanna cut it you can. Well I love Jackie Chan movies because he gathers the best of Hong Kong action movies and he's very nice funny guy. He's not trying to show impossible things, he's not cheating, he's cheating but he's saying he's cheating so it's just for fun and I like that. But if I have to give an opinion seriously about martial arts movies I really, I can't stand all those movies that in addition to being completely disconnected to the reality, they've done some super 1:10:02 no way and it's like pornography and sex in real life, that's not the same thing, right? The same thing with martial arts movies. Like if I have to mention one aikido martial art actor guy, I would say Steven Seagal, he does martial arts pornography. I'm sure there are plenty of good movies that I haven't seen or sometime I did and I did like some of them of course but no it's so much disconnected from reality. I think it's very good, it's good action movies for people who don't practice martial arts. They like when you watch expendable you're not necessarily someone shooting people all day, you just want to see people shooting for fun and if you ask a marine or any military guy or 1:11:11 that will just 1:11:12 and say well it's just funny that it's the same thing with martial arts movies and it's the exact reason why I like I love Jackie Chan because as a martial artist he used his movies to entertain people while trying to teach life lessons without taking himself seriously and I wish that more 1:11:41 martial artist would behave the same way in their own field because some of our isn't only actors take themselves too seriously it's also teachers and I think it would be for the benefit of martial arts if more teachers would take example from Jackie Chan noting what he does technique or the how he does it I don't know if you see the point yeah I'm not a big fan of martial arts action movies.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How about books? Martial arts books are they, do you spend time with those that you mentioned some research and I believe some translation earlier on.

**Jordy Delage:**

Yes, so when it comes to books, I mainly on the research field meaning that I don't really whatever sensei whatever teacher wrote because cause actually my point will be to read while he read and have my own interpretation of it so I'm not really a fan of books but I think that if you practice Japanese martial arts at least Japanese martial arts, there are 2 books you absolutely need to read. The first one is



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Bushido and the art of Living, it's by Alexander Bennett that I mentioned before but the title is a bit misleading but because it's not about the art of living your life today and including yourself. It's an inquiry the point is to unfold the history of what can be called bushido from the earliest time of Japan 1:13:56 days of course it causes almost to present days but there is 1:14:05 phases and how it evolved to stay relevant with time. In bushido, what we all think bushido is like of a very a foggy concept, we don't really know what it is, we know that there are some values and anything, everything but we don't really know what it is and it's like a not a fixed concept. It did evolve over time to stay relevant to the 1:14:39 on time and that's exactly what this book is about, what it was 5, 600 years ago when it was 200 years ago, 100 years ago, 50 years ago, 10 years ago and I really recommend this book because unless you have a clear understanding of Japanese history you cannot really benefit from Musashi's 1:15:03 the 3 or 5 rings book cause 1:15:12 which are the most 1:15:15 Japanese martial arts books because it's very obscure you really cannot understand that if you don't have a huge Japanese history and culture background. Honestly unless you went to university studying Japanese and Japanese culture, don't read the 1:15:35 right away and think you would understand everything because you don't you really don't and the Musashi's life is crazy. In martial arts today we talk about fair fights and values and everything Musashi is just saying that if you cannot win a fight you just shoot, use tricks and wait the guy turn their back and stab him bad which is absolutely completely against what we what martial arts stands for today but that's clearly written in the 1:16:18 so you can really ignore it but it's in the book and what Bennett is doing in his own Bushido history book is unfolding the world history and how the values of bushido by Musashi were useful and relevant in his time to stay alive and how the same set of values can be changed 1:16:46 in some ways to be relevant to our days today so I think it's an amazing book with really good references. So when you finish the book you can just pick up the references and read another one and that would've been my first recommendation if you practice Japanese martial arts I wouldn't know about Chinese or other kind of arts and maybe if you after reading this or if you have an extensive background in Japanese history you can read the bushido, it's just called bushido and it's written by Inazo Nitobe was written during the early Meiji period so more than 100 years ago and what's very interesting was that Nitobe was a scholar and educator he was raised Christian. He spent quite a while in the west he had no connection whatsoever with bushido and samurai culture. He did write his book directly in English. At the time Japan was just opening to the foreign world and his vision with bushido was formalized 1:18:15 written with the aim of present the depth of Japanese culture to the west with absolutely no regards to the truth, it's but it's not complete nonsense that's what's interesting is because it shows exactly what was the Japanese mindset of the Meiji period, exactly the same as the last samurai movie if you like the last samurai movie, you should read bushido the book of Nitobe because it explains what Japanese people thought of themselves or how they wanted to sell themselves to the west at the time an that's exactly what last samurai movie is doing its rewriting Nitobe's book, it's selling to the west what Japan wanted to sell at the time which is completely off reality but it's very interesting historically speaking because if you can understand the gap between this movie and this book and the truth at the time then you perfectly understand the gap there is in the



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Japanese society today because it's exactly the same kind of the thing you find in Japanese society today. I don't know if that's what your audience is waiting for hoping for but that's my recommendation.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, no those are great choices and they're great because I don't believe either of them has been recommended on the show before and we appreciate that of course if anyone's new to the show [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) is where you can go for all of the show notes where we have links to and mention the books and anything else that's been discussed on the show and links to past episodes that are reference such as Sensei Erard's episode and other things that we are yet to talk about. Let's talk about the future, we've spent a lot of time talking about the past and how you've gotten to where you are now but let's look forward, what are your goals? What are you obviously you're still training you still enjoy training and you enjoy training so much that you brought that passion into your professional life, what are you looking to accomplish as life moves forward?

**Jordy Delage:**

Do you trust me if I tell you I have no goal at all? I think I'm getting better everyday just working training and then meeting people. I don't know if I'm getting better I'm not the one to say it but I'm trying at least I'm trying and every good time if we have time we have a training session it's like one small set up at a time, I'm learning and I think 1:22:09 is a lifelong process that only ends with death and my only goal is to continue improving myself so I really don't have a specific goal I met a teacher I don't want more students and with my company I don't want more customers, I don't care about more money or more customers I just want to do things the best way I can and do better everyday I wake up in the morning with new ideas for the website for the company for my staff for training sometimes I have a small dojo at home and sometime I sit in the middle of the dojo not really meditating cause I never probably managed to get into the I tried but never could do it but I'm just sitting in the middle of the dojo and I think yeah I should do that that way at least I should try and see what comes out and I think that's very funny and that's happiness for me, having new ideas and being able to test or implement them be that work or on the dojo on the mats and 1:23:27 it's just enough for me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's talk about you and what you've got going on now, this is your chance to talk about your company that you've withheld the name all of this time, talk to us about that if people want to reach you find you online, this is your commercial time as we call it.

**Jordy Delage:**



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Well I'm from a scientific background and I did Japanese studies so I'm not very good at selling myself, I don't know marketing or stuff like that I think I've been very lucky to have such a successful company I hope it's just because I'm doing my job the right way but I have to admit that sometimes I think I'm just lucky. So, the company is called Seido S E I D O it's in Japanese it's a Kanji which is a Japanese letter for a star 1:24:35 and the letter for do like in karate do judo karate do so the way and it's called the way of the star for many reasons but mainly because I find that very poetic and I think some company use the character bu which is the war like in bushido or budo. I didn't want to use it because it reminds more of the martial part of martial arts and my whole life has been about the way and I want more, I want to focus on the way more than on technique and the fighting so that's why I preferred this do character for the company name. So were selling 100% made in Japan items, mainly wooden weapons, closing and a few iaidos so it's the Japanese work replica which are in aluminum alloy, it doesn't curve and will never curve I want to emphasis on that iaido's should be made of steel and it's just not possible legally in Japan, the only way to make it a steel blade is to be an approved craftsman from the Japanese government and your blade is gonna cost 5 to 10 thousand dollars so it's just not possible to create an imitation that would be made of steel and 100% of Japanese teachers and iaido students are using alloy blades. I don't say it's perfect but it's the Japanese way and the Japanese law. So, we're selling a few of those as well if you want to have a look at our YouTube channel probably Jeremy is going to put that in the website.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely.

**Jordy Delage:**

It's we have a video about 1:27:03 working with for iaido's it's about I don't know 15 minutes long maybe while we present the workshop and the craftsmen and everything. We're very proud of the video because the music and the editing is done by Guillaume Erard again him because he is a very good artist when it comes to video editing and music, the shooting the interview directing and everything I did myself and I'm very proud of the video because I think it could be aired on like national geographic and no one would realize that it's not a professional production really crazy job. That's the only one we have with that level of production but I'm very proud of it and I hope we will have more but it's it took a year to have this video live so it's a bit too much of work I'm sorry and well we we're selling 100% made in Japan equipment almost I wouldn't say 100% because there are a few things like raw materials that are coming from China like laser imitation is not produced in Japan anymore so we have to import that as well as Ebony wood for 1:28:23 because obviously Ebony is from Africa so we cannot have it in Japan but apart from the few items that are for good reasons are not 100% made in Japan all other items are really made in Japan. Well I think we're helping the community, we're releasing documentaries and interviews. We're supporting people helping them with translations, proofreading and fact checking or



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simply with money we're just sponsoring a few events and few people with research so buying from us is in a way also supporting the martial art community. I won't lie we are mainly focused on aikido equipment, iaido equipment which is our second markets I can say that this way and a bit of kendo and but we chose to not sell a few items like kendo armors because kendo armors bogu in Japanese are 99.9% made in China sometimes finished in Japan and labeled as made in Japan but they're not and it's a very complicated market. We don't know where the products and raw material comes from so we do not sell it that's as simple as that it's a very good example because if we don't know a product if we cannot master the product not 100% because we're not craftsmen we're not gonna do as good as people making them but if we could understand at least much better than any other company that would do the how the products are made, why and where they come from then we just don't sell it so if you come on a website and decide to make a purchase with us, you can be sure that we know what we are selling, we love what we're selling and we do work on some items very extensively like wooden weapons. We're the only company offering the choice between varnished or oil polished weapons you can choose which finish you want for almost all the weapons we have in the website and we do make the oil polished directly at our shop, meaning we resend the weapon with very very 1:31:16 paper and we put oil on them like for 3, 4 days that they have a touch that is amazingly smooth but it is honestly it's not for you, it's just because we like it because working with wood and then those wonderful products it's just something what we like, we love to do so yeah if you're really interested in the best of the best for your practice in aikido, iaido, kendo or koryu like 1:31:52 koryu or if you are interested in craftsmanship and you want to see what Japanese craftsmen are producing then please have a look to the website there and see what we do. If you do so make sure to click on the about us page and the craftsmen presentation page because I think that's the 2 most important pages in the website, presenting the team and our motivation and with who and also the craftsmen presentation with who what they do their pictures. We're gonna come up with the interviews of almost unfortunately almost all the wooden weapon craftsmen in Japan, there is one who did refuse the interview but 3 others did accept so the first one is planned in a week or two from now on our YouTube channel, the second one in a month and the third one a month after and yeah if you want to hear about what Japanese craftsmen in a finished world with issues with raw material sourcing and Japanese very old society so not so many young people doing the art what they think of what they're doing there are good and bad points I think you should have a look to the interviews we are currently working on because I don't know if I'm proud of the final result because it's not live yet but I'm very personally myself I'm very happy of the time I had with these craftsmen what they told us, the relationship we have. We I think Seido is a company that probably took like the second place not the first one but second place in the aikido and koryu martial art equipment and market in like 5 years when other companies have like between 25 and 100 years background and I think if we manage to do that it's also because we also managed to get a better relationship with the craftsmen in 5 years that all other companies did in 100 years. It's not only about customers it's about everything the human side of things and getting along with people, understanding what they do next time around I'm bringing one of my staff with me in the 1:34:59 of Japan, visiting this craftsman again and we've planned a week there learning how to finish and fix weapons and this one



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idea we had within the company for a few years but it was actually a proposal from the craftsmen themselves, they just say oh you're fixing weapons, you're trying to improve weapons with oil finish and everything you should spend a week here and learn technique with us and either any other company or any other martial artist would have visited us, visited them in the past to say the same thing I really think we have this amazing human relationship and then I don't wanna say I'm proud of it about it because I just feel it natural but I'm very happy about it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Speaking of someone who spends a lot of time working with manufacturers and making sure things are done properly I can hear the passion for what you do and what you're saying and I do hope that folks will check out everything you've got going on at Seido at the website and again we will link all of these things that we've talked about links to the website social media etcetera at our show notes page [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). I wanna thank you for being here I wanna thank you for being so open and sharing everything that you did, but I'm hoping I could ask you for one more thing, send us out in our signature way what parting words do you have for the folks listening today?

**Jordy Delage:**

I'm sorry just cut in the middle of your phrase, in the middle of your sentence yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay what parting words what advice would you give to the people listening?

**Jordy Delage:**

Should I give any advice, you don't get that I'm drinking I'm smoking I'm far from perfect or many teachers many very famous teachers do smoke and drink as well in Japan but as a foreigner I shouldn't. I should know better, I should develop but I'm not I'm not ashamed of that I'm just a human being so the only advise I can give is about what makes me happy, I want to quit cigarette and I want to reduce drinking so you shouldn't smoke that's the first advise and don't drink too much but that's just a human speaking advise it's not martial arts related. Now if we talk about martial arts 1:37:54 just learn as much as you can no matter how good you think you are or cultivated you think you are you can always get better. I have done a few things many people say it's amazing, oh you created an amazing company where I think I really don't see that as amazing I see that just as a natural process because I'm learning everyday I'm just trying to do things better so I think that would be the best advice. Budo is a framework, it's not a religion in a religion you have everything you need inside it, in the framework you decide what you put inside but you could put religion inside the budo framework if you want to, that's



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something possible but you can put anything else, it's just up to you. It's up to you to make the best of everything you do, of everything of all your experiences and to build inside this framework the put it whatever you want and just try to learn and do better everyday. Where you come from where you're going it doesn't really matter, what matters is what it brings to your life everyday that your practice budo what it brings to your life everyday. If you feel it gives you something, brings you something that makes your life better, makes your ethical and moral better then you have it and you should stick to it and just look for anything that can make it even better and if it doesn't then maybe you should stop and try something else because there is no point at doing something you don't like or you 1:39:57 ways or which is not improving your way of life so yeah just be sure the reasons why you're practicing try to learn as much as you can and have fun, just have fun.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Mr. Delage was nothing short of magnificent and I wanna thank him despite some troubles that we had with skype I thought the conversation came up pretty good. His journey in the martial arts is inspiring, from being challenged as a child to starting Seido all the great stuff in between, he has proved to us that martial arts is his life. Thank you Mr. Delage for coming on the show. If you wanna check out the show notes with photos links and everything else that we talked about in this episode [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). We also of course have links to Seido and the things going on in Mr. Delage's life. If you wanna follow us on social media we are @whistlekick and you can find all of our products at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). I wanna thank you for sharing your time with me today until next time train hard, smile and have a great day.