



Episode 251 – The Benefits of Training For Or Against Competition |  
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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey what's going on everybody Jeremy from whistlekick, coming at you. I don't know what episode number this is, I don't know when it's going to air, I just know there was something I wanted to talk about. If you are listening through your podcast feed, this is one of those episodes I'm recording in the vehicle and I do have the go Pro on the dash, so we get a little bit of video, you can see out the window past my head while I'm driving. I am driving back from the smart, that's this date martial arts ratings and totals I believe is the acronym. The main competitive martial arts circuit, their championship was yesterday and they were kind enough to invite us over, so I came over, set up the booth from the kick mobile, which actually is a different vehicle now, considering renaming it the kick wagon. But that is completely irrelevant to what I'm here to talk about today. I am here to talk about competition and not why you should do it why you shouldn't do it but a different perspective of how to think about it. And before we get into that, if you are new to this show, if you're finding us on YouTube and have never seen what we do before, you should check out [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) or [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) that's where you can find everything that we do. Of course, there are quite a few other episodes of the show that you can find everything from interviews with world-renowned martial artists, to roundtable discussions, to profiles of movies and actors, history segments, to my opinions. We have quite a variety so hope you check out that stuff as well the products that we make, our newsletter, various websites that we do all for you, the traditional martial artist cause I love traditional martial arts and I wanted a



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business that would help support those that participate and grow the scene, realm, community, whatever word you want to use overall.

Let's talk about competition. If you are a listener to show you know that one of the questions that we ask in almost every interview is about competition. The majority of our guests, I would say even the majority of martial artist at some point compete whether that's a small competition within their school or regional competition maybe even a broader national competition and it tends to be a very quietly polarizing question. People tend to love competition or strongly dislike competition even those that haven't participated in competition a lot tend to promote the benefits of competition. Talk about competition is something that can help you meet new people or refine your skills or be exposed to new ideas, new techniques, new methodologies. And then we have folks on the other side of the argument saying that competition dilutes the true spirit of martial arts. It tends to promote ego, it can be horrendously, really, I guess, is a horrendously subjective and it can keep people focused on the things that don't really matter. All of those things are true which leads to a question, what do you do? If you have benefits and negatives, pros and cons to both competing and not competing, how do you reconcile those? And I'm going to suggest that the answer is actually the same answer to a lot of questions that we have not only martial arts but in life in general. So, let's go back a bit, let's take big step back and talk about what I mean.

The first thing to consider is that the human body is amazing at adapting, we are adaptation machines. there's a great example, really narrow but you look on a box of any prepared food you've probably seen that these numbers you know, the nutrition information is based on a 2000 calorie diet. The idea that the typical human being living in a modern society needs about 2000 calories a day to survive and not become unhealthy either from weight loss or weight gain. There some kind of stasis in there for the average person they said it's about 2000 calories. We'll we see examples of times and in famine or people that have been imprisoned in less than ideal conditions where they're getting so much less than that and they still survive and not just for couple weeks but for years. Weight training the idea that people can get tremendously stronger or as an endurance athletes get much faster, the human body adapts to whatever we do. I'm sure you can think of a bunch of other examples, I'm not gonna name off every example I can think of but you can probably come up with three or four right now that I didn't mention. And this is a generally accepted thing, I don't know that anybody out there is going to disagree that when we work on things we adapt to them, when we don't practice things we don't work on them we lose that adaptation. And the same is true of our martial arts, when we work on certain movements or flexibility or power, our body adapts it becomes more efficient more usable from that perspective and when you don't, you lose it, you use it or lose it. You can say the same about competition, if we've spent a lot of time competing, refining our forms, our sparring, our training towards competition were going to adapt to have better results from those tests, if practice your forms in a way that a referee a competition will like them, you're going to get better in that way. But you can say the same thing from the other way, if you spend all of your time not competing, if you never practice your forms from the



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perspective of what would do well in competition, you are honing your martial arts in that way, you are adapting to be a noncompetitive martial arts. The greatest benefit to any human being when we consider adaptation is to do the thing that you aren't used to doing. The marathon runner that spends 6 to 8 weeks lifting weights, even a light weight training program even let's say, two hours a week, if it's programmed correctly they do it well is going to see tremendous benefit to their running by the same token, someone who spends all their time in the gym lifting weights if they spend a couple hours a week doing some complementary running, you know maybe running some 400 m sprints or running a mile couple times a week, that's gonna to translate back into their weight training, they're going to have more cardiovascular fitness and thus be able to have more capacity in the gym. Of course, it depends on what your programming looks like, you may or may not benefit from that but hopefully you see what I'm getting at there. If you spend all your time practicing for competition, you're going to lose on some of the noncompetitive benefits. Now this becomes far more subjective than the example I keep going back to about endurance training versus strength training but it's in there. What are the benefits, what of the things that the noncompetitive martial arts spend her time working on? They tend to be more around the personal development, if we isolate our discussion to forms, a competitive form is generally going to look different for me noncompetitive form, for most of us, depends on the style, depends on form. If you're spending the time working on your forms because you love them, because you want to explore them to get better with them for your own purposes. There is benefit there. I remember one particular day where I was training and it happened to be for whatever reason I don't remember a lot of the details I was a Brown belt, I was teenager maybe 14 and myself this other young woman, we were the only two people in the room in the dojo higher than probably blue belt for whatever reason that I and the instructor said you to go over there and practice the enshin. For those of you that don't have enshin or don't know that form, most systems have a form that is very similar and it's a straight-line side to side, it's completely lateral form and we practice the hanshin and because that was all the space there was. We spent an entire class practicing the hanshin. When we started that, that 45 minutes or so that we work on that kata that day, I hated naihanchi. It was my least favorite, I found it boring, I thought it was stupid, I didn't know why it existed, I didn't like it and I was incredibly resistant to working on it. Don't get me wrong, I love forms. At that time, I was competing and I didn't see the benefit of working on a form that had no purpose in competition, that had no flare to it. The hanshin and as we did it in our school was pretty short, 30 seconds, 45 seconds maybe I don't know that I've ever timed it, but definitely shorter than most of the forms we had. Well, by the end of that class, I had managed to find elements in that form that I loved and I went from absolutely hating it to enjoying it and it's still a form I really enjoy. And that taught me a tremendous lesson that day that my forms didn't have to just be for competition and the only forms worth doing weren't ones that would be great in competition. I'm never gonna do nahanshin in a tournament, but I like it and some of those lessons that I learned around enjoying the form around finding my own timing, my own style with performing that form translated back into competition. At the same time, the things that I've learned about my forms and competition have translated into doing forms just in practice. To say it another way I know for a fact I am a better



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martial artist because of the time I spent in competition and I know that I'm a better martial artist because of the time I've spent doing things have no place, no purpose, for competition. I'm better because I've done both and I would argue that any martial artist is better because of doing both.

One of the major debates these days is around the practical application of martial arts. There are some schools that will not do things that aren't practical. Okay. There are some schools that have been doing and seem to care about what's practical. Okay. But again, if we consider adaptation if we consider the idea variety is good, that a diverse martial artist is a better martial artist, working on practical things, it's going to make our non-practical things better. Start to look at the techniques that we do and say is there practical value in this? Maybe there is maybe there isn't. If there isn't, maybe we find another reason for doing it. This technique is fun, I am never going to do a jump spinning Crescent kick in a self-defense situation. I am not Jean-Claude Van Damme, I don't have a movie coming out, I do that movement because it's fun, because I'm knocking on 40 and to do things still require high skill reminds me of my capability as a human being, as a martial artist. To take a look at what I'm able to do, from what works in a practical setting, makes the other movements I'm doing better as well. So, you can see this juxtaposition that happens throughout martial arts and the value for doing things for different reasons. For competition, for fun, for practicality, for self-defense. To say it another way, you will become a better martial artist doing the things you are worst at, you may not enjoy that training, but if you can find a way to enjoy it, it will become even better more effective and faster.

I hope this is made sense course I'm in the car I have no notes to go on. I get interesting feedback only do these episodes, surprisingly most of you seem to love Jeremy off-the-cuff, Jeremy unplugged? No, I don't think we can say unplugged you see there's wire right there. But I hope you enjoy this episode I hope I've made you think, because that is my goal most of the time.

I would love to hear your feedback whether that's on social media we are @whistlekick everywhere. If you want to email me directly that's [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) you can subscribe to us on iTunes or stitcher or anywhere you find podcast, we are all over the place. You can find the other episodes we've done at whistlekick martial arts radio. You can find the products in the other websites that we produce at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) thank you for your time, thank you for tuning in. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day. Peace everybody.