



Episode 172 – Coach Greg Amundson | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 172 and thanks for being here. Today we get here from coach Greg Amundson, a practitioner of aikido, krav maga and jujitsu as well as a crossfit athlete and coach an author. At whistlekick, we make the world's best sparring gear and here on martial arts radio, we bring you the best podcast on the traditional martial arts two times every week. Welcome, my name is Jeremy Lesniak and I'm your host as well as the founder here at whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. Thank you to the returning listeners and welcome to those of you trying us on you can find our show notes at [whistlekick martial arts radio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) and that's also the easiest place to sign up for our great newsletter, as a thank you for joining, were going to sing or top 10 tips for martial artists and exclusive podcast episode. Our newsletter keeps up-to-date on what's going on here whistlekick, upcoming show guests sometimes original content and even discounts on products. I want to remind everyone of all the sideline things we offer and why we do them. I've never been secretive about our business model which is all about growing the martial arts. It's my belief that the more people participating martial arts more customers we'll have here at whistlekick. That's why we bring you this podcast, our martial arts meme site we mentioned recently and less recently, martial arts calendar all for free. As our martial arts Rome grows, we all benefit. Thank you for supporting that vision. Our guest today has a professional resume that reads like a modern-day James bond. CrossFit athlete, law enforcement officer, DEA special agent, fitness coach, business owner, that's not even the entire list. What's more impressive is many of those things I mentioned, happened the same time and quite a few of them are still happening. A legend in



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the cross fit world coach Amundson has deep roots as a martial artist. Roots, according to him, that have given them the ability to live the life he now leads.

Coach Amundson, welcome the whistlekick martial arts radio. Jeremy, thank you brother it is great to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's great to have you here great to talk to you. I've been looking forward to this one for a long time and listeners will come to understand as we talk about different components to, you in your life and the ways that I've gotten to know of you before I got to know you a little bit and I'm just pumped to have you here so, thanks for making the time.

Greg Amundson:

Thank you it's great to be a brother been looking forward to it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. You know we kinda get started in the same way on every episode, because I think it's really important that the listeners myself included understand who you are and your relationship to the martial arts before we can talk about anything else. How did you get started as a martial artist?

Greg Amundson:

That's a great question. I look back over my childhood and my earliest childhood memories are my dad driving me to the YMCA to work out and on the way, there we had on the radio, dr. Wayne Dreyer and Deepak Chopra, my dad was so enthusiastic about self-mastery and one of the paths to self-mastery he adamantly believed in was some type of martial practice. So, in the early childhood days we would be exercising together, in a very specific way, he was very enthusiastic and adamant about the value of, what I later learned from another mentor in I life coach glassman, was functional movement so even at a young age rather than doing what a lot of my peers were doing such as bicep curl and deltoid rate, you know, the variety of exercises that are designed to get the body to look a specific way, my dad had me doing handstands and back squats and you know he was just a big believer in this compound multi-joint movements and he was a chiropractor and formal navy officer so he was also adamant about knowing how to use your body in the most productive efficient way possible. Maximizing our power output, maximizing our ability to generate power and produce power and productive and in a way, that could apply force either to an object or if we needed to, to another human being. Now that being said, my dad was also a minister so in terms of applying force to another human being, it was always through the lens of nonviolence, more an approach to control and to use force that was being applied against us in a way that would allow that force to flow through us continuing the force in another direction. So, aikido became a natural early martial art that both my dad and I learned together and I'll tell you what one of the greatest values I achieved from aikido in that time in my life with my dad was learning how to roll and tumble. Because as I pursued careers in military law enforcement, it seemed like the rolling and



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being able to break my fall was serving me on probably a monthly basis you know, that skill. So that was the early, the early childhood you know when I think back there's even a photograph I keep on my refrigerator where I'm dressed up in my dad's naval uniform and I'm holding in one hand I've got a rifle at toy rifle the other hand I've got my dad scuba knife, I've got on kneepads and in one knee pad, I have a backup knife stuck in my knee pad. You know, I was just so influenced by my dad and by the warrior archetype at that age and in the pursuit of the warrior archetype. The warriors are drawn to cultivating their skill set of which martial arts is a huge, huge importance.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah you know, it's just, as I think back, you know as I'm hearing these things that you're talking about you know and in I'm lucky compared to probably a lot of listeners and that I know little bit about who you are of course this warrior archetype you know I know that that something that resonates really strongly for you and were you hear more about that. I'm gonna ask a favor and hope maybe you be willing to share that photo with us? Because I can be the only one that wants to see that. That sounds like a pretty sweet picture.

Greg Amundson:

Absolutely, yeah. I can however you need me to get it to you. Absolutely, it's a classic photo and I keep it on my refrigerator as a reminder because there is this saying that we are who we always were and sometimes if I feel that my path is lost or if I feel a disconnect from the warrior archetype, I look at that photograph because it reminds me when I look at myself and I see myself and my childhood eyes, I remember that's who I am. There's a part of me that is a warrior and that will always walk that path and it takes different expressions but there's a part of me that really wants to protect and serve and to be a source of good in the world and I attribute that to those very early childhood days in the mentorship my dad provided.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now of course on the show we talk a lot about stories. Martial artist have great stories, you know there's a long tradition of education and lessons through stories as we go back you know, however many generations we can go back to track that stuff. And I love to hear stories, that was the reason I founded the show, I just want excuse to hear your great stories. So why dint to take a minute, tell us your best martial arts story.

Greg Amundson:

Oh man that's a great question and brother I'm the same way you are, I love story time. Let me preface my story with this; one of my mentors when I got into the drug enforcement administration, DEA, one of my mentors at DEA said to me once Greg if you tell me the truth, I will believe you if you tell me a fact I will listen, however if you share with me a story, then I will remember. Isn't that awesome?

Jeremy Lesniak:



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It's pretty poignant.

Greg Amundson:

Yeah that's the beauty of the story in the warrior culture is that, what warriors do is from generation to generation we hand down stories and that is best done through storytelling. It's a fascinating subculture within itself to look at the art of storytelling. It's such a rich tradition especially in the warrior culture. Some of the best stories I've heard were during my times in boot camp at officer candidate school at DEA academy, that's when these great stories were told because that's the perfect context for these instructors whether they be drill sergeants, tac officers, special agent instructors, that's the best time in the best context and environment to share these stories they can only be told essentially through storytelling you almost can't even write them, they gotta be told through the human voice. So, I'll share with you the story that I shared last night. I teach were your yoga at my studio in Santa Cruz on Tuesday and Thursday night and god put this story on my heart last night, so I'll share the story from last night at 6 pm, it's such a great story so, legend has it that many many years ago in a small town called Kyoto, japan, there was an old very respected samurai who had transition from the warrior samurai to the samurai sage. He was in a dire predicament because the town that he lived in was very close to being overrun by a group of bandits. He knew that in reality he would need one other samurai to help him protect the villagers who were all farmers, they were unable to protect themselves. He needed a very specific type of samurai so he devised a test the testing devised was, to have one of his servants hide behind the doorway entrance of the small hut with the sword held an overhand. The servant's direction was; anyone that walks through the doorway without hesitation, cut them down. Then he let word be known far and wide, that there would be an opportunity for samurai to join him in the protection of his village. Three samurai arrived to participate and to have the honor of protecting this village. The rules were explained and the rules were: walk into that hut. Simple as that. On the first day, a young samurai, rather than walking into the hut, this guy just charges right into the hut and no sooner than he passes the entrance, whoosh, down comes the sword and he's killed. The next day, another samurai takes the test, now this samurai had been walking the path of the warrior for a longer period of time. He's more centered, he's developed greater levels of self-awareness, greater levels of self-mastery. He's deeper in his practice. He walks up to the door and as he approaches the door, he removes his sword from his scabbard, then very tactfully, mindfully with skill he crosses the threshold of the doorway and is that lethal blow comes down he's able to deflect it and he lives but there's still one more samurai to take the test. So, the following day, one more samurai takes the test. Now this samurai is very, very centered there's a sense of peace and inner calm this that radiates from him. He has indeed not only mastered other people in the pursuit of his practice, more importantly, he's mastered himself. And so, what he does is interesting, about 10 feet away from the doorway he becomes still and he takes a deep breath and then he senses that something is amiss. His intuition is so well developed, he knows something is amiss and he yells out; you behind the doorway come out show yourself or we will both surely perish and upon seeing this the samurai sage that had devised the test he says, yes this is the samurai that will



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save our village. And legend has it that that's samurai and the sage together protected and saved the town of Kyoto, Japan. Isn't that awesome?

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a fantastic story and I really dig that.

Greg Amundson:

Where I [00:14:01.24] with the story so the theme last night, I always share a story before I begin the yoga class so that we can move into the physical practice through the lens of the story. So, the question now to contemplate for your listeners is; where are we in our practice? Which of those three samurai are we in this moment in our life? Are we that samurai that is charging full speed ahead or are we a little bit more developed in our path or are we like that true warrior that's master not only the outer realm but the inner realm? And that's really what were all desirous of, this is why the text the art of war is so fascinating because the author is trying to inspire this new generation of young warrior to realize that to win a thousand battles in battle is not the mark of a great warrior, it's to win a battle without ever having to go into battle the first place.

Jeremy Lesniak:

One of the things that I tell my non-martial arts friends, that I'm most proud of is not the fights that I've won but, those situations where it very easily could go sideways, it could turn the blows and then I find a way to diffuse it.

Greg Amundson:

Yeah, you know as a 16-year veteran of law enforcement, that was always my goal and it was inspired through these classic texts on martial arts mainly art of war and book of five rings. I was so fascinated by this idea that these great samurai were using strategy, terrain, the direction of the sun, how amazing. So, they were using their environment to benefit their martial practice and I use those same strategies in law enforcement and I was able to apprehend people on a regular basis whom were considered to be two or three deputy calls meaning that normally that person would require two or three deputies to apprehend and affect an arrest. I was able to apprehend them without even using force because I was able to use strategy and timing and leverage and trickery and deceit to woe them into handcuffs. And when people asked me how are you doing that? I said you've gotta read these books because strategy both mastering our mind and our inner world is just as important as trying to master the physical art that were all practicing which at that time for law enforcement was known as defensive tactics. And I was trying to explain that defensive tactics if you have self-doubt is not going to help you. Yet, if you're able to achieve this vibration, this energy of inner certainty, that is transferred at the level of the soul, of the spirit to another human being and people tend to just succumb without ever having to come to force.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Totally. You know, it's interesting that on the show the books that come up most often, I mean, we got a couple modern once, but book of five rings, art of war, these are not new books by any stretch of the imagination and yet they're still so relevant. People haven't changed is much think as we like to pretend. We like to think they were so involved and yeah, we have modern conveniences but, who we are as people? Not that different than we were thousand years ago.

Greg Amundson:

Oh, well said brother. Yeah, human nature is human nature, it always was and always will be. We evolve in the sense that I think we begin to gain greater and greater levels of understanding and while speaking of understanding, I spent a three-day course with a gentleman named Dan Brule, a modern-day warrior, modern-day warrior yogi. Dan Brule is a new book coming out that I highly recommend called just breathe. He's a breathing master and if you look at every were your tradition, every warrior tradition is adamant about the benefit of mastering the breath. And how do you know you mastered the breath? Well, that's still for me a question I'm trying to answer daily however I'll tell you how I know that Dan's mastered the breath because whenever I'm within a few feet of Dan, here's what I do, I go like this... I picked the deepest breath of my life. You know that guy has that resounding effect. The only other person that's able to have that effect on my breath is mark divine, another student of Dan Brule who teaches breath work. So, Dan said something fascinating to me on Saturday at this breath mastery course it was in Ojai, California and what he said I'm still trying to unravel, it was that deep and profound. I was talking to Dan about how I'm trying to understand the challenges that I've had in my life and I'm trying to understand the karma that I'm experiencing and what Dan said was Greg you know what? Understanding is overrated because, even in a moment of understanding something were only understanding it from our current level of understanding which is limited. Isn't that amazing? So my understanding of something today, in a year from now I will gain greater understanding and a year from that I will gain greater understanding and in that conversation I said Dan, you just help bring a bible verse alive to me with new meaning, because the bible says "lean not on your own understanding, but trust in every word of god" and so I've been spending more time lean on my own understanding in trying to understand the nature of cause and effect, that's well beyond me but the good news is as a Christian, I don't need to worry about trying to understand things because I can turn to the word of god and faith in god and that very quickly alleviates me of trying to control the world, which no matter you know, how many years I do crossfit or how many years I practice martial arts, it's just not gonna happen.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right. Between the stories that you been telling you know really the answer that, my first two questions, we got a really good context that people can tell by now you're pretty positive person, you're an upbeat person, you're striving for personal growth and in any way, you can achieve them. You almost seem hungry for it. Let's talk about some of the things we haven't. What else outside of martial arts, personal growth, what gets you going? What are your hobbies, your interests?

Greg Amundson:



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That's a great question brother because everything that I do, all my passions are... All my passions allow me to know god on a deeper level. So, knowing god, that intimacy, that passion I have to know god in my life, that's the catalyst for everything that I do. I sincerely believe that at birth were all given a specific mission in life. Each one of us has talents and skills and abilities and these talent, skills and abilities are not for our benefit, they're for the benefit of those people whom we serve and the greater we get to know god in our life the greater were able to allow these passions and skills and abilities to come to fruition and when we co-create with god, the gift that god's bestowed upon us, were ultimately able to share which creates a reciprocal flow. So, as I give, as I create, as I love, as I share that love, that sharing, that gifting returns to me in the beautiful continual flow of energy. So that being said what do I love and enjoy to do well? There is there's never a shortage, I mean, I know at the end of the day sometimes I wish I had more hours and in the morning, I, you know, I jump out of bed eager to continue on the path, because there's so much to do. But there's a difference between having so much to do and being busy. Being busy means were at the mercy of other people and being busy means that were reactive and being reactive is not the path of the warrior, being reactive if we go back to the first story, the first samurai that ran into the house was reactive and he was cut down. The very last samurai, he had an abundance of time, he had so much time that he could stand still. And in that standing still he was able to create the perfect resolution and outcome to that moment. He didn't have to do anything, he just stood still and took a breath and in that breath, he created the perfect outcome. And so, what I found is that sometimes, I'm able to achieve more by doing less yet what I'm achieving, what I'm creating, when I'm cultivating in the world, sometimes I'll even step back and pause and I scratch my head because I don't know how it happened other than by the grace of god. You know last year I published two books, I have no recollection of even writing them. I vaguely remember sitting down for long periods of time but other than that the grace of god just flowed through me, but I created that space because I've come to learn that god's desirous of moving through all of us. Yet in order to allow that flow of life force to come through, we've got a trust and be able to become still.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Well said. I'd like to tell us about a point in your life where things weren't going so well. I mean you're a pretty upbeat guy, you're positive guy, and I've got a feeling that you've been blessed for a long time with a lot of good things that have happened, but no one has that perpetually, we all go through rocky points. Think about one of those, tell us about it and tell us how your martial arts training help you through it.

Greg Amundson:

Yeah, solid question. Let me preface that question with a story.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You know I'm never gonna turned down a story.

Greg Amundson:

This is such a great story because, we'll let me show the story then I'll explain why I passion about the story and why I think it's important to answer the question you've asked me through the lens of the warrior archetype. So, one of the most famous battles to ever take place took place at the gates of Thermopylae. 300 Spartan warriors were preparing to defend everything they knew. Their culture, their family, their tradition, they were prepared to defend to the death against overwhelming odds of Persian army of millions. The night before the battle, a scout went out to conduct a reconnaissance of the enemy force in the next morning the scout comes back at a dead sprint. He approaches the king and says king Leonidas, we must retreat we are so outnumbered the enemy force so outnumbers us that the archer element alone, just the archers not the cavalry, not the infantry, just the archers when they lose their arrows, their arrows will block out the sun. To this, king Leonidas says the following; good then we will fight our battle in the shade. Wow. Isn't that amazing? Think about the discipline the king had in that moment. In that moment when the average person would be so fearful so overcome by the gravity of the situation, the arrows will block out the sun? Oh, my goodness quickly let's retreat. Yet this king was so disciplined, they've mastered themselves, they mastered their self-talk, they literally mastered they're thinking. And as a result of mastering their thinking, they were able to also master their speaking and therefore the king spoke with positive expectancy and he said good, then will fight our battle in the shade. So, he was able to see an opportunity for success, even in the midst of overwhelming defeat and that is the goal of the modern-day warrior. The modern-day warrior as we advance in our practice, is able to see that little sliver of opportunity in everything no matter how overwhelming the odds. No matter how challenging the set of circumstances before us, we've disciplined arm trying to see the most minute opportunity for success, for victory and then we focus on that small detail, we put all our force on that small detail and were able to overcome even the greatest of challenges or opponents. This is essentially what happened at the battle between two people, David and goliath. How easy would it have been to be overcome by the gravity of the situation? This small farmer, this small boy, this shepherd is going to fight the most fearful warrior of all time, goliath, a giant. He was even offered armor and he said no, he trusted in himself in the smallest detail of his craft the sling and a small rock. And he was very accurate in the placement of that rock and it brought down goliath. That's a perfect example, that's what king Leonidas did. So, I use this story and I always hold the story in my heart because just like any other person, Jeremy, that you and I stopped on the street and said what are some of the challenges you faced? Every one of us can default our mind has a default to those challenges and as we default to the challenge, we have a golden opportunity to see a challenge in our life through the lens of defeat or the lens of victory. And this is again why turn to the bible in this moment because in the bible it says; "my god supplies all I need according to his riches in the glory of Christ Jesus." he doesn't say my god supplies all I need so that I would be defeated and fall to my knees and discouragement, its saying that everything that we experience in our life although, in the moment like Dan Brule says, were trying to understand it, well rather than trying to understand it let's see as an opportunity. Iron can sharpen iron



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and these circumstances that the average person might think are out to get us, if we view them as an opportunity to temper and strengthen and sharpen our blade well then, we can propel ourselves in the higher and higher levels of self-mastery and growth. It's simply an opportunity to shift our awareness and our perspective of the world.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I dig it.

Greg Amundson:

So, another way like, because that that that might leave a listener scratching their heads so here here's the real-life application of that my life. In 2011 if I recall, 2011 I was I was hit by a series of challenges that all cascaded through my life in just a matter of months, we say that some of the biggest challenges that someone can go through, in particular a man because it threatens our mail ego and identity, our change of career, loss of a family member, moving, dealing with attorneys and divorce. I would add to that loss of a pet. I experience those six challenges within two months of each other and in that moment, I vividly recall myself talk and I vividly recall realizing this is a moment to utilize the practice. This is the whole point of having a martial practice for these very moments. So, I use those challenges in my life to benefit others and rather than dwelling on the mistakes that I made, I wrote a book on those mistakes but more importantly than identifying the mistakes, identified what I could do differently in the future. And that book it's called your wife is not your sister and 15 other love lessons I learned the hard way. That book has sold thousands and thousands of copies and it's therefore saved thousands and thousands of marriages and intimate relationships from collapse. That book is required reading in several law enforcement academies because in the law enforcement environment, sadly, divorce is at a disproportionately high rate and this book has helped that specific culture in addition to the military environment. So, there I was at a crossroads in my life, I use the martial practice to strengthen myself as the martial artist strengthens our self, we concurrently strengthen all those who are committed to walking the path of the warrior with us and that's exactly what the book is done. And what's so amazing is that, that ability to use the challenge in our life, if we look at some of the great leaders and teachers in our current warrior culture, they've done the same thing. And it's a real gift to give the world because as one person is able to learn from a challenge and a setback in their life, they help another warrior on the path of void that same pitfall. So, talk about transcending our karma, that's the ultimate way to do it is to help a future warrior to help a future generation.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The thing I'm struck by and I think a lot of people listening may gloss over this this detail. You know, you rattled off a list of some pretty rough stuff. You told us that you experienced all six of these things in a two-month time but there was no negativity in your voice, there was no self-deprecating words but what you talked about what came out of it was something that you're very proud of. That you took that challenge, you met it, you grew from it, and you found a way to help others out of it. And that's



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something that I think a lot of us strive to do whether or not we realize it consciously, I think is a great example for people to look at and say hey you know here's coach Amundson sharing this knowledge taking what he experienced and flipping it around and hopefully someone else doesn't have to endure the same pain. Cause I'm sure that two-month period of time was incredibly painful, you're probably, you're not digging into that but I can imagine that your cheerful demeanor may have been diminished a bit during those days.

Greg Amundson:

It was fuel for the fire within. I used it as an opportunity to deepen my practice, to really commit to the practice and as you were speaking something struck me, you know in my travels I do I travel all around the country teaching the principles of crossfit and goal setting and leadership to law enforcement, one of the most common mantras in the law enforcement community is protect and serve. So, if you see law enforcement patrol vehicles, most departments have a motto or mantra painted or decal on their patrol vehicles and the majority of departments have protected and serve. And so, if someone is desirous of developing the warrior archetype what better mantra to adhere to than protect and serve. And so each and every one of us has that desire within our heart, once we even scratch the surface of the warrior archetype, were compelled to protect and serve others and those opportunities that the martial artist dreams of, being able to defuse a hostage situation you know that's what we dream of. Well, those opportunities are few and far between but we all have an opportunity to protect others from the heartbreak and from the setback and from the challenges that we've experienced in our life. That's a more realistic use of the warrior path is to witness the mistakes of the challenges that we've had and then help others through the lessons of our life and so that they can avoid, we can protect them, we can help serve them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Undoubtedly and I think it's a great lesson and I think it's something that I know I'm working on in my life and it's something I hope that the listeners will continue to work on because I know most of you out there doing so whether you realize it or not. Let's talk about competition. It's something that hasn't come up as we talked about you and your path but you know you're a crossfit or and I know cross fitters almost unilaterally come from a stock of competitive folks. Let's talk about your competitive mindset and how that surfaces in martial arts for you.

Greg Amundson:

Competition is such an interesting idea. It's an idea, you know we have this idea that we are drawn to competition. It's an idea it's a paradigm and if were competing the likely you send context is that while were competing against another person. And what I've learned through crossfit and through martial arts is that, that is exactly what the author sun tzu in art of war was warning people against. It's not about competing against other people, if were desirous of competing against others and basing our self-worth against other people, that is the warning in the book. Power is not displayed through overcoming other people. Power is displayed by overcoming ourselves, so of course let's transition into a story because



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there's an amazing story that I heard years ago and it's helped to mitigate the temptation of the ego in me which is in everyone to compete against others. And this is a story about alexander the great he was leading his army through India and suddenly this massive army that had literally overcome the world came to a dead halt because the lead platoon element had come across three yogis who are seated on the path in meditation blocking the continuation of the formation. A young lieutenant comes up and demands that these yogis clear the roadway and they don't budge they continue to sit in meditation well along comes a captain and says to the lieutenant the tenant what seems to be the problem? There's three yogis seated move them out of the way. Well along comes a major and says Capt., lieut., what's the holdup? It's just these three yogis and then finally along comes the great king and the king looks at these three yogis and now there's some pressure on the lieutenant on the captain and on the major and the lieutenant yells at the yogis and says look, do you know who this is this is alexander the great. He has overcome the world, who are you to stand in his way? And with this the elder of the yogis looks up and says I do not need to overcome the world because I have overcome myself. And with this king alexander turns to his leadership and then the entire army and he says if I could be anyone other than the man that I am I would be this yogi. Isn't that awesome?

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's fantastic.

Greg Amundson:

The yogi had overcome himself and as we turn the attention inward this is the practice that's known in ashtanga yoga warrior yoga as pratyahara or turning the attention inward, where the normal lure of the senses is drawn out into the world. So, we project our self-worth on the material objects or onto the identification of the ego on status and normally competition is derived from a desire for status and that's all an illusion of the ego and here's the challenge the real insight for the warrior for the martial artist and if there's ever a culture that could understand this lesson, it is the martial artist. Because what we need to be wary of is trying to control our circumstances, trying to control the external environment, or trying to control an opponent. What we need to do is develop control of ourselves. That's really the path we've always tried to self-master, trying to master ourselves. So, the desire for competition if we view competition through the practice of pratyahara, who are we really competing against in any given moment? Ourselves. So as long as we're competing against ourselves, as long as we're practicing what they referred to in the samurai tradition is reason kaizen, kaizen, meaning trying to be a little bit better than our self of yesterday. If that's were directing the energy of competition well, fantastic. But if we're constantly trying to compete against other people, that's ultimately a path that leads to suffering, no good can come from that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Agree. If you could train with any martial artist from any point in time, who would that be?



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Greg Amundson:

Oh man. Your questions are awesome brother.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thanks.

Greg Amundson:

You know, I gotta say... You know this is such a lofty way to answer the question but, how incredible would it have been to have been an apostle of Jesus Christ. You know, imagine being there with a fishing net in your hand and along comes Christ and says follow me and just to have the courage to drop everything and follow. Now, answering the question that way means that I view Jesus Christ as one who walk the path of the warrior and I do. With all my heart, I think that Christ lead the path of epitome of the warrior. What better expression of all were desirous of achieving talk about self-mastery, oh gosh. What an example to follow and that being said in in my life at this very moment, I'm blessed with an incredible mentor one of the greatest martial artist I think living today is mark divine and I'm blessed and that I see and correspond with mark on a regular basis. He's been a dear mentor of mine on the warrior path since we met in boulder Colorado at law enforcement crossfit seminar years and years ago. So, part of me wishes I could go back in time and be an apostle of Christ and part of me is very grateful to be right here, right now with the great mentorship that mark has provided me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And Mr. Divine is certainly somebody that I want on the show and maybe I can poke you for an introduction cause I have reached out.

Greg Amundson:

And as such in awesome

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, he's a pretty cool guy he's done a lot. So, all right. You've named some books talk about the art of war, we talked about book of five rings, you mention one of the books that you've written. But I know you've written more than one so just really quick, and we're gonna do our commercial time a little bit later on but was just kinda close the book loop and then we're gonna talk about movies and actors. So, what are the other books that you've written?

Greg Amundson:

I've written 2 from 2016, one of them is called god in me. Daily devotionals for a heart like Christ. That book was wow, what an experience to write that book because my relationship with god became so profoundly deep. You know the way that book was written was communion with god I would pray, I would meditate and then I would just open my mind and my heart to the presence of god and as quick as my fingers could move I would pour onto the pages, his word, his message that was an incredible



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book to write. And then the other book from last year, this actually came out January 5, 2017 but it was written during 2016, is the culmination of 16 years of walking the warrior path. In many respects, I started writing that book in December 2001. December 2001, within a week of each other I found and started my practice in crossfit and I found and started a practice that continues to this day in krav maga. And this book is a culmination of the great lessons, and the great mentors, the great leaders, the great experiences that I've had. And the book is called fire breather fitness and it's broken down into three categories; mind, body and spirit. And what's so amazing when I reflect on the book is that each one of those parts of the book could essentially stand on its own and more often than not we compartmentalize our training so if a student is lucky, they find a mentor to help them develop their spirituality, their body and their mind. Yet unless those three instructors are talking then the training is compartmentalized and the real power in the practice is our ability to integrate the mind, the body, and the spirit together and I was blessed with mentors that had developed that variability and I shared what they taught me in the book. So, fire breather fitness wow, I love this book because the book highlights some of these great teachers who god was so graceful and merciful with in my life to allow me to learn from.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure. And we're gonna have links to the books of course in the show notes [whistlekick martial arts radio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) to anybody that might be new. Let's talk about movies. We've talk about books, we talked a lot about your views on the warrior archetype, I've got a feeling you might have some interesting answers to these questions, tells about your favorite movies. Martial movies and martial arts actors.

Greg Amundson:

Great question. I was always fascinated, I just loved the James bond movies. James bond was he was a character in my life that I was, I was drawn to. You know I even when I started the application process for the DEA, you know of a part of me was like ooh, this is my chance to really be like James bond, the secret agent and what was so awesome about James bond is he, he was that fine line like his character was that character that was walking between the world of reality and fiction. Even the fight scenes were like wow, that's realistic I could I could do that. You know, crouching tiger hidden dragon for example I love it fantastic movie, you know that's like all we all dream of mastering our ability to fly and soar through the air but okay you know maybe not yet. But a movie like James bond we see those fight scenes and were like yeah, I can develop that skill and ability so you know, I think I think the James bond movie maybe, maybe it's not the true martial arts movie but there was something about that character that I was just so drawn to even to this day. So, drawn to bond.

Jeremy Lesniak:

My guess you know if I buy me psychoanalyze you for a brief moment, you really seem drawn to the service above self-lifestyle. Martial arts, law enforcement, higher elements of law enforcement, faith, James bond. It seems like a continuation of that from my perspective because what we know, I'm



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assuming everybody out there is seen at least one James bond movie, he's willing to die at any moment for the cause. And there's something really powerful in that surrender towards whatever the mission is. That's my guess.

Greg Amundson:

Absolutely, absolutely. You know, wow. Speaking of willing to die in a moment for the cause, there's this great story of a judo practitioner. He's being interviewed because he's on this victory streak, he's undefeated no one can defeat him and he's being interviewed and the interviewer asks if there's any rituals that he's developed in his life and he briefly explains well before every match I make a point to take a bath and so that if I die in the match, my body would be well scented. And then he goes on to answer several other questions and I remember reading that interview and I glance over that statement then I come back to it I'm like wait a minute, this guy takes a bath because in the event he should die in a judo competition, his body would be well scented. Now, I'm not sure of anyone's ever died in a judo competition, but this guy was ready to die. He was ready to lay it down, no wonder he was undefeated his opponents were not nearly as committed and I always remembered that and you know when I when I work out to this day I'll preface this statement because it's hard to understand if we take it out of context but a few days before I found crossfit, I nearly lost my life on the street as a deputy sheriff. To have a fight for your life is something that changes you especially in the context of law enforcement because I'd heard stories in the police academy of law enforcement officers that had died and after being killed the suspect took their firearm and then killed other law enforcement officers with their firearm. And as I was fighting for my life that day, that thought occurred to me that if I die this guy's gonna take my gun and he's going to kill the next deputy that arrives on scene. And that scared me more than losing my own life the fact that harm could come to another deputy. Man, that kinda chokes me up man and after that happened, yeah it kind of brings me to tears, after that happened I started, I was I was a man on a mission, Jeremy, because I knew that there was something I needed to do differently in my training and so that that wouldn't happen to me again and thank god that I met coach glassman because in my first workout, I felt like I was going to die. I knew I wasn't but that moment, as I was racing against a gentleman named mike weaver, I felt that if I rode even one neater faster, if I did one more kettle bell swing at a faster tempo, I might die. And my mindset that day in my first workout, was I've got to win, I've got to do my very best because if this is the last workout before the fight for my life, then the default memory I need to have is that I give it my best because if I only go 80% in this workout, then on the street all have preprogram myself to go 80% which is going to result in loss of life. So, every workout since December 2001 to this day, my mindset is that I've got to train like my life depends on it because it does. And that's the message when I teach the law enforcement officers is that every time you work out you've got to push yourself to the limit and beyond because your life depends on it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think regardless of why we train, I think that's a pretty important lesson, an important perspective the people can have. Very few of us are ever going to be in a life-and-death situation and that's were lucky



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for that and were lucky for that because of law enforcement officers like, like you people that are willing to step up and put their lives on the line, so that we can live in a mostly safe society and I certainly appreciate that, but it allows us as martial artist to give a different perspective to our training. Just because it's personal development, just because most of us will never be in a life-and-death situation doesn't mean that trying to put yourself in that, I don't want to say that physical situation, I'm not proposing that you go out to a bar find a really large drunk guy and pick a fight with them but what I am saying is that, that experience, that physiological response can be cultivated whether it's in crossfit or you know 10 minutes of intense sparring or you know any other number of things most of us have at least dabbled in it and I think that there's something really valuable in the lessons you learn about yourself in those moments.

Greg Amundson:

Yeah. You know the founder of traditional Okinawan karate [01:01:26.10] he had these great quotes that I think for the modern-day martial artist, a modern-day warrior are so important to hold in our heart and one of his, is it just it's brilliant and in what he said he said that when I leave my house, I face 1000 opponents. Isn't that awesome? And he said that when he practices kata, he always holds life and death in mind. His opponent is always on his mind and so the difference between someone who dabbles in martial arts and dabbles in crossfit and dabbles in yoga and dabbles in meditation and self-mastery and someone committed to the warrior path is that once we make that commitment, the quality of our intention that we bring to our practice is different because the quality that were bringing is life and death. We take our training deadly serious because were committed to life, were committed to life. So, we take our training deadly serious because we love our life we love our fellow humans that we are sharing this life with. We're committed to protecting and serving the ones whom we love in our life and that love that we have for ourselves and other people compels us to take our training deadly serious.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. Powerful stuff. We heard a lot of intense stories from you today, a lot of amazing insights and we have episodes once in a while that really make me think and listeners might be able to tell, I'm a little less prone to jumping in during our conversation that I am for some of the interviews because you've got me thinking. I mean, my heads reeling a little bit at some of these insights that you're sharing into your life and just the way you perceive the world so I appreciate that, I thank you for coming on and being so candid. The honor was mine without a doubt but let's switch gears for second I promise you some commercial time. We heard a bit about your books I got a feeling that there are quite a few listeners out there that are listening to this interview saying, I want more. I want more of a view of coach Amundson so talk to us about the books, talk to us about the other things that you've got going on, tell us how people can reach out to follow you on social media and all that good stuff.

Greg Amundson:

Awesome thanks Jeremy. I think well, they've already heard about the books. That's a great way especially god in me and probably the fitness, god in me is meant to be read one page a day and each



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reading corresponds with that day. That book has really lead people to a deeper understanding of god's word, of modern understanding because what I do in the book is I weave the word of god through storytelling. The warrior archetype is weaved into the traditional messages that we learn in the bible. Fire breather fitness wow, that's an opportunity to learn and of book from some of the greatest mentors and teachers alive today. My social media would be gregoryamundson.com that's my website. My crossfit website is crossfitamundson.com and then the book fire breather fitness also has a website firebreatherfitness.org and what I'm really pumped about is I'm going to be starting a show called the Greg Amundson show. It's set to air in April and that will be a dual show. Some of the episodes will air on YouTube for viewers that want a more interactive experience yet every show that airs on YouTube the audio, will be on a podcast and the whole first season will be dedicated to understanding the power of our mind and I'm really excited because the power of the mind is one of those subjects that has always fascinated me and some of the mentors in my life that normally we think are teaching physical adaptation such as coach glassman the founder of crossfit, really what he taught me was that mental adaptation to a physical training program. So, the whole first season is going to be dedicated to really cultivating the mindset of a warrior, really harnessing the power of our mind.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That sounds like a great stuff and of course once it is live please let us know, we'll update the show notes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com so people if you're listening, if you're listening later, you know after this sometime in April 2017, mark that shows probably can be live so if the website we'll get all the links for it check out yourself.

Greg Amundson:

Awesome, thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're welcome. Let's go out we go out the same way this is become in the same way for every guest, but that doesn't mean it's the same. It's always a little bit different and I got a feeling this is gonna be some good stuff so, what advice would you give to the people listening right now?

Greg Amundson:

Great question. Parting advice, let me share the advice that my parents gave me. My mom and dad have both passed away and my mom and dad were in their own respect, in their own right, they were warriors. They were committed to serving others and the parting advice they gave me was life-changing. You know, if we can change the direction of our life by 1 degree, even the 1 degree change in the direction of the trajectory of our life over time can have the most resounding impact. Take for example an airplane, that departs from john f. Kennedy in New York the plane is bound for san Diego. Yet there 1 degree off their flight plan. That plane lands in san Francisco. San Diego and san Francisco are eight hours away from each other. So, over time, over time, the 1° change that we think is insignificant on any



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given day will over time that compounds. And a 1 degree change over time were not the same person. And here's that 1 degree change that first my dad offered me and then my mom so, in 2001, my dad was nearing the end of his life he was battling terminal cancer and my mom called me, I was in Santa Cruz at the time and my dad was at the hospital in Stockton damron hospital. My mom called me and said you gotta come up here soon as you can your dad probably isn't going to make it through the night. So, I dropped everything I was doing and I drove from Santa Cruz to Stockton went right to the hospital up to the third floor when I got there, my mom left the room so that I could have some time with my dad and at this time in my life I was starting on the path of law enforcement. I was a new officer a recruit officer for Scotts valley police department, that's right started my law enforcement career and like many young law enforcement officers pride was a motivating factor in my life a lot of things that I did were for pride and I really wanted my dad to be proud of me and so his eyes were closed he was there on the hospital bed and I leaned over him and I kinda whispered in his ear, dad I am going to make you proud of me and a smile crept up on his face, he opened his eyes looked at me and through very strained voice he said Greg whatever you do, do it for love and that was the last, you know those were the last words that my dad spoke to me whatever you do, do it for love. And that was the 1 degree change in my life. That day, I recommitted to doing everything for love, not pride. Pride is a factor of the ego where love is a factor of the heart and when we do things for love, the power that were able to channel through our life through our work, through our ministry, through our practice is the very love of god, it's incredible. And then my mom. My mom, once my brothers and I were all out of the house we all started our careers and my mom went back for her second tour into the peace corps, yet she wanted to serve in one of the most oh gosh, she was in a place called umarras Jordan. It was a very harsh environment and why mom spoke to me about where she wanted to serve, I'm like, mom, you know of course I understand your desire to serve in the peace corps to go back on another tour, but you sure you want to go there? She said that's where I feel called Greg and so I said okay and you know it's funny is I happen to have a contact, a diplomatic security agent, at the embassy in Jordan was a friend of mine and we spoke and I said look bro, my mom's coming out, she's going to be in this remote part of Jordan, can you just kinda keep an eye on her and he said absolutely, you know, she'll be good to go brother. But you know she lived in a in a hut, and all of her possessions for the that about 18 months that she was there, they fit in a backpack. You know, it's like wow mom your warrior and she was ministering in teaching a self-worth and self-love to this this small village and these female, these young females that lived there. She was trying to inspire them and she had a massive stroke while she was there. There was an undiagnosed brain tumor, massive stroke she was medevac out and a military plane brought her back to Davis, the UC Davis medical center and I was actually on a training deployment with the army at the time and I received word and dropped everything and drove across the country to be with her and when I got to her she had been in and out of consciousness and when I was at her bedside, she came to, she came to consciousness. Yet it was, it was apparent that part of her was here and part of her was likely already with god, you know with my dad. And here's what she said, she said Greg, everyone can support someone and be supported at the same time and she explained that we can all be a source of encouragement for someone else and essentially what she said you know, through her understanding of



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the path of the warrior essentially what she said is that, we can all in some degree protect and serve. Everyone can encourage somebody and be supported at the same time, everyone can protect somebody, everyone can serve somebody and that that was a 1 degree change also. You know, that moment is just crystallized in my mind and so you know rather than trying to give my advice to the listener which would, which is my advice in this moment through my own understanding which you know Dan Brule has inspired me to realize is, is limited and always will be. I can pass on the advice of my parents you know, people that were so close to god and that had walked the path of the warrior so, so many years and whose devices had resounding positive impact on my life and if their advice and their counsel which has been of service to me can be of service to you Jeremy into the listeners on your show then I'll feel that the legacy my parents have left me is continued on and on and on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What an amazing storyteller coach Amundson took to our format and just ran with it. I really enjoyed the way he woved together tales from his childhood, recent past and even some of the legendary tales from fiction. I feel privileged to speak with someone I've admired for honestly a long time. Thank you, coach Amundson, for coming on the show. Over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com you can find the show notes that awesome photo he mentioned from his childhood as well as plenty of links and some other good stuff. You can follow us on social media Facebook twitter Pinterest u2 and Instagram our username is whistlekick. You should also check out her Facebook group whistlekick martial arts radio behind the scenes. If you like to show you know you should be subscribing hopefully are all doing that and if you want to help us out beyond that we appreciate it but course is not a requirement what is ask and sometimes it maybe you give some back. Best way sure to show some friends, you could also leave us reviews, join the newsletter list, join that Facebook group, like us on Facebook or make purchase. I appreciate you taking some time every day and spending it here with me. Until next episode train hard, smile and have a great day.