



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



#### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello everybody, thanks for tuning in. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 246. And today we're joined by Sensei Nick Nicholson. If you're new, to the show I want to thank you for tuning in, my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel and you can check out everything we make. All the other websites that we produce, everything from [martialartscalendar.com](http://martialartscalendar.com) to [martialartsmemes.com](http://martialartsmemes.com) and the best place to start to find all the things we do is [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). You can find the show notes for this or any of the other episodes at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) no hyphens or any funny ways to spell everything we just do it straight up nice and easy, we want to make things simple for you. There's at least one thing going on that simple in your life, right? It's the show, hopefully for some other simplicity, some other elegance beyond your martial arts to look at and say hey things don't have to be overly complicated do they. Hey maybe that's a subject we need to tack on a Thursday show, complication and complexity in martial arts. But that's not what we're here to talk about today, we are here for Sensei Nick Nicholson. Now our guest is a former marine and he is the founder of the Family Kenpo Academy. He was a tough kid growing up and it took a while before he started his formal training in the martial arts. His story, as with every story we bring you, is interesting, inspiring and it showcases how martial arts changed his life allowing him to become the person he is today. So, without further ado let's welcome them to the show. Sensei Nicholson, welcome to the whistlekick martial arts radio.



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Nick Nicholson:**

Ah, well, thank you for having me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, I appreciate you being here. I'm looking forward to this, you are part of this kind of kempo wave we have coming in on the heels of Mr. Scott Bolon, who listeners may remember is already been on the show and is introduced us to a number of folks including you and there's more on the way. But of course, were not just gonna talk about kempo, were not gonna talk about things that are so limited, were and how martial arts aren't we, because...

**Nick Nicholson:**

Absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's kind of all the same when you really get down to it,

**Nick Nicholson:**

Sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Were all doing the same weird silly stuff wearing angry white pajamas to borrow the title of that book.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yes, absolutely yeah, it's gonna be good. Scott's a great guy and there's a lot of great, great martial artists that I've had the pleasure of meeting and entering. So, I look forward to the future with them also.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool. And if we were to go all the way back to your first days as a martial artist, you know, give us a little bit of context your origin story if you will, how did you get started? [00:03:03.00]



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Nick Nicholson:**

Okay. Well, if you consider like in my backyard doing flying sidekicks who with the Saturday morning kung fu series, so that would be it. But my official start was when I was in the marine corps and I was 20 years old I was in California at the time, I was beside camp Pendleton and I was, I believe I was going to the grocery store or something like that I was looking for something I saw a sign that said sag nam taekwondo college. I'm like taekwondo college what the heck is that? So, I walked in and spoke with sagnam, he was the Korean Olympic trainer and very very cool guy, both of his sons were there and I was like man those guys are amazing. But that's when I started my martial arts career. I got the blue belt and then I got transferred to, I was actually in iwakuni, japan and I was looking all over for a dojo, I just was in the wrong spot, I couldn't find it and of course you know, I couldn't read kanji and everybody I would talk to they say oh no, no, no so but yeah so that's how I got started.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So obviously your kind of alluded to it that there was some interest very early on,

**Nick Nicholson:**

Oh yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But there was quite, I'm getting guests you know, a solid 8-10-12 years in between flying side kicks in the backyard and your start at taekwondo?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I guess the question is why? You we don't have a lot of folks on the show who have that initial interest and wait so long. I'm curious if there's a reason?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well, I believe it was my parents I would believe. I was not the best of children and I would get into a lot of fights and I believe that that's why they didn't want me to get into that because they saw the side of it



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

that was that kicking and punching things like that but they didn't see the discipline side. I think that would help but that's that's probably the reason, I can't I can't speak for them but I'm sure that's what, I'm sure that's what they would say.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So here you are, you find taekwondo and you make it to blue belt, was it what you expected?

**Nick Nicholson:**

I gotta say it was and it wasn't especially what I know now but at the time it was something totally brand-new to me you know, everybody that walks in somewhere you know there are very hesitant to actually you know, get immersed in it and I was no different. I think it was after I did a tournament at the California state tournament and I took second place in kata and they wanted me to go to the international but I couldn't because of the marine corps so that ended that one. But it was more than what I expected on the other hand with the training and things like that. So yeah, it was a very good experience and I truly enjoyed my time that I had their.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When you say it was more than what you expected in terms of training, what do you mean?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well, they had people from other disciplines that would come and they started there. Even though that person was a you know they shodan in karate, they would come and they would start as like a white belt and taekwondo and so it was, you had me starting out as a white belt that never had any formal martial arts training, you know, I had marine corps, the marine combat training but that was before the marine corps adopted the marine corps martial arts program. So, the training was limited to what we were doing in the marine corps, so that was my first official martial arts training at the taekwondo and it was an experience to have to try to keep up or spar with the guys that were already seasoned. And but it was a very great learning, I'm a big proponent of positive and negative feedback that's why I like being the cookie a lot of times because I want to make sure that it works you know, I want to make sure what you're teaching me works and everything that they have done on me works, I could tell you.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome. Now if we take a step back you know, we just spend some time digging into kind of the early piece, we had a little focus but if we were to take a couple of big steps back, and I was asking you to



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

reflect on your time in the martial arts and I said what's your favorite story? What your favorite story be?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Oh well I get I can tell you this. So, I I've trained for seven years at the self-defense studio on Crestwood, they actually were the ones who showed me from white belt to my showdown through them, kempo, Tracy's kempo and we have recently, we have another instructor now so I was at Roger Green's warrior weekend, two years ago and there is a gentleman that now, all of these people that I'm talking about, I highly respect them. They have they have given me a lot of things to use when I teach and things like that, and by that, I mean it could be negative of what not to do and what to do. There is a Jimmy Stewart is one of Roger Greene's black belts and I was doing some working out and things like that at the warrior weekend hands-on and things like that and Jimmy Stewart turns to Ted and says, who is that guy and Ted says well that's Nick he's from Chicago and Jeremy said and he's got a really good kempo. Now I didn't hear this, so I'm sorry, Ted Sumner from the San Jose kempo. Ted Sumner and Henry Childers, I believe you might be having an interview with him I'm not sure,

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I can neither confirm nor deny.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yes, yes. Henry came up to me later on and said hey you know, Henry was standing by Ted in and Stuart, so Henry came up to me later on and said hey you know Jimmy said this about you, I'm like, wow. Because Jimmy is an older man, older martial artist and I really respect him for this, the guy is amazingly fast. I saw him working out one time and I was like holy crap, I cannot believe a guy and nothing against you know being older because I'm not a spring chicken myself but it amazed me how fast he was moving and the power he was generating at such a short distance so for him to say that I have really good kempo, I was floored. He later came up to me and he said hey you know you have really good tempo, you need to thank your instructors and I said I absolutely will. So that's my kempo story that's that something that I hold very near to me because it not only reflects me, but it reflects my instructors and reflects other people that have contributed because I can't just say it was my instructors, I get a lot of extra training from Ted Sumner and Henry Childers and all the seminars that I go to. You know, I try to take something from everybody and it, so far, it's worked out to my benefit.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

And that's my attitude when I go to seminars you know and just try to, try to empty your cup you know we have like that great cliché right in the martial arts and I see so often folks will come in and they seem to go to seminars for the opposite reason you know that they're trying to prove what they know and I'm thinking you know, that's just an expensive way to have your ego dashed.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yeah all I know, one of the things that speaking of ego nobody in the martial arts has an ego.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No, not at all.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Me being no different. So, I also, right now I've always been fascinated with the katana and you know the sword in general. So, one of the things that I think helps with ego is starting another martial art and starting at white belt. So right now, I take the ido at shinjinkai in Chicago. It is very humbling you know, you reach a certain point in your martial arts career where your like, yes you know I can teach this, I can do this, I'm able to help people but to be put in that position of needing that help more from somebody else, it is an incredible placement of one's ego and I honestly think that's needed because we do have a lot of ego.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We do, do you think that makes you better teacher to be able to step back and put on without a white belt again?

**Nick Nicholson:**

I think so. I think it really does. It put you back in that mindset of being that white belt. What are they experiencing? You know, myself and my fiancé Brett Sieber she's also, she teaches also, she's a kid whisperer. I gotta tell you, every time a little kid would come into the studio I'd be like how are you doing and they'd start crying and I go that's your child right there. But you know, it's a very, we've taught a lot of people and it just puts you back in that mindset of hey, what were you feeling? I think as martial artist as we go along so long that we cannot forget that, and we cannot go yeah you know, we were there, but to be put back in that position I think is a tremendous help to like I said your ego and teaching people for sure.



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I agree, absolutely. And it's something that I think, I think if we had some kind of unspoken rule about you know you hit a certain level, certain amount of time, you know we just, we take that belt off you and you start over somewhere else.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Right, right yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think there, I think we, I think that ego would fade a bit because there's nothing more humbling than you know being 20-30-year veteran of striking art and hopping into judo something and realizing wow I'm terrible at this.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Absolutely yes. Absolutely. Yeah, and you know I'm not saying I belong around for forever, but you know I have been alive but this year will be 44 years for me and I've done a lot of my life, I've been all over the world and I'm a pretty good you know, read on people. And I've experienced a lot of people and the way people act and things like that and you know, when I hear somebody tell me that kempo is the only way, you know, I start going, oh come on, why don't we take a step back, show me show me how you get up off the ground if somebody tackles you. And then are told, well you just don't go to the ground. How does that happen? Teach me, please teach me because you know, anything can happen and I think if you take bits and pieces from different people, different arts, you are more well-rounded martial artist and I know some people have a problem with that where you know, that they think that it's only one way but you know, the marine in me for always being prepared for stuff you know, I want to know. The thirst for knowledge is there

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of my favorite things about that, that the whole notion that there is only one way you know, that that this way is the right way. The irony is that at least based on the reading that I've done of the founders of those styles, is they believed the exact opposite. They collected the things from everything else that they saw and said this is what works best for me and I'm gonna teach it.

**Nick Nicholson:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Right, exactly. One of the things Stuart Gavin said to me, again, the guy's gonna be here in Chicago, he's gonna be with us for a week he's actually gonna be staying at my house. So, he once said to me because he does judo, jujitsu, he does [00:17:43.27] kempo, but he has his kempo with an m instead of an n like us. One of the things that he said was, I take different martial arts to try and learn what my kempo will work on and what it won't work on and then I incorporate the stuff that they teach to make my kempo better. Now that right there, that is something to think about because if you think about it that way, kempo is fantastic, I work for train, passenger train service here in Chicago and I've actually you know, after all my trying to stop conflicts and things like that I have had to use it on the train and it's very fast and dynamic and its very I guess controlling, you know. And I know it works but I also know that other things may get better so it's just not all about kempo even though kempo is, in my opinion, one of the best arts out there because it, kempo has kung fu, judo, it has jujitsu, and it has that stuff, its already in there. But if you take all these other martial arts and learn from them, you can make those things better. So.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For sure. Do you have time for things that are non-martial in your life outside of training and teaching and fighting bad guys on trains? Are there... Do you have hobbies?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Absolutely yeah. I well, I guess it all relates to the martial arts. Martial artist is such a big part of my life. I do woodworking but a lot of woodworking is geared towards martial arts. I like make [00:19:41.32] and things like that for people. There is I do silk-screening and those are usually kempo related, silk screens. Yeah, I guess so. But you know, I really love my... I have three kids, Ryan who's 18, max who's 14 and Alexis who is actually my daughter but not really my daughter. I've [00:20:08.29] her since she was four she's my fiancé's daughter so I consider my child. She's actually probably the one it's most like me out of everybody which is crazy but I enjoy hanging out with them there are good kids and then of course spending time with my lovely fiancé.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You mentioned that she trains, do your children train?

**Nick Nicholson:**

My daughter does. My older son he did and my middle son, he has no interest in it so he just does his own thing which is cool. I show him some things, some things he wants to see, something he's like ok that's great.





Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Is that hard?

**Nick Nicholson:**

No. Because I made sure that the other two kids know that I'm not gonna be here one day so y'all gotta look out for each other and if max doesn't want to train, that's perfectly fine but now it's up to you guys. I kinda put the blame on them so they can put some screws to him. Hey know you really need to learn this. So, but that there good. It doesn't bother me. I regret that my older son that didn't keep going with it because he was, the kid's fantastic and here goes the ego again. I wish I had 1/2 the talent that my kids had. You know flexibility and things like that. You know, the marine corps it really those at the toll on your body at age 40 I had my left hip redone. It was the best thing I did because I can still kick and things like that but you know, as you get older you know, the flexibility goes so. But yeah because the ego part again.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know, I think having a little bit of an ego is healthy. It's important. If you spend all of our time working on making these things better and we continue to look at ourselves and say were terrible were crap yeah then you know it kinda loses some of the motivation to move forward. I think.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Oh sure. Oh, I will never say that I'm crap

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's good.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Okay. The marine corps I was the guide and that's a guy who holds the flag and all that stuff. Well my senior drill instructor came at the meeting was guide, he goes on to tell you something don't you ever let anybody tell you anything but the truth. He said, always speak up but if you know you're wrong keep your mouth shut. So, I live by those rules even to this day.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

As were talking we kind of been hitting on good stuff and unless you are the most fortunate person on earth, you had stuff in your life that wasn't fortunate. I'm wondering if you might tell us about that time and how your martial arts helped you through that time.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well. It was not a very good leaving our old instructors. They were of the mindset that they, they think that loyalty should be put above anything and by that, I mean if they treat you a certain way, who cares you should still be loyal to them. If they say something to you that you know like well, you shouldn't you know, correct them. Well, were not them, those type of people to be treated in such a way. So, it was very hard to leave them because we were conflicted you know, loyalty. If we do something wrong and then when we sat down and we said you know what, we didn't do anything wrong, we were able to go; all right well, were done and they didn't like it but you know, it is what it is and we started teaching and it's actually not, I guess in a way it is the martial arts that help, it was more the people we are teaching, you know. It would've been very easy for us to go alright, were done, were not gonna teach anymore were just gonna step away. But all the friends that we've made, the students that we, that we've actually impacted their lives for the better, that's what makes it good and like I said, we take good things and bad things from people. Our instructors absolutely taught us how to be good kempo martial artist, taught us how to be great instructors, but they also taught us bad things and we didn't like those bad things enough to believe. It's unfortunate because really like them, you know, we consider them family and hence our name, Family Kenpo Academy. And we have some partners that we teach with and its Jeff Sigler and Erika Rosson. And the from the moment we, myself, barrette and Erica, we all started at pretty much the same time and just started probably a year before us and man, we were on a mat at the studio, cause we all trained at the same place. When were on that mat, we are teaching group class, man, you had parents going up to our instructor going; we want those guys to teach our classes and you know, here we are blue belts or green belts and you know, they're saying that they want us. So, we have a very good chemistry and that's why we decided to come up with our own studio, not our own system because you know, the Tracy system is fantastic and there's a lot of information on things like that but that's why we call the Family Kenpo Academy. The four of us actually left because of things that happened and I guess martial arts did the that help us to through it. I've been used to being treated by people bad, you know, my fiancé she took it I think the hardest because she's never been treated like the way she was treated and I feel bad. I feel bad I should have [00:27:12.50] sooner. Oh well. You know, and there's two sides of every story oh. But anyway, on to the happier things.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I just wanna ask a little bit. You know, I'm not gonna dig. But I'm just curious, as you look back you know, hindsight is 2020 did your expectations, your standards change? Or did their conduct changed?



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Nick Nicholson:**

I always have very high standards for myself. You know, I don't know. I would like to say that it was a combination of both because again they have taught me so much and I'm very fortunate to have known them but I know I don't know, I don't know. I keep finding out things from other people. As I meet more people from the past that have you know, train with them I keep hearing more and more things that I just don't dig it and but again, I wouldn't be here today without them.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're certainly not the first to come on the show and talk about this and in some way and I think it's a more common occurrence that someone progresses through the martial arts and sees that this person that they they've held up in such high regard, really can have this the very same failings that any other person can. And you know we don't have to go into the specifics of my opinions or your opinions on why that happens, but it seems that if nothing else, when we have that realization that this person that we've looked up to for so long is human and fallible it almost seems like it's worse because they should be better. Because we look at training and we look at all the good things, you know, we know we talk about respect and we talk about all the wonderful things I mean you look at any typical marketing materials for a children's martial arts class and then you find out that the person who's running that program and has been doing so for however many years has forgotten some of those fundamentals that they teach. It's hard. And I could hear in your voice that it's hard talking about a little, you know its bringing up some emotion.

**Nick Nicholson:**

I really don't, I don't talk about it with a lot of people. There are a core group of people that I speak with about it. You know just because you know, it's very off-putting you know, I think back and I go, what how is this impacting the students that I've taught, I've promoted? How does it impact them? I don't really so much care about myself for the simple fact that I know myself and I know that what I pertain and you can't take that away from me. But I have a very strong constitution and you know, if you have somebody and somebody that has trained, let's say Barrett trained the one kid for 3 1/2 years and it was, let's say that she left and now this kid's thinking, where they did she go? Am I not good enough, I mean that's just, that's horrible. That's absolutely horrible to think of and you know, I'm sure barrette thanks about it a lot. She brings up past students that studio and she's like man, she goes, I wonder how they're doing you know. So, I know it affects her. Again, without them, I would not be here, it's not a bashing on my instructors because I know I really value everything that they taught me. You know, there is no place to go.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

I don't think anybody listening is gonna to hear what you're saying and think that your trashing them in anyway.

**Nick Nicholson:**

No, no.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know it's clear that you had differences and differences are okay and it sounds like you made the best of them. That you've learn from them, that your school is more in line with what you want, you and your fiancé and your partner with the way you want to teach. And really, I mean, that's what we should all have, we all should all have the ability to present our information to teach our students in the way that resonates best for us.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Sure, sure. And you know we've been told by people that there are no bonds it's only, it's only kempo, there are no bonds and you will and you sit back and you think to yourself, no bonds. Are you kidding me? In my opinion, they are trusting you two teach them things that will help them in life, you know, in their family and to keep them safe. You know, it's not only just, especially me being a marine, not only just martial arts like the martial arts like kempo, it's being aware of your surroundings. You know, not having to use your martial arts, you know that's a big part of it. I heard somebody say you know you spend 15 years learning a system and you spend your whole lifetime trying not to use it. Yeah, that's a good way of thinking about it you know. Like I said, I used to be a bad kid, I used to fight all the time. Not only did martial arts helped, the marine corps helped. And when I get a kid in and you know, the mom is like yeah, he need something or she needs something, okay, I used to be just like them, I know. I get it. It's our responsibility as instructors to make sure that not only are the things that we were taught instilled in them but to make sure that they go out to the community and be good citizens. You know, that that's art, that would be the worst thing to have somebody come to you and say, you train this kid or this guy and he went out he beat the crap out of a bunch of people. It shouldn't be like you know of course you know, you get people that are, but you know, for the most part that's our responsibility. No such thing as bad student, bad teacher.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a karate kid line if I remember.

**Nick Nicholson:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Absolutely. Yes, it is. Especially with like what color belt are you? Uh, levy's. I don't know whatever it is [00:35:07.27]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. Belt is good for holding up pants.

**Nick Nicholson:**

That's it right, right. That's why we don't wear, we don't wear stripes on our belts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You don't?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Nope. We have kanji, one side says kempo karate, the other side is the spirit of the tiger and the dragon and others no stripes on there. And that comes from my former instructors and that said another good thing that they taught that I took from them. Once you achieved black belt, your learning starts all over again and it doesn't matter what rank you are. You know, that black belt has very vast meaning and why would you want, that's the ego side of it again, how many stripes you have [00:36:09.41]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I kinda look at it, if you would be able, if you know, if you have six stripes on your belt, this is this is not a criticism, but if you have six stripes on your belt, we better know even when that belt is off in the way you conduct yourself, in the way you train, in the way you teach and who you are as a person.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yeah that's good. Absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We've heard a lot about your former instructors and how much of an impact they had on you, who else has been really influential on your martial arts?

**Nick Nicholson:**



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Ha. Well, ted summer, henry Childers, Stuart Gavin, Roger Green, jimmy Stuart. There is a guy roger lee, he lives in Kentucky he is one of henry Childers guys and he does this you know, not sure if you ever, Bruce lee did like that 1 inch punch, well roger does a touch punch. And the first time he ever did on me he's like hold that book then it was a phone book and he did it at last man standing in Dallas with nick chamberlain he put on for Mr. Tracy. And I had the video on Facebook and it's where it's similar to the to the 1 inch punch except his fingertips are touching and the way he moves. Now, at the time I was 215, I weighed 200 now, but no small guy by any stretch of imagination and he rocked me from that and I was like wait a second, hang on a second. So, I you I got real low and good horse dance held that book and he did it again I was like are you, yet he said are you ready? I said yes. And he hit and I was like are you kidding me? And you know roger's a you know, thin guy, six-foot, older gentleman and I'm like that's what people don't expect from somebody like roger. You know, that misconception about people. And that was an eye-opening thing to me that this man can just rock me and he hit me with that that power and I was like holy cow, how did he do that? Well then, in this year's gathering of eagles and Dallas that nick chamberlain put on with the Tracy's, I was rogers uke for the whole seminar and it was fantastic. That's a good point to bring up to him. Roger lee, that guys fantastic.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, what did you take from that? Can you do that yourself? Have you learned yeah? What's the secret?

**Nick Nicholson:**

I have. What it is, is its as with all karate comes from the hips. And it's just that slightly, you do a slight drop in your stance with a little twist and it's unbelievable that the power that you generate and you know, it took me all seminar but I'm like, alright yeah, he is a great instructor. Yeah everybody's like, no, no he didn't do that, you let them do that to you. I'm like okay, let him do that to you. And you know everybody was you know, you know when they know that it's not crap when they put that little stature he does it and they rock back and they put that little smirk on their face like man, how did that guy do that to me? That's when you know that it was, it's good stuff. And that's the training, the training is fantastic. They know that the gathering of eagles all these seminars that people put on, it's just a fantastic way to not only network, but to learn other things. You know, henry Childers that that guy's fantastic. He does a lot of small circle jujitsu and he does kempo and things like that. And what I found is, it's the guys that you don't expect you know, henry is a very unassuming person, I guess would be the right word, and the but his technique is so right on that I'm like, okay that works too. So, but yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I love seminars. I think it's one of the most fun elements martial arts training to go and kinda have these intense immersions into other things that people do and even instructors that you train with, the



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moment you get them into that kind of format with other people, they become different. You know you learn things in a different way and it's just...

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yeah. Stuart Gavin at the at the last man standing last year. I was his uke for three of his seminars, so I learned a lot by being an uke how things work, the proper type of pressure you need to put on things and that guy Stuart, if you've never been to one of his seminars, he the time isn't long enough, you're like, where did the time go? You have so much fun. He is such a fun instructor. He is a you know he he's first of all his accent, which is probably gonna beat me when he gets here, but his accent is fantastic. Especially when he's saying stuff and he'll look at you and go; what do you say it for this and I'll go yeah, it's this, oh okay. But the people that that we train with, their technique is spot on and you know, Stuart is no different and I think one of the advantages, all of his people that come over from Scotland, all fantastic. And they, in Scotland they can't carry handguns, they can't carry guns, they can't have weapon, they have to use kempo, they have to use hand-to-hand stuff because they don't have anything else. He had [00:43:44.59] stick or a knife or whatever but they have to use it no matter what and I think that's what gives them an advantage sometimes over you know, a lot of people you know, from the countries allow weapons you know. Anybody can pull out a gun. Well okay, now that I'm against the gun and you don't have one, or knife or steak or whatever it is. And now yeah, Stewart, the practical application of the techniques and things like that, I enjoy.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You've mentioned a lot of great people. People that clearly have had a strong impact and not just your martial arts development but it sounds like your personal development.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Oh yeah, for sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But if you have the opportunity to do to add one more to the list, somebody you haven't trained with. Somebody alive or dead, who would that be?

**Nick Nicholson:**

I would say, you know bob white. I see a lot of you know, Facebook is an amazing tool. You know, bob white was actually in the karate kid movie, he was one of the judges, the referees in the fights. And his



Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

studio has been there for 40 years I think it is? The way he moves and things like that and the way he teaches, through the magic of Facebook, some of the things you can see and you know, bob white would be one. And I think the main guy would have to be James Mitose because he's the one who brought kempo to Hawaii for Mr. Parker and then it spread from there. And there's mixed feelings about James Mitose about his accomplishments and things like that but yeah, I think I would like to train with him. That old oak style as they say.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. Certainly, an influential figure in kempo and if anyone's new to the show you might not know, we did an episode a profile episode on Mitose and I apologize I don't remember the episode number. Here we are in the 240s, 250s they're not all stuck in my head by number anymore, but we would link that in the show notes. [Whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://Whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) we'll have a link in there make it nice and easy for you.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Right, right. Yeah, it's a, they're very... Bunch of different opinions on him and yeah and I think so. I think so or that were prof. Chow you know, one of his students. It would be fantastic. It's the training you know, the more I can get the better and when I first started you know I felt like a little kid you know. We have one technique where it's a hip toss. And you know it's a right punch from the side and do Perry brush block and you do a hip toss. I was, I remember like giggling like a little kid going do it again, do it again to me. And you know it it's that training, it's that alright, this is fun. It's when it doesn't become fun, then I think people have a problem that it's you know you hear people all time, I'm coming back, great. You never see him. That's fine, that's fine but that it makes you look did I do my job enough? And did I make it fun enough for them? That I give them enough? You know so, there's a lot of things that that you take from people that stay and they go. So yeah, and I think I think one of the things that would be a huge honor, if I take somebody from a white belt to a black belt and I try and to teach them everything and I instill in them things that I was taught how to teach people and somebody wants them over me, I don't think I would take offense to that for the simple fact is, I would say man I did such a good job they want that person not me, where you have other people you know, whether you're fifth attempt, ninth whatever you are that would take offense to that why you want them there only a 1st degree black belt? Instead of being hey you know I did such a good job with them you know. I think that's that, I think that's what we all have to get out of people that we train. We're teaching the next generation basically be us or a better version of us. You know it's like your kids I think.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. I mean what more could you want for as a martial arts instructor than to pass on your knowledge and have it improved, have the students that you train exceed your capacity. Isn't the definition of





Episode 246 – Sensei Nick Nicholson | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

success is a martial arts instructor that they write transcended what you knew and what you were? Kinda how I see it.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Right. Absolutely, yeah. But you know that there's people out there that don't think that and it's sad and you know, I don't know if it's because it is a business also that they're afraid that they're going to lose people because you know you won't train them, because they I don't know what it is. I honestly don't but I think that that's something I will take away from anybody whoever says that there a better instructor then you know, anybody who says that I don't know about that. It's the people you know, it's the people that I think should choose their instructor and then the instructor will either say yes or no. Now

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You mentioned earlier a bit about competition, but we haven't talked about it since. Is that a big part of your life or was it ever?

**Nick Nicholson:**

When I was in taekwondo we used to have competitions all time. And there was a point where it was okay he could punch in and kick and things like that, I was at a tournament one time and the guy went to kick me and that he was doing a roundhouse kick and you know, I dropped into a really low stance and ducked my head while they are like you can't do that. I'm like what are you talking about? Why can I do that because you ducked down. I go but I didn't duck like there was a difference like I went way back into like really low bow stance and the kick went over my head then I came back up, and I hit him and they said I couldn't do that because I was ducking under the kick. And I'm like wow, I really don't want to be kicked so. It happened twice. So, that competition it's just my interpretation that is become more tag, I got you, know you get anything from you know, I understand incidental contact happens it's a it's a it's a sparring match, you're going to punch, you to get hit but to be disqualified because you hit somebody and I know there's saying control but if you're going in, the back for somebody to the temple you know in their headgear which is legal and they move you know, they expect you to I don't know I... Mike McNamara is a great example. I'm not sure if you know who he is he is that guy is fantastic he is I believe he runs a sports karate museum right now or is one of the contributors he has the Illinois martial arts hall of fame that he does in Illinois and he would take gold or silver at every police and fire Olympics, he was a police officer in the town I grew up in and he would, like he would have broken ribs and fingers and things like that and that's the stuff that really, you see the old films of you know, no chest protectors, no helmets and things like that, that to me is the appear to me of the competition. You know, hitting somebody with a pad really doesn't show that you know your stuff just means you're



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faster you know you can tap somebody I don't know. That's why think a lot of people, I have not seen a lot of tournaments in my area that were in and I don't that's the reason or if it's just a lack of interest or I'm not I don't know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I have a feeling your martial arts movie guy. Am I right? Okay, I just had I had a gut feeling. You know pretty much everybody's into movies at least a little bit. But something tells me you you're more than a little bit.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Oh yeah. I love the Ip Man movies. But the who was Bruce Lee's teacher? Ip man and I like those... I like everything from the old kung fu movies like I said when I used to watch them on Saturday morning and go out in the backyard and try and duplicate those things. I would never be able to get up at those trees I just don't know how. [00:55:54.52]

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How about actors?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well I like jai white. I like the guys that like actually train. Like who amaze me was Keanu reeves, that the guy I was like holy cow, he actually trains with the guys for his movies. Like john wick and things like that. He was in a movie tai chi, tai chi master and that guy amazed me. Jason Statham, those karate, I watched a couple of his tournaments and I like the guys who you know, aren't just trained by choreographers.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You can tell the difference.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Absolutely yeah. Like I'd be like; that doesn't work, that won't work. My fiancé Brett she'd be watching, she was watching a show arrow and she was like did you see that kempo move? I'm like where was it? And it was an overhead knife and there is a deflecting block and the guy like shove the knife right into



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his leg, I'd go that's our technique. Yeah, it was very cool. She's always like to point this out, point this out, point that out so yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice. It's fun to have a significant other who not only tolerates watching the movies with you but, will enjoy watching the martial arts stuff. Whether or not they train cause I know plenty and you know, I'm not just not being specific to one gender or the other. I know plenty of plenty of folks who are not blessed with partners that will watch martial arts content with them.

**Nick Nicholson:**

You're going there again? Well how many time you go in a week? When we started, the whole reason we started kempo, I think I get that. My older son was very, he wouldn't look people in the eye and things like that. He was very timid and I didn't feel that I would do a good job with that at first because you know, new dad and I think the marine corps, too much of the marine corps would've came out. So, I needed to find something, so we are driving past on cicero here in and Chicago and I saw kempo sign and when I saw kempo, Jeff Speakman, that's what I thought of and I go all right and you know gosh drove by it probably for year and 1/2 and finally you know what we're stop in. So, I stopped in and I originally sat down with Becky, it was burette and I and Becky was there and she scheduled us a time to come back with Ryan our son, and just go and talk about it. So, it was originally just Ryan then Greg's like why don't you take it too? I'm like, okay I'll go on the mat with you. Then barrette wanted to join, then Alexis wanted to join. So, we all started pretty much of the same time. Ryan stopped going he was an orange belt, we kept going so Alexis is now a 1/3 brown and I wouldn't mess with the little girl. I still think of her our little girl she's gonna be 15 in January. But yeah but I it's good to know that the women in my life can take care of themselves. Yeah but that's all reason why we got started at kempo.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The family that trains, together right? It's pretty important, powerful. I mean, there's some good stuff in there and just for my observation families that are training tends to stick around longer because of you know you have that built in support system when one person you know, wants to fade away the other 2-3 say no, were going this is what we do as a family.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Right. Yeah, we had a quite a few families and let me see... We had probably like 6-4 person families that would come. It was good to and teaching that was the other obstacle how do you teach those people with different skill levels and things like that. You know, you work that stuff out, it's crazy. I



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started teaching when I was an orange belt because I started teaching my son and Alexis. We would get our lesson and then we would teach the kids and I was really fortunate coming up in the place that I came up in the martial arts because I would make mistakes. The other black belts on the mat would never say anything to me in the lesson, after the lesson was done by that I took on another student, a white belt. After the lesson was done they will come out to mingle. That's great, how about you try this? I don't you know what I was shown that. So, we came up in a really good studio you know, the people around us, the support system was fantastic. Yeah, you know, we are very, like I said, we are very fortunate to have the people around us that we did, the better our instruction things like that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice. As you look to the future what's going on? Are you a goal driven person or things are striving for? Are you trying to hold steady, what's going on as we look over the horizon?

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well, right now we are our new instructor is Todd Tomco and he's in Ohio. So, we have to no go out there, were in Illinois, it's a 6-hour drive so were to go out there train for the for the day then the next day when I have the tournament. So were going to start when trying it out there at least once a month because we want to start working on our sandan. So, you know, the goal is to of course always progress, we want to actually want, were gonna be moving to Indiana and we want to buy some land and build our studio on there. I know there's a, I want to a building that is simply dedicated to the studio that's it. Just when you go like we have a dojo in a in a strip mall or something like that you are you always have constraints on what you can have like a makiwara board if you hang it on the wall, your neighbors are gonna you know, why are you making so much noise or if you have a makiwara board, you can drill it into the concrete, can't dig it to the concrete and do it like you should some we want to have a studio out in Indiana on our property where we can customize it, we can have people come up and train and I take that from roger green. Roger green lives in Oklahoma and he puts on warrior weekend every year and he's got a bunch acres and he has a studio out there. So not only does he have a studio on his property you can train outside. You know, there's huge sections where you can train in you know, we train inside, we train outside and it's fantastic. So, I'm gonna try to emulate his property a little bit because I just think it's fantastic. There was, so at the warrior weekend last year yeah ted Sumner and Jefferson Davis, I think Dan Kennedy was there, there was a bunch of different martial artist we all went out to breakfast. All of the older generation martial artists were at one end of the table and all the younger generation like me Jeff, a guy Jean Sepulveda, the crazy Russian guy he's great though. Vance murakami, bill Dalton. All of us younger generation were sitting at one end of the table and I looked down and I see all of them in their all talking, all the older guys. I should say seasoned, not even old, just the seasoned guys and I'm looking I'm going, man, I turned to jean and I said jean you see that? He goes yeah, what about it? I said that's going to be us someday. You know, that's going to be us so we're



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gonna have to have you know cause roger green although we would love him to be around forever, he's not gonna be. It's just a fact of life. We need to have stuff where people can train, you know it's up to us as the next generation to try and fill their shoes as big as they are you know, it's up to us to try and fill their shoes and try and be as good or if not better than them. For the next generation because that's how it's the whole things can happen, we have to be continue to go. So, the plans in the future are to try and... Al Tracy was the other the founder of the Tracy system, put out a memo well, we did a seniors meeting and studio owners meeting at the gathering of eagles and one of the things that he wants is the system to go on and you know, in my opinion all of us who teach and take the Tracy system that's what we want because it is such a, it's such a unique system, it encompasses so many things that we should really pass it on to the next generation but it's at I believe it's important and again we are trying to fill those seasoned guy shoes so the other generation comes up after us, those our shoes, and so on and so on. But I think if you don't that's how things get lost you know, things get lost in martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of the reasons for the show.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Yeah absolutely. And thank you by the way her having this. It's a great outlet for people, the martial arts calendar that's absolutely fantastic. Trying, trying. Maybe that'll have to be the thing that we plug in this episode we usually put something in the intro and outro for each episode. But [martialartscalendar.com](http://martialartscalendar.com) it's free to use and free to post too.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's it, absolutely. How can people get a hold of you? People are listening if they're traveling through your area, if they want to drop in or somebody just says you know, I love what you said no one reach out and say thank.

**Nick Nicholson:**

Well, we have a couple different we're an all of the social media platforms you know, Facebook, twitter, skype, Instagram, all of it. We have a website it's called [familykenpo.com](http://familykenpo.com) you can, what we do is on that website, it basically tells you about us and how we started where we came from, what we teach, upcoming things. Like there's like a calendar section, on there if were involved in a seminar or if it's just something else's like there was the benefit on October 28 that's put on by an aikido studio. We have a kempo page and we encourage, kempo Facebook page and we encourage people to put on their seminars and their training and things like that because that's why we're here. You know, were here to



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spread the martial arts throughout the world and this aikido studio it's called center for the martial arts it's in worth, Illinois they're doing a benefit, there is a studio in aikido studio in Puerto Rico that was just devastated by the hurricane, you know, they been teaching for in the local community for like 10 years and their studio which is decimated so they're having at this benefit and I think Scott put it on one of the things I can't remember what he put it on but those are the types of things that that need to get out there so, that'll be on the [kenpofamily.com](http://kenpofamily.com) website. You go to Family Kenpo Academy Facebook, eastside kenpo and then we have Crestwood Family Kenpo Academy on Facebook. So, our phone number if you like the train is 708-942-9594 anytime being call leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as we can.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sensei Nicholson is definitely a well-rounded individual not only martial arts, but in life he's a dedicated family man both inside the academy and at home. His journey to the martial arts is given them the tools to face life not only survive but thrive. Thank you Sensei Nicholson for sharing your story today. If you want to check out the show notes with photos, links and everything else from today's conversation, you can find those at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) you can find all the other past episodes there and you can find everything else that we do including our wonderful product offerings at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). I thank you for tuning in today. I hope you'll share this or maybe another episode with somebody else, please help us grow so we can continue to attract the very best martial artist in the world and have them share their stories with all of us. Until next time train hard, smile and have a great day.