



Episode 252 – Rory Miller | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well hello and welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 252. Today, we welcome Rory Miller to the show. If you're new to the podcast or maybe just need a reminder my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel. You can find everything we do it [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and I'm your fortunate host for the show for all the episodes that we do I have the best job in the world. Thanks for tuning and I appreciate your time and hope that you enjoy this episode. You may have noticed that were doing some stuff bigger and better lately, whether it's the newsletter or more inventory, new products or better social media, that's because were growing and everything we do is for you the passionate, traditional, martial artist that is all we will ever do. The things that you want as a traditional martial artist. No MMA stuff here, never will be, were all about TMA. Rory Miller is a pretty straightforward martial artist he didn't have any training as a kid because there was no martial arts school in his area that made him turn to books and other resources about the martial arts. But today, Rory Miller shares his very deep and honest views of the world as well as martial arts training and everything that made him who he is today. An accomplished author with several books to his name and an in-demand seminar instructor. Let's welcome to the show.

Rory Miller welcome the whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Rory Miller:**



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Good to be here Jeremy how's your weather?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Weather is, for this time of year in Vermont actually pretty good. The snow that came in yesterday is all but melted. It's, I think its knocking on 40 degrees. What's it doing out your way?

We're having an epic rain and wind storm it's gorgeous.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hopefully we don't lose you, if do we'll piece it together or something the beauty of technology.

**Rory Miller:**

We'll see what happens.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I appreciate you being here and longtime listeners are going to pick up on something that has never happened on their show and that was the way I introduced you. Of course, you and I had a brief conversation about that, but I want to talk about it because it's the first time I've relented and introduced someone simply by their name. Why is that important you?

**Rory Miller:**

There are a bunch of reasons the a, that's who I am. Anything you throw onto that, you know, any titles is a way to separate people and one of the things we've done very, very terribly throughout almost all the martial arts is, were trying to make when the most natural things in the world which is not dying which every animal does and mostly with a pretty good amount of skill. And we try to mystify and make it special, we put labels and names on something we should be treating as one of the most natural things. And your here to get a little bit better at the are already born as a top predator on the planet. This is just a polishing thing and when we mystify stuff, when we make it special, we actually start weeding out the people that most need it. They said I couldn't do that and those are the ones who need to be there. So that's one of the reasons. Another reason is, I have this dislike ethical base for teaching and part of that is that, I'm not better than anyone that has come to me in the class. They're all, someone does it, they literally keep the world as we know it running. People who go for years and years and years without my training and never, never die but a lot of people just going to create complete meltdown if they lost their internet for a day. So, the it wizards keep stuff going, school teacher can



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keep a group of eight-year-old, 38-year-old monkeys in line for a day, I can't do that. And there's this whole try to keep a separation and especially when you get into the really, really, I don't wanna say traditional cause not necessary traditional thing, but it's really freaking hard to teach someone to stand up while demanding that they bow and those are just so completely incompatible. So, I don't, we need to divorce ourselves, in my opinion, from that whole, I'm trying not to step on this too much, it's when I talk about tradition, I'm not talking about tradition as a bad thing. Tradition is what we do when we don't have any direct experience to go with what we've been taught, when most of the traditional systems are traditional because they survived long enough to get that title, but when they been separated from their environment, when they haven't been used for a long time in the forms of tradition become more important than that then the meat and the content and that's where heavily there now. It's one of those, you know, 300 years ago teacher taught, some would be teaching their family, their clan members of people that they were going to go on the battlefield, living or dying with. And to that extent you needed some element of military discipline, but you were always teaching people that you loved and it's that dynamic is gotta bring back into it, these are not supplicants, these are not any kind of children that need to be taught or bullied to become, they're the people you can want on you back and you gonna teach them to cover you, to take care of you, to be on your side when you need it and you don't want anyone inferior do not want the best you can do. So that was really long-winded way to say that I've never ever in my life my head, in teaching students, I've always been teaching my backup on some really, really dark day when I was working in the sheriff's office, I knew I was good have to call for help and I wanted the best people in the world there to pull my, oh I'm trying not to use bad words, but the best people the world to pull me out of whatever I got myself into. And that's I was never training my underlings, I was training people to be the best in the world, because that's who I would need. So how was that for really long-winded answer to a really simple question.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Not that long but yet really poignant and says a lot about you, your views on the martial arts and I think does a good job of setting the tone for where were gonna go here. But what I love the most about what you just said, that the piece that's stuck in my head, the notion of training your backup rather than creating that stratification between teacher and student. I think that's what resonated for me the most have you always had that approach when you've is sharing, a better verb than teaching for you?

**Rory Miller:**

I didn't want to teach. I kinda got roped into it, we had a very bad year and a one year about 1/3 of our officers were assaulted and 10% hospitalized in a single year. And José Martinez is a training sgt. At the time look at statistics and we had to do something about this and pulled a couple of us primarily Paul [00:07:57.03] and me to redesign our defensive tactics program. And so, it was yeah so, I started teaching, literally teaching my backup and my job was to make them as good as fast as I could. And it



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turned out once we started change our training methodology, it's not hard to get people pretty good, pretty fast. So yeah, I've always been, when I when I started teaching jujitsu, classical jujitsu, the only reason I did that was my sensei had retired and I couldn't find playmates. I wanted to get people up to speed so they can play at the level that I played with my instructor students cause it was fun. But it was, it was purely selfish. I wanted playmates, I didn't want students, I don't want, I want people that could do in fighting [00:08:46.59] the way we did and that takes a little bit of skill to build up to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're certainly not the first to start teaching or sharing or whatever verb is used for that, quote unquote selfish reason that was how my original instructors got started. They wanted people to train with.

**Rory Miller:**

Yeah you get used in certain games or levels of play and when you were lucky enough to have a really good instructor, it's hard to find people that can play the same games that level safely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How did you get started? Where is the beginning for, in martial arts?

**Rory Miller:**

Okay thanks for clarifying going to explain words. I lived in a place so small and so rural that there was literally no martial arts probably in a hundred miles. So, it's something that I heard about, read about. If you hit that late 70s its one of the things in this part of becoming a complete human being, and it was one of those I was both really excited by the idea and at the same time completely naive. I actually did not really grasp that there were different martial arts. So, I graduate from high school at 16, turned 17 that summer, went to college and signed up for the first martial art that I saw, so is taking the judo classes and join the judo club. And that was just pure luck that I started judo and I am so incredibly happy that I did. The instructors were extraordinary, Wolfgang had been on the west German national team back when there was a west Germany. Mike Moore had been one of the junior national champion here in the us and they were superb instructors really demanding, we had a running joke you could take out the entire LSU judo team if just cut us after practice, we literally could not put a shirt on by ourselves every day. That was also, there were old-school enough Wolfgang used to say, if you weren't fighting two weight classes up, you weren't doing judo, you are just doing mere wrestling and I don't think I ever completed my own weight class the whole time I was at LSU. So that's how I got started and they set my bar for what qualified as a good instructor.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When you look back and you think about the people that you've worked with, because you've worked with the [00:11:25.09] you're making a distinction between a good instructor, so certainly you have ideas of what about instructor is. What are the qualities that make a good instructor?

**Rory Miller:**

Wow, one of the... Okay and this and this is the whole, I should have thought of this question, this is a great question especially since I just did a book on how to teach. I should be able to just fit this out it is basically, among other things you have to have an absolute thorough understanding of your system, of what it is your teaching. And that as simple that sentence, there are so much to unpack, this is understanding not knowledge. I don't care how much you've memorized everything your system, if you don't understand the mechanics behind it and what it's used for and the goal and how it spins off into and affects everything else that could possibly happen, if you can't take it and look at offensively, defensively and I have this rule that almost everything that really works, you have to think of as you are you may hand us. So, when you're looking at balance, I have to maintain my balance, I to disrupt your balance. The minute we catch on theirs and our balance that I have to be able to manipulate too and so I have to see it at that depth. So, understanding absolutely critical for an instructor. Really high standards for both your students and yourself and that's one of the things that the human psychology, if I sit there and tell you that this is impossible, 80% of you will fail, 80% of you will fail. If I said the exact same goal and tell you this is well within your capability, but it's going to be hard work almost everyone will achieve it. So, understanding the stuff, understand connections. Teaching, knowing how to communicate it, some of the best practitioners in the world are some of the worst teachers and a lot of that is because they don't consciously know what they're doing. It takes an extra piece to consciously so, through understanding both conscious and subconscious level, through understanding a teaching methodology and that's gotta stay conscious to continuously prove, cause once you become an unconscious teacher you will be really good for some people, really terrible for others. And one of the things I hit on a lot is clarity, which is both clarity of understanding, that clarity of purpose and goal. You gotta know you can be teaching martial arts or you could be teaching self-defense, but for most people to think those are the same things are delusional. You have to be teaching the student as a student is not what you would do if you were in the student's place because you are not that person, so the actual clarity of the understanding a problem, understanding your tool so you have to solve the problem and understanding of the student that needs those tools to solve the problem, that student will get, I think without those, you can be an okay instructor, maybe a good instructor, but you can't be an excellent instructor.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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The subject of making that distinction, you know that good martial artist versus a good instructor of martial arts. And how within martial arts we do such a terrible job and I will be that blunt, we do a terrible job of teaching martial artist how to teach.

**Rory Miller:**

Well and a lot of this... What we know about teaching tends to come from terrible sources. Most people's exposure to teaching as a methodology comes from school. You know everyone almost here in the us has had a minimum of 12 years of school, which is professional instruction from someone who went to college to learn how to teach and we assume that that's a good model and one of the things that people don't grasp and this goes into the power dynamic in teaching your we touched on earlier, in the school kids don't have a choice, they're all there involuntarily and when you have students that are basically prisoners, you can teach them any crap you want. And they can hate it is much as they want and so it we actually create a go along to get along is far more important than whether you actually learn anything dynamic there and we transit that. Again, because when you're thinking, oh how do I teach he was my best teacher. And you start re-creating you know, your experiences from the third grade when you were small, weak and in a power dynamic and basically conscripted and we try to treat students like that. That's insane especially when trying to teach students to stand up and be independent.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This is all good, it's giving us a good direction and anybody that's read your books are knows who you are has a pretty good idea of your foundation. One of the questions that I'm most excited to ask, all of our guests, and the one I most excited ask you today is about stories. I know you traveled, I know you've seen and done some crazy stuff, no I'm guessing. If I was to ask you for your favorite story from this side your life that this martial arts piece of who you are, what would that story be?

**Rory Miller:**

Oh wow. Gotta go for the funny ones or the formative ones or one of the ones that was big, formative for me. It's in a Jew tournament in Seattle and I'm fighting as a [00:17:15.52] lightweight and the [00:17:19.16] middleweight category. So, I'm completely outranked good instructors. My girlfriend is watching the matches, she knows nothing about judo and bigger brown belt clips you over and gets me an arm bar [00:17:37.47] through the legs. And I'm hearing my coach yell at me to tap out before he breaks it, he just broken some of the kids arm. It would say move and I'm here and my whole team tell me to tap, to give up and I see my girlfriend tell me to give up and it's like, see I'm looking at the sign family [00:18:00.55] no and I shoved into the thing which got my elbow off the point and I was able to turn in and the guy was so freaked the later gave me his back, I was able to strangle them out and but is



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it was that moment of having everyone that you counted on your support network telling you to give up. And that relationship with the girlfriend absolutely and last. That was on and it was all just common sense, but I'm not big on common sense, I hate losing so that moment I realize that a lot of the decisions I was going to make in my life later, I was going to have to make this decision despite or against the advice of every single person that I knew. So that was a big formative one early.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I wanna unpack that for second. How much of the end of this this romantic relationship was because she was in this group of folks telling you to give up? Was that? it did not have that much weight?

**Rory Miller:**

I think... I don't know. I mean, I really can't pick a part it was a long time ago, I was much younger, I was a different person, I was taking like a lot of young guys, I was taking very small things and thinking they were very big and blowing them probably way out of proportion. At this is a you know, at the age I am now if I was as a coach and I had a young arrogant, which I was. A young arrogant judo kid who I thought was too arrogant he would get his arm broken rather than lose, I would have been yelling to tap to. So, no one here is a bad guy or did anything wrong, everything was doing everything, when everything is right as they could, but for me and relationship aside, it was at that time I realize that I'm and maybe this is true for everybody but, when you when you decide to push the envelope, you're going to be alone and you have to get used to that loneliness and maybe revel in it. Is that enough to unpack? Because I really don't have an answer for your specific question and I don't think the relationship is all that cool to begin with, you know, yeah, I have a girlfriend but that was about it. The way you summed up, when you decide to brush the envelope, you're gonna be alone, absolutely that makes sense to me that helps me wrap my brain around it. Well I'll let you keep going, I think you had more that you were gonna get into.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Maybe it was another story, it sounded like you were, you were setting up a list for us.

**Rory Miller:**

There's a list. I used to be a way bigger jerk than I am now and I all this time I thought it was funny but actually just made people interpret it as funny. I went to seminar up and in Seattle, this is a sad part two you know who Johan Blooming is? John blooming?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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I've heard the name.

**Rory Miller:**

Okay. He was he was Don Drager's roommate during that whole period. He was the beast of Amsterdam, the reason why non-Japanese are not allowed to compete in the all japan tournament, he is a super high rank and super effective both kyoshin kai, karate and judo and he was coming to Seattle and these old dragons, you gotta see when you can because they aren't gonna live forever and this was many years ago now. Once in 2002 or 2003 and I just had something happen at work which was pretty extreme and knowing that you know, I'd be waiting for lawsuit for the next three years and I'm with a bunch of martial artists who are fantasizing about doing some stuff I wish I had not done and I'm in a really dark place that I can't miss the seminar. And blooming comes out and he's this old crippled up any he just changes completely his footsteps on the mat and he's an animal again. He's talking about one of his favorite strikes which has become one of my favorite strikes now is hitting with the on the little finger side of your palm, the small bone way down at the bottom if you do it is with action it has a huge amount of power and I've never hurt my hand with it yet, and you call it the shotay. So, he's demonstrating this he goes when you hit a man with your fist and you tear his ear off and you're sitting in a cold jail cell for four hours wondering if he's gonna die and what the police are going to charge you with. You wish you'd hit with something that just does the internal damage. It was like, okay I can totally learn from this guy, he gets my world. And it was it was just an awesome set, one point were doing the judo there's one guy, still remember his name and I sure would put on here you choose [00:23:26.25] Steve Choi was one of the so guys from Madigan up there and he came to this and he was he was a blast, he rolled me and he tapped me and it's was like nobody taps me. So, the next round I'm rolling with him and the first thing I do is maintain [00:23:45.06] and kinda stood over the edge of open water bottle drink it while I'm holding him down. And then I tied his elbow to his belt without him knowing and his running away and he was tied up he didn't know. So, I was not a very good person basically, but I think the stories are funny. That just me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When did you stop being a jerk?

**Rory Miller:**

I don't think I have but I married someone really, really smart who points it out now. So, I got a little less with less weasel room and I'm turning into much better person with a lot of mentoring. My wife has been trying to domesticate me for 30 years now and she's doing a pretty good job.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Those are great stories you know and there's some humor there. It sounds like you find the humor in a lot of things, I'm gonna guess even in things that most people wouldn't, am I right?

**Rory Miller:**

You have to. It's one of things, one of the things I would tell my rookies is it's okay if you take yourself seriously. It's okay if you take a job seriously but never both at the same time. If you do you'll burn out, you have to be laughing at something and laughing and crying are a lot the same but if you start crying there's always a chance you'll never stop, so you have to find the humor. As far as I know when you're dealing, when dealing with bad things I don't care whether you're emergency room surgeon, a medic, a soldier or what I was doing working in corrections, if you focus just on the poignancy or the pain or the, you see some incredibly messed up people and you know, and they turn into predators but they didn't have to, and you start finding out about childhoods and stuff. It's like if you can't find something in there to laugh at, you will burn out. So yeah, I've trained myself very hard to laugh as much as possible.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If you think back over the last however many years, and I ask you to pull out at time that was, let's call it bad, you know going through some bad stuff and in whatever capacity that was. You hinted at something I don't know if it's gonna be that or something else. And you leaned on your martial arts whether that's the physical or the internal side of it to get through it tell us about that time and how you move past.

**Rory Miller:**

The first time, martial arts, the original judo was kind of a sanctuary. I didn't know anything about people, I've been raised you know, in a desert basically on a survivalist compound, didn't know anything about people. Something physical, something mechanical, something I could understand was really good. And it's one of those that wasn't a dark time so much as a time where I was completely ignorant, naïve and it gave me a touchstone, it give me a place where the world always made sense and I can go from there and go out and try to figure out the rest world and come back there and the world makes sense. So, in that case, place and time is kinda like a harbor. Later you know, first serious relationship that broke up just threw myself on the physical training just try to exhaust myself every day and that was good. The worst when there's an essay in medications on violence the one about, you know, baggage. I had a really bad year and the weird thing is looking over my sink, I keep a little kinda, notebook journal, not a lot of detail because I was always afraid to be discoverable. If there is a lawsuit over use of force, but it's one of those that your action was not intense except it kinda was, and my first body recovery search and rescue was a guy's brains are splattered all over and taken a foot or a hundred-foot fall. Couple friends committed suicide, it's weird I blown a hole in someone with a firearm



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and the agency was never sure whether consider shooting because it was a less lethal round that malfunctioned, so is rubber bullets are supposed to hurt a lot and bounce off and they blew a hole on them like a shotgun shell. So that was and that was just unexpected, I think it's why that one hit me so hard and then the whole everyone treating you with kid gloves made it worse and all your supervisors going, well we want to advise you and talk to about this but were afraid if we do, will be named in law suit too. So that and that was also the one where my intention was to you know, it just training was what I did at the time you know I gotta go deal with it, go workout get sweaty, pound people around and that was the first time where I realized that most of the martial arts I was hanging out with did not get, did not understand what I did. And so that was, it was actually opposite of what you're saying is going to martial arts to, this is first time martial arts failed me and being able to work something out and it's the reason I started writing was to get it out of my head.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If you had a similar situation come up now, how would you handle it differently? What would, yeah god forbid right? But what would your tool kit for dealing with it be?

**Rory Miller:**

If I get to the edge, one of it is writing yourself therapy is really effective and I've gotten better at it. And then there's a bunch of stuff and I've got a blog out there but there's you know, within the blogger and dashboard there's probably 30 essays that I want published cause they're about stuff like this as it comes up, when it comes up in minor ways. So, writing is one sometimes shared sometimes not. Meditations is only published because Chris wilder did that without telling me. I have a better, I wish I had a better support network, I know there are lot of the same people I knew then but they're more mature, were able to deal with and I'm way more comfortable just talking about it. I don't have to sit there and pretend that I'm okay. I can sit there going you know what, I'm really not okay right now and I have people that I can sit down with them and talk about that so that, if I was advising someone else especially someone just going to [00:31:06.52] like this, maintain a good support network don't just lock in the people to do the same thing you do under the assumption only they can understand it, sometimes you need people that'll accept without understanding. You need people that'll listen and don't let people tell you you're supposed be messed up, it's all a process you're continuously growing changing, and change doesn't become pathological until you decide that you're messing it up in my opinion. So, and yeah, don't stop working out, one of the, well, where do you wanna go with this, how bad you want this to be?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm loving where this is going, this is a great direction. It's one that we have not had.



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**Rory Miller:**

One of my... A long time ago about in the era when the baggage thing was coming up, I was working graveyard shift with one of my deputies and he was going through a lot of personal stuff and so were sitting on the graveyard shift in a jail, the [00:32:15.37] is talking about mint flavored gun oil and a senior looked at me because you know no one is ever committed suicide because of the stuff that happened to him, they commit suicide because they think about it too much. And we make commitment from that time to keep moving to just do stuff and it's one of those you know, I don't wanna say no one, cause someone will come up with example but people don't kill themselves when they're working out, when they're training. Sometimes a they go on long hikes to do it, but it's one of those you keep moving that the thing is to keep living not to wallow. It's our physical animals every so often you have to remember that and go be physical animal for a while. And that's huge armor and huge healing to go into that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well said and succinctly said.

**Rory Miller:**

How many little kids go to get nightmares after listening to this now.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, I would I would hope that any small children that listen to the episodes have the parents you know, kinda curating a little bit. Because we do get into some heavy topics some time and this is you know, martial arts leads to a lot of stuff. I mean there is, there is at least, at least the premise of violence in what we do, if not the actual application.

**Rory Miller:**

It [00:33:43.09] that you were talking about violence.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If we take out that original judo experience which clearly was quite formative for you, I said who in the martial arts world, you've got that outside, you've got that law enforcement influence but if we corralled to the martial arts world, who's been the most influential? You're known as being a voice that speaks in a slightly different way within our sphere and I'm curious who you take as inspiration?



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### **Rory Miller:**

Two people [00:34:20.28] is Dave Sumner. Dave was my jiu-jitsu sensei. Say he is now pound for pound the best fighter I've ever run across. He's infectious, a truly good person all the way through but Dave who is able to take an arrogant, really arrogant young judoka and form a really and he did this with a lot of students. He made something really, really integrated fighters. People that don't separate offense and defense, they're all the same thing. They can lock, strike, throw, grapple and bite simultaneously. He was really good at not letting things get separating in our heads and just supremely skilled. And one of his, the story about Dave and I probably told us a lot so this won't be new to any of your listeners that have been following [00:35:18.10] when I first stumbled into jujitsu, I was looking for judo school. We just moved up to Portland, and judo as everyone, all right-thinking people knew was the ultimate martial art, I couldn't find a judo school but found a jujitsu school coast where we lived and it's like, well I guess, until I can find something better I'll spend some time with his primitive backwater judo variation, which is what I thought jiu-jitsu was at the time. At first Dave taught me three new entire principles to throwing, three, not three new throws but three entirely different categories of throws. It didn't exist in the judo curriculum. Wouldn't let me spar for the first couple weeks and I've done karate and some other stuff so I've been...and then he finally let me spar with him and he was just a little bit better than I was, I'm thinking okay I'll stay here for a little bit until I you know, I'll have what he has and I'll move on. And in one of his other black belts is this really old crippled up, [00:36:22.10] arthritic knuckles, spar with me and I go out there and Paul tore me apart. He literally toyed with me. I had not been toyed with at that level in years and I'm stepping off their you know trying to be all you know Zen that I was fuming cause you know, why isn't he teaching in his class, he's 10 times better than Dave, and then I watch him sparring Dave, but Dave was 1/2 much better than Paul was and in the, until I got near the very, very end of the training Dave had that skill to take anyone from beginner to some workmen who is a national champion, cause he did that the couple times. I witnessed and just be 1/2 notch better than they were and just give you that feeling, if I just work a little bit harder I can take him. And you work little bit harder he'd be just enough better to keep you on that hook, keep you working your off to get better. So, Dave deftly hugely formative in me and I would say that she was my transition from pure martial artist to actually doing it as a fighting system. Whether he knew or not cause I don't think Dave was, Dave was to like I say, one the most effective fighters I've ever seen but so absolutely nice that he could talk. And the second Paul Mccredman mac. The other big martial influence in my life. I met him [00:37:51.51] shares off his career he is the Vietnam that with more black belts than he has fingers, who worked in jail for a and then worked enforcement for a while and doesn't retire very well, he's retired like three times and keeps coming back in various capacities because he can't not fight. And he's getting and old crippled up and the mac thinks differently and he would throw some stuff out there that you know, he would challenge me to do stuff you know well you're gonna be working in the jail, next time you get in a fight, try this. And most of the psychological on my part, mac is a kinda guy who go see is just too sure will you can have no fights happen in the whole jail all night. I was like, are you kidding me? And he had me experiment with a lot of things that actually worked out pretty amazingly. And for the



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teaching side he was were thinking experimenting with principle based teaching, he was experimenting at the same time with awareness based teaching and when we got together, started comparing notes on that made from really good system to get people good fast.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It almost sounds like the two halves usual one being the physical strong physical influence, the other being the strong mental influence.

**Rory Miller:**

Yeah that's just a good way to put it. Dave had one way and when I asked him, cause I read a lot so it's like, so I read someone saying that you know all martial arts have a spiritual element and it's like Dave, once a spiritual element that goes with the system a jujitsu and he goes, well dead people don't get to go home and pray.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Love it. We're you successful at keeping the whole group from fighting for an entire evening by sheer will when that happened?

**Rory Miller:**

We had a night with no fights while I was doing that, I doubt seriously I had anything whatsoever to do with it. But the idea that I could... I would work place and go in and try to manage, mac was taught [00:40:28.57] managing energy but managing your presence. And it's one of those if I can go into a place, normally pretty tense, and be not obsequious leaf friendly but, you know engaged and alert and not like I'm looking for trouble. But if I did find trouble I would be there to help you not get in trouble with your trouble and that and not just with the inmates, with the deputies then attempt to have a pretty good outcome. You could basically get one relaxed person and emotions are contagious that relaxation would also be contagious. And when you can when you can have that presentation in a use of force, so you're here knocking somebody down and sooner their legs out from under a grab and there's twist them into handcuffing position but you're talking to him like you know, part that we really don't have a choice in this point and just have to go on. Soon as you actually put handcuffs on everything stops get you to a cell, get you some food, everything will be all right you need to relax partner. And when this is happening when the physicality is intense, it does a definite cognitive dissonance on the person, the subject and a lot of them would surrender a lot faster and weirdly they will play it back in their heads, one guy came back to me 14 years later after one of these, after he got out of prison and it was like, he actually said I want to thank you because I was being a hard headed kid and you were sitting



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there and trying to talk me down, I couldn't see the time but I wanted to thank you. So, he been thinking about this for 14 years, I didn't remember it. So, there is a lot of the stuff that mac advised me to do or to try work really well, I don't think necessarily for the reasons I'm not big on there's a spiritually universal unconscious that I can manipulate, but it still worked sometimes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now if you had the opportunity to train with someone new, anywhere in the world, anywhere in time, who would you want to work out with?

**Rory Miller:**

Let's see. I would love to play with Sonny Umpad for sword cause in fairly modern, there is something at as it's totally different t [00:43:08.46] but sometimes I think about uechi karate because it's so not like anything I do. It's alotta kata but there is, but I see some stuff in there, structure that I would really, really like to play with. I would've loved to be at the early kotokan and have some of the early guys see exactly what they had. The let's say, I can keep going forever because there's all the history I want to see. I think the European swords schools were probably just as good or better than the Japanese, they just happened to hit at the preliterate phase and I like to play with that. A good Italian renaissance fencing master would be awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Have you gotten into the hema, the historical European stuff that's growing right now?

**Rory Miller:**

Yeah, I played with some of them, one of things that in college is fencing and I did sca for a while which is fun. I liked it a lot of the hema that was really, really passionate really, really good. I played with the guy in Oakland whose fun [00:44:35.59] instructors name is [00:44:37.13] guy Windsor, I like his books, I met him he's fun, josh Amos out here so it's there and it's fun but I would want to find a group to play with as opposed to ones that are trying to re-create manuals that they barely understand so I'm really big on play as a training method far more than trying to re-create something.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How do you use that word then, play? Different people use it in different ways and for the listeners, if you could, if we could define play in this context, what would that be?



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**Rory Miller:**

Good question. Sparring is obvious because we think about martial arts and sparring is a game and again the harder faster you do it the more you have to have safety flaws. So, one of the bad things about playing fast and hard is that you get better at not hurting people that you are hurting people. So that's the side that play is the way animals naturally get good at stuff. They don't learn by rote, cats don't learn to hunt by sitting down and writing, diagramming out. They got they pounce each other and they have fun with it. So play engages the fun part of your brain, it's chaotic by it's nature, you can't predict what's supposed to happen and that's the only way we get good at chaos is by playing. I think those are the two biggest elements. One of the long term, okay two things. If you look at a kid and how fast he get good at a video game, it's because I go through that first screen that tells them what the buttons do, the tutorial and then they play and they're competent in a couple hours. People they, try to get good at chaos by rote and tend spend years at it and never get nearly as good as someone who place literally for hours and that was [00:46:41.43] about judo is, if you know, this is to deadly the practice, if I take techniques that are less deadly that I can play hard with [00:46:52.22] and they'll someone whose techniques are technically superior, but they don't have the confidence in them, so that play element is huge. So, animals naturally learn... Okay, I think I am gonna go with that. Did that help or not?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah that helps a lot and in fact I really like the videogame analogy because you've seen you know, a kid he's playing and one of the parents tries to engage and sits down picks up a controller, how do you do it and then they pick up the book, right? Fall back on the book how do we do this and they sit there and there are reading the book after reading the book, still doesn't make sense. There's still no context for it. You got to immerse and make mistakes.

**Rory Miller:**

That's nice. That's a really nice... Cause I thought of the book, I was thinking coaching you know, of we tried to coach martial art, or coach video game the way we coach martial arts, you know, how good is someone over their shoulder screaming, they're using the wrong part of their thumb on the x button. If we could, if I could fix martial arts in general, I do like racquetball so it's basically, that sounds like fun I wanna play racquetball. So, you play with your friends you beat the out of each other for little bit and then you go, ooh, I want to get better at this, so you go take a lesson from somebody and then you back and you're better and then you're better at beating up your friends and then you they start to catch up with you and you go take another lesson. I think that that would be so much healthier and make this again rather than lineages and styles people that are just good at doing something.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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If we have several school owners and instructors listening, it sounds like you might be suggesting to them the spend a little bit more time in free-form exercises rather than rigid basics practice?

**Rory Miller:**

Well if you want people to if you want people to be good under pressure, yeah, absolutely and the pattern that I use is you don't have a game, a general game and for me it's at low level skills it's a one step, which is a slow-motion but full contact, full tent at the higher level as in fighting randori which is chest to chest to back, and just a plain touching. You stay at that range and no holds barred but you have to control contact. So, you have a general game and then you have icon breakouts, so we come out, we work on one piece of that like striking or power generation or leverage for. I'll have a class and usually in that class there's a specific game for it, when I'm teaching leverage for instance, have you ever played chase our sticky hands?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes.

**Rory Miller:**

That's a [00:49:43.38] contact. Okay, so we have a variation that where you're playing chi sau and we take turns, but as you're doing it my job is to let you get close enough to my face that I can put the hand behind your elbow and take your whole-body structure and spin you take a completely off balance or put you on your toes or lock into the elbow with my elbow in and take off balance. So just an idea where that leverage point is at the end of the humerus and that they can catch almost all the time and so they play with it. See you play this back and forth and then you go back, so general game breakout skill building session, specific game and you throw them back in the general game and suddenly these leverage points which you know in the seminar format, you know, no one ever thought of 20 minutes are now just part of their fighting style they can't not see them anymore and that's why play gets people so good so fast. So, take him out, teach him show how suites work, thrown him back in the game, take him out show him targeting, throw him back in the game and that's when we're talking about the method that gets people competence fast. It's mostly about the play-based, they don't have to memorize techniques if they know the elements of what makes a technique work. You already know what hurts on the human body cause we have a human body your whole life. And when you change it from this is where you throw him to the fist, you know, don't hurt your hand when you hit something bony, it's like, ooh they're not gonna use the fist. And because everyone knows that no one's gonna hit a brick with a fist unless they've been trained to watch way too much television. So, you know you don't have to teach the stuff that they already know, and you put them in a game where they feel really, really





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good when it works and they feel a little crappy and embarrassed when it doesn't work and they continuously get better.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Where does the notion of competition fall into all this for you? You mentioned that you have competed.

**Rory Miller:**

Yeah, I and I love... Okay. I hate competition but it is good for me and I don't hate the head-to-head competition, I hated the idea that someone that hadn't been on the mat for years would be in a position to judge the people that are on the mat. I never liked the audience and I never liked, the rest have a safety thing and they can point out stuff but the judges, that was a part always bugged me about competition was being judged part. So, it's one of those competition play resistance absolutely important but I have a personal thing about, I want, I want the person tell me whether I'm good or not to be on the mat with me and feeling it not looking from the side in deciding if I look pretty enough when I did what I did. So that's one piece of the competition thing. The other thing is, if you do a noncompetition style or you do non-kata a style where there's one party or system, or you do a kata style not a non-kata, or if there's is one part of your system you don't like, I encourage you to do whatever that is until you don't mind. It's the whole essence of self-defense is doing stuff it's pretty icky. And so, if there's something within your system you find icky on any level, part of your training is to do that. If you find kata boring and pointless, then practicing again and urge you to doing things you don't like to do, to doing chores which are big part of being an adult and doing life and it can also lead you to a point where you can meditate to the point you're doing stuff and using your brain for other things. So, whatever you don't like, I really encourage you to find the value in it and sometimes values just to run it even though you don't like it cause I guarantee you that you ever have to put your hands-on a meth freak is all scabby and covered with various oozing pustules, we are going to want to have some practice at doing things you don't like to do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That is both a very powerful reason for doing forms, kata, and a unique one. I have not heard that one before, of course is quite the discussion in the martial arts world lately but I love how you kinda brought the two sides together.

**Rory Miller:**



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yeah. Same for competition, if you don't want competition that in and of itself is reason to do it. If it scares you and mostly it's intense fear of again, audiences being judged or way more people rather fight than sing in public the fact that it scares you is reason enough to do it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Obviously, you are an author. Sure, a lot of the people listening have read your books or at least are familiar with your books. And were gonna talk about your books and in a few minutes here, but I want to talk to other people's books. What books do you enjoy? What would you recommend to the audience other than books you've authored?

**Rory Miller:**

I have an entire reading list on my webpage,

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay. Let's listen to that.

**Rory Miller:**

Okay I'll send you link when I do the linking thing on the page you sent me. There's a whole bunch of good people written some really good books. I like Lauren Christiansen's stuff. There's other stuff that I think you got it you gotta keep a very skeptical mind and a lot of people not practice that skepticism. When you one of the unfortunate things about writing a book as you get automatic credibility, so even if you're just kind of you know, doing a puff piece for yourself, people can tell the difference and that's... [00:55:46.00] so you want specific recommendations?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

A couple would be great and of course folks you know if you're new to the show or maybe you forgotten, if you driving don't you don't risk death, we'll put all this up [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) that's where we do all the show notes. Go ahead yeah, if you could give us just a couple.

**Rory Miller:**

I knew couple of my favorite martial arts book of all time is judo and self-defense by Bartlett and it's a British book and he set it up as 100 lessons to black belt but the cool thing was that every time I was having trouble with the technique I would open that book and he would write at the bottom of the



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technique of the points to watch in connection with this throw and he would tell me exactly what was not working and why. So that was just very cool for me as a young judoka, I love that book. One of the and try to do some stuff that's a little bit off the side here, so one of the interesting books that one my students, one of seminar students said you have to read this and sent me a copy, improv by Keith Johnstone and it is a book about teaching improvisational acting. And it may be one of the best books I've seen on teaching fighting once you grab the similarities. Because of things that mess up and improv scene are the same things that mess up a fight, it's trying to be clever, trying to remember what you're supposed to do anything that doesn't come from the nature of the character and when the big one [00:57:20.28] stopping the action. Especially are smaller and weaker, you have more opportunity and movement than you ever will in and immobility so when something is coming at you hard, instead of trying to stop it, you try to use it and get out of the way creatively and it's on. It was just really interesting in this book from something that is probably from a guy that's if I said, oh this is a good book on fighting would probably mess themselves. But really, really cool taken it from that side. So, I again, encouraging you, read the stuff within whatever it is you want to teach but sometimes reach out to stuff completely outside and you will get some huge insights.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'd never considered a similarity between improv and fighting. I did some improv in college and yours is spot on, I get it.

**Rory Miller:**

I didn't either till I read this book, it's like I haven't done any acting it's like I'm reading a book on acting why am I reading book. Oh, wait this is, oh he nailed this. Yeah. It was one of the things he had a whole section on status displays and it's like, this should be part of self-defense training. How to you know, how to sell exactly where you want to be in the hierarchy. So, yeah. There's a lot of really cool stuff out there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Before we start talking about your books, couple last kind of fun questions I like asking these, you watch martial arts movies?

**Rory Miller:**

Yes, yes. Absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Okay.

**Rory Miller:**

And the best of all time is the last dragon.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You kinda hedged before you said yes and I'm kind curious why.

**Rory Miller:**

Well it's, cause I've been doing a lot less of that lately and at the same time there's a lot of action-adventure movies which have better martial arts than a lot of the old martial arts movies did. It's my current addiction is a TV show called banshee which is like the Deadpool version of justified it is awesome. Completely over-the-top violence, completely ridiculous plot line and it works really, really well. So, I still watch movies but a lot of the whole martial arts as a specific genre is just blended into everything else.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Very true, very true. Quite often on the show we have people holding up movies that are not thought of as martial arts movies, you know. The raid, or john wick as their favorite kinda current martial arts movies of choice.

**Rory Miller:**

The raid was really cool.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For sure.

**Rory Miller:**

But the best is the last dragon. Bruce Leroy versus the shogun of Harlem.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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It's a classic movie and if you've been a long-time listener you know that we had tai mak on the show. That was just so much fun for me.

**Rory Miller:**

When you talk to him next time tell him I'm mad that he didn't keep that acting going cause that was awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay I will tell him. I'm sure he wants to hear that from me. Yeah cause I think it was last year they reached out to us, cause I think it was last year they were still rating the was at the 30-year anniversary or 25-year anniversary that movie, so there's a big media tour it was over the place, it was a lot of fun.

**Rory Miller:**

I'm getting old.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

One of my favorite jokes from, completely non-martial arts related, I'll share this. If you familiar with the comedian who's passed on mitch hedberg, did all these brilliant often substance influenced one-liners. Here's a picture of me when I was younger, every picture is of you when you were younger. We can't help but to and help

**Rory Miller:**

There's one way to stop that I'm not recommending it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Fair enough fair enough. I will accept that I'm wrong on that one. Let's talk about your books. You mentioned earlier that meditations was originally published without your permission?

**Rory Miller:**

Not without my permission. The original id written it kind of visit as a [01:02:00.17] as the thing that I would eventually pass on my students that all the things you can't teach in class. It was kinda what I was doing with it, it was self-therapy it was just a big psychic vomit and I sent it to couple of friends that



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we're you know, experienced the martial artist just to get their feet back and Chris and I don't know if you know Chris wilder, but Chris's brilliant and he can be obnoxious when he wants to but he has published several books YMAA and he called me and he goes, oh hey I got that manuscript that you sent me, cool. I was on my phone the publisher when it came in so I just sent it on to him, I hope you don't mind. And that is just a jolt of adrenaline when he said that and yeah so it was always one of those things and maybe have been thinking about, maybe this could be a good book to publishing but, I think the part of me that shy, never would've done it. So, Chris just completely went around that part of my personality and then after that I was a writer so I kept it up.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How many books do you have out?

**Rory Miller:**

This gonna sound really stupid because I don't know, I have well, did I have roughly okay I got; meditations on violence, facing violence, force decisions, scaling force and conflict communications, and maybe another one from YMAA, but I also have some e-books that I put out for myself including like blog compilations and those are the one's that I probably lose count of and one self published, which is for writers, violence writer's guide.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, a few more than one or two you certainly are right.

**Rory Miller:**

I'm getting a note from the peanut gallery here. And talking them through is an e-book on talking down emotionally disturbed people. So, it's my wife is trying not to make noise while were recording so she's kinda trying to mouth this, I was like I don't know what you're saying. I don't know what you're saying so she just came over wrote down, talking them through, because she likes that one.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Why does she like that one? What's different about that versus the others?

**Rory Miller:**



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That was based from the class I did for the sheriff's office on how to talk down people that were in extreme emotional distress or it was extreme mental illness and there's not a lot on that subject. It's been most of it is but say I'm trying to say this without being mean... Most of it is clinical fantasy. You get someone that's never talk to someone who was at least stable enough to get to their office, trying to tell officers what to do when someone is literally stabbing themselves in the stomach to show that they're serious. And just one of those, it's more there's just not a lot of information out of it and secretly she probably likes it because that's one of the first cover she did for me and the covers pretty dramatic.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice. We're gonna have, of course all these books mentioned over on the show notes. If someone's new to your book, where would you suggest they start?

**Rory Miller:**

People are different if you need the gut check, the psychological you know, if you're either really, really sure a really, really in doubt, meditations on violence, tends to hate people an emotional level. If you want something really, really useful facing violence, for almost anyone that conflict communications, that was kind of weird it was originally mark McKenna and I were trying to put together de-escalation program for police to talk criminals down, but the beta test classes were more impressed that the feedback was yeah this does work on criminals, this is explains my boss and my wife and we'd stumbled on something way bigger we had. So, if you get yourself a lot of conflicts he can't figure out why, conflict communication is a pretty good model for instructors and for people who actually want to dig into their own psychology of it, the drills manual which is why training for sudden violence my working title is just drills, so that's what is in my head. There's a bunch of books out there, it depends on what you're looking for but there's something out there probably will help.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And if people want to get a hold of you, or find your website or I believe you offer seminars as well, if someone wants all that information, where will they find out?

**Rory Miller:**

That's on my website [chirontraining.com](http://chirontraining.com) and Chiron is c h I r o n and then [training.com](http://training.com) and I don't update it all that often but it has a calendar for the rest the year and I'm about to post 2018 and maybe a 2019 calendar as well. So, changes constantly, next gig is first weekend of December and Valkyrie martial arts up in BC, Vancouver BC and I'll be a full [01:08:17.31] so I'll be teaching with the randy king,



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tammy r McCracken, and Casey Kaiser and those tend be very, very fun seminars. Which I'm not allowed in Maine because I want to call it the vd clinic. That was dynamic seminar, right? Vd clinic.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely, well you may have some folks coming in off the street looking for something different.

**Rory Miller:**

Yeah and that's that was why I'm told I'm not allowed to name things anymore. But I liked it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Dig it. What parting advice last words would you give to the folks listening?

**Rory Miller:**

Okay I got something for you. Never train out of fear, never train because you're afraid of what will and bad guys will do to you, you got a train because you loved the training. You're hanging out with cool people, you learn how to throw big people downstairs, you doing all that fun stuff makes you stronger, make faster, makes you better, but if you're doing it because you're afraid of what bad guys will do, they're already controlling your life even if their imaginary. Never do anything your life out of fear, it's fundamentally toxic. Do everything you want to do out of love.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I found Rory Miller to be a very deep insightful man. His passion for teaching paired with this humility it's inspiring. But then again so is almost everything else about him. Thank you for being on the show. And thank you for listening to the show, if you want to check out the other episodes you can find those at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) you can find all of our products and our other projects at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) social media wise, were @whistlekick and you can find our show notes for this episode with Mr. Miller, see can't help but do it, his social media and the other stuff over on [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) this was an episode that several of you were asking for quite a few of you actually had written and asking that we get Rory Miller for an interview and we did. And I just offer that as a reminder that if there someone that you want us to talk to, don't be afraid to reach out. You can get to me directly [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) and the website, common social media, wherever that goes, somebody will get it to me, don't worry. That's all for today. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.





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