



Episode 248 – Sensei Robert McQuade | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey! All my dear friends played sports well now I finally have something. Welcome to Whistle Kick Martial Arts Radio episode 248 and on today's show we have Sensei Robert McQuade. This is gonna be a fun one, if you're new to the show you should check out everything we do with this show at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You can find everything else that we do all the wonderful things we do from the products to the websites to the services to the all of it at whistlekick.com. We're always dropping in new stuff for you and the best way to find about the new stuff, it's with the newsletter subscription we do those just a few times a month and it actually. I know that this is being recorded in the past versus when you're listening to it because we haven't figured out time travel but I just put up a new shirt design in the store people are going nuts for it so if you want to know about the stuff, you got to check out the newsletter you know what I haven't done yet. I haven't told you who I am, my name is Jeremy, I'm your host on this show I'm the founder of the Whistle Kick a sparring gear and apparel. I am a passionate martial artist and I love my job. I love my job because I get to talk to people like today's guests since he Robert McQuade he was a self-proclaimed lazy kid who only played video games all day which is why his parents were forced to send him to a martial arts school. He didn't want to go, until he stepped foot in the door and he became amazed by the movements of his instructor from that moment he was focused on his goal of becoming a great martial artist which based on talking to based on what I know of the guy he's certainly achieved. Let's welcome him, Sensei McQuade welcome to whistle kick martial arts radio.



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Robert McQuade:

Thank you so much for having me it's absolutely my pleasure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh it is it is my pleasure. As I've said on the show I have the best job in the world I get to talk to martial artists and call it work and indirectly I actually make my living from doing this so how awesome is that and it's great to have you here you know we've been Facebook friends for I don't even know how long but this is our first time really talking.

Robert McQuade:

Yeah absolutely we've been Facebook friends for quite a while and ever since I heard the episodes with you, know master Dave Kovar and master chip Townsend I was definitely a fan and I I was very happy to find you on Facebook and hopefully or not hopefully I was very happy to ultimately connect with you and and get myself on the show it's, it's amazing to be here. I'm very excited.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well you mentioned some pretty great people right there you are in good company and I'm in good company too because I get to talk to you and I am always humbled at hearing the wonderful stories that our guests have to share with not just me but with the audience who is, is out there in the ether in the future. We were just listeners we were just discussing that as the show has grown the delay between recording and airing is something that we're trying to manage because unfortunately we have more than one person a week approaching and I don't like to say no so it's kind of built up this backlog but we're working through it we're figuring it all out and regardless of any of that you're here today. You're here to talk about martial arts aren't you?

Robert McQuade:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Something that we both love, something I'm assuming all the listeners love

Robert McQuade:

I would assume so yeah absolutely



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Jeremy Lesniak:

I know there are a couple out there that, have just become fans of the stories and I hear from them from time to time they'll write in. I'm not a martial artist but I find this show motivating or inspiring or I love the stories or whatever else and hey cool I'm not gonna tell them they can't listen,

Robert McQuade:

Yeah that's amazing. I didn't know that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah it's certainly is a minority probably you know 1% but

Robert McQuade:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know if someone gets value from the show whether it's you know it keeps them awake while they're doing homework or it helps them fall asleep because they find the sound of my voice so terrible. I'm not gonna take that away from them

Robert McQuade:

That's great

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm not here to talk about listener demographics here to talk about the ways that I you know could improve my, my diction. We're here to talk about the martial arts and your role in the martial arts so let's get started how you became a martial artist.

Robert McQuade:

Sure absolutely so as when I was younger I was a little bit on the lazy side I would just come home from school play video games. I was not interested in exercise in the least and when I was about 12 years old my mom had come home one day and told me she signed me up for martial arts and I was also kind of a brat I was a very spoiled brat where if I didn't like something that my parents did I would, you know make it known so I fought with her a little bit. I told her I didn't want to go and I refused to go to my first



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class which is pretty amazing, if he asked me now and when we went to that I had an instructor by the name of Brandon Apal. I can drop names on this right Jeremy? That's fine.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely, yeah please.

Robert McQuade:

Okay cool, it was a guy by the name Brandon Apal and as a 12 year old, so Brandon was 18 and he was a second-degree black belt which that was the first experience I ever had realizing that black belts don't have to be like adults or middle age. I always thought that like oh you're a black belt you should you know you obviously have twenty thirty forty years experience but it's not that usually and this kid could flip and trick and it was the coolest thing in the world and I fell in love, I absolutely loved it and the martial arts became something I just latched on too and my other instructor was a man by the name of Bill Williams who I still know and still learn from to this day he's one of my co-workers. Now, now that I run a school and yeah between him and Brandon and another guy who was still very relevant in our action karate family his name is Michael St. John his students call him Sensei Michael, you know though three guys really taught me a lot about my life a lot about martial arts and a lot about Kempo which is our style of martial arts so a 12 year, 12 years old I was hooked man, I was hooked.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So here we are 12 years old a self-proclaimed lazy kid.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir

Jeremy Lesniak:

That doesn't happen too often people you know well maybe I wasn't the most motivated you know maybe the parents will confess later on in life it was kind of a lazy kid but you're pretty aware of it were you aware of it then?

Robert McQuade:

Uhm,. I don't remember exactly I feel like I feel like no or, or maybe I was I just didn't. I don't know if I cared like who I cared about was playing video games I was very I was I don't love it very I've know some people who are like extremely overweight but I was I definitely wasn't in good shape. I just wanted to play video games I would stay home all day and I don't know if I I might have known like hey I got to do



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something about this but I don't know if I was concerned about it per side if that makes sense. I think I might have been aware but not concerned you know what I mean and that's why when martial arts became like you know my mom was like I signed you up for martial arts. You're gonna go have fun you're gonna go you know exercise I was like whoa whoa whoa whoa I don't want to do all that stuff and then sure enough I, I was like this is pretty awesome saying that was the first thing I found I didn't really do sports as a kid I, I wasn't really too into it until I got older in terms of sports I'm now a very very avid soccer fan I love soccer back then I hated it. I didn't want to run so I think, I think martial arts was the first thing I really had that it was like, oh hey this is like my thing hey, you know what I mean sir?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah so I'm curious even in a video games where you're playing

Robert McQuade:

Oh yeah that's a great question. I actually have that in in my notes for hobbies to talk about later on but I played a lot of uh, I remember specifically around that at that time I had Nintendo 64 and I played Super Mario 64 was one of my big ones. I used to play a Goldeneye, I had PlayStation 1. I'm a big one I play station 2 I'm sorry I'm a huge pro wrestling fan as well and so I played a lot of pro wrestling video games like Smackdown and that stuff so yeah. I used to do that a whole lot

Jeremy Lesniak:

I played some Goldeneye in college I had some friends that were really into it and this was the late 90s and for folks that aren't video game fans. Goldeneye was one of the really first console based shooting games where you could play against each other instead of just playing against the game yeah. It was easy, it was a lot of fun and yet these people there were four of them that lived in an on-campus apartment and they scrounged for TVs connected them together and blacked out with construction paper. The three quarters of the screen that showed the other people playing because typically you folks would play with one TV so they had this arrangement where they would sit in a cross pattern and they could only see what they were doing they got into it that much they had four TVs in the middle of the floor on a table and and they just they went all out single

Robert McQuade:

Oh my god

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.



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Robert McQuade:

I was dedicated to it

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've never met anyone else that was

Robert McQuade:

Yeah right right that seems a little extreme but that's cool though if you got that set up I guess once it's all set up you can, you would probably you know that person was probably the, the king of the parties and his friend group.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely now here you are you're 12 you went you did a complete 180 from I don't want to go to martial arts to it becoming your thing. How quickly did that transition?

Robert McQuade:

How quickly did it become like my total thing and and what I loved

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Robert McQuade:

From when I started was that your question?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yes.

Robert McQuade:

Okay cool sorry about that so I started and I latched on to a really quick and I was obsessed for a few months and then something happened when I got in our style Kempo, you reach purple belt around a year and I know every style is usually different around purple belt I, I left and I stopped for I think it was about like a month and a half and I can't remember exactly why I think I got so into it that like I went all



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the time and it got to be something where it was like I kind of burned myself out I think and I stopped going. I told my mom and dad I didn't want to go back and they fought with me as you know every good parent should you know and eventually I stopped going. I stopped going for about a month and a half and then something happened where one day, I was just like man I miss it and I remember coming home from school and I was literally, I don't know why but I was in tears and I said to my mom I want to go back call, call Mr. Williams who was, but who was Bill Williams our head instructor at the time then when I mentioned earlier and see if he wants see if you'll allow me to come back into class and she did and of course I was and I latched back on again but I think it was really quick Jeremy it was very fast I realized that hey all my other friends played sports when now I finally have something, yeah so. I went hard and fast and then it caught up to me took a break came back and did it all over again it and it kind of hit me again I got obsessed with it again around the time I was a brown belt which is about two years in that's when we started learning like to jump, spin kicks and stuff and I thought, I thought that that class was extremely challenging but also very fun and around that time I started going to class every single day which our schedule is people are recommended to go two times a week if they want to accomplish perfect attendance in our in our, in our school but they can go every day if they want, we have unlimited attendance so that's why I started to do when I was at Brown but I started going every single day and I think that was the peak of my like. Alright, now it really hit me so, it hit me early on but about two years in as what a real bit me and I was like I was going everyday. I was determined to make it on the demo team which was a huge goal of mine and and yeah so that's when it really hit me hard. I would say about two years in

Jeremy Lesniak:

Tell me about that demo team. What was it about that, that interested you?

Robert McQuade:

Ah man it was the coolest thing I thought I used to so their practices you used to be on Tuesday nights well right before my class and this is when I was going every day so I would go and I would literally sit there and watch the demo team. I thought hey, if I'm here it's probably a better chance that I'd get invited on the team the challenge I thought was a, I was a lot older well not a lot older but our demo team was fairly new so it was like, it's not like you would see that like team Paul Mitchell or it was nine ten eleven year olds and by that time I was about 15. So I was older, I was taller, so I knew if I was going to get on the team it would have to be in some sort of captain role or coach role. So I know I had to be really good so I would watch the routines I literally at one point I knew their whole routine it was to the theme of Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen that's not really relevant but I just like mention things. I think it's funny.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a good tune



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Robert McQuade:

What you say sir?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a good tune

Robert McQuade:

It is a great team but I would never expect a demo to do it you know what I mean normally you hear the vamp you didn't need any or you know whatever but anyway it's a great song and one day, I was watching practice and I'll never forget this for as long as I live. I'm sitting there watching practice our coach was sensei Michael St. John that the person I mentioned earlier and he asked me to come on the mat and I'm like oh my god and Jeremy I was like oh my god this is finally happening and he asked me to come on the mat and asked me if I would control the music while the team performed and I was like no, I thought he was calling me from the stands like put me in coach. I thought it was time but now it wasn't so it was very appealing to me and when I actually got on it there were the time action karate which is my company has well not might come down on it but it's the company I work for has an instructor here who was a like 10 time I think or fifteen time world champion Anthony Atkins. Have you ever heard that name Jeremy?

Jeremy Lesniak:

We have heard the new

Robert McQuade:

So Anthony Atkins is our head instructor of our Huntington Valley School and he came to us and he was already a world champion so he like knew so much about martial arts to begin with. He was hosting a camp it was a six week long camp and and it was open to all the schools but it was only they were only accepting like ten people but it was like a couple hundred bucks which for Anthony Atkins if you've ever and for those who are listening if you get a chance to YouTube the name Anthony Atkins cause he is a heck of a performer at a heck of a coach but so. When I saw that camp, come up I was like I knew I had to do it I didn't know how I was gonna do it cuz again I was 15. I was I hadn't started working at all yet and I had no money so what I did was I started picking up all my old video games and trying to see how many video games I could sell to try to take this camp. My mom and dad caught me doing that asked what I was doing I told them about it and they offered to take me to it and they said if you take it seriously you don't have to sell video games we'll pay for it but you need to take it seriously and I said this is it. This is how I'm gonna get on the demo team and it was me and five other people for we trained for Friday nights from 7 to 9 o'clock with Anthony Atkins in Huntington Valley Pennsylvania and my dad



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took me every Friday so and it was hard it was really tough but with two weeks left in the camp Michael St. John and Mr. Williams you know my instructors asked me to be on the demo team and it was the coolest thing ever. I was super excited so with two weeks left in the camp that was asked of me, a week after the camp ended I was appointed captain of the demo team which that can't was like so obviously 95 percent responsible for me reaching those two goals so I was very happy about that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What did that moment feel like because there's a lot there, there's a lot of anticipation and drive and you know you set that as a goal you were very aware that you would have to be that much better than even the majority of the people because of your age. So what did that feel like when you finally were asked to participate but be a captain?

Robert McQuade:

It was amazing it was I can't it's hard to even describe it there are two moments for me well no I'm sorry. There might be a couple more but there are two moments for me that's stand out as the greatest moments in my martial arts career and that was absolutely one of them I still remember walking in the office that day I remember him sitting me down I remember him asking me it was literally like a 25 second conversation but it was incredible because it was literally do you want to be on the demo team. Yes sir, okay great that's it you're on so to him you know to my instructor it was a quick conversation for me it was hours and hours and hours of practice and hard work and dedication. It was amazing it was possibly one of the coolest things I've ever experienced and at that point in my life I hadn't had a moment like that yet so at the time I wasn't like like oh I'm gonna remember this forever I just I knew it was special I just couldn't put into words.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can feel the emotion as you're talking about it I've had a few of those moments myself but what I'm thinking about as you're talking about it is how many of those that we have in the martial arts pretty much every

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Rank promotion or award for competition or being on a demo team and really it's it's a moment that is reflective of so many other moments of practice and dedication and sacrifice



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Robert McQuade:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And the moment you've I mean if we think about it in terms of belts you know we earn a new color or stripe and then we go back to training you worked so hard to be on the demo team you get on the demo team but that wasn't the end of your work I mean you had to work just as hard if not harder

Robert McQuade:

Yes, absolutely it was very challenging our instructor Ryan practice half of it was like actually performing our routines and the other half was just like strictly working out hard and doing drills over and over and over. I can't tell you how many chop punches we did I can't tell you how many times I finger roll two comma we used to do practices especially with Anthony Atkins. There were a couple times when we performed for the Philadelphia soul halftime show and there was only one time where I got to do it because I got on the team and then the year after is when we did the Philadelphia soul for the last time and I think we've done it since then I just wasn't on a team. I was just an instructor those times but the one time I did it I was our groups we had every demo team perform for the Philadelphia soul so we split them up into three groups. It was the the basic the intermediate and the the elite team and I was like okay I'll probably be on intermediate. I was amazed when I was asked to be on the elite team so we were coached again by Anthony Atkins and and that was probably the most intense time. I've had on the demo team because it was me and and I don't think I would admit it back then actually I probably would. I was probably the worst martial artist in the room at the time because it was all people with ten plus years more experience than me and I was still coming up but I like that. I learned a whole lot from those guys I'd rather be the worst than the best in the room. I like to teach people but at the same time I love to learn and that was just intense we would practice sometimes for four or five hours at a time just to get ready for this one performance but that was another intense moment as when we got to go out there in front of people. We had no clue who they were and it was actually on a football field and it was incredible. I never thought I would ever have the chance to do that and had I not did everything I could to sign up for that Anthony Atkins camp very beginning and certainly don't think I would have gotten there maybe I would have who knows but I definitely owe a lot to that camp and and as you said yeah the hard work did not end by making it on the team. It was a constant struggle once I was on the team to keep motivated and just be like now I gotta get better I gotta get better I gotta get better so yeah absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We're getting a glimpse into who you are and your approach to the martial arts as a lifestyle



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Robert McQuade:

I hope so absolutely

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well that's kind of the goal here right we're trying to tell you're story.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir

Jeremy Lesniak:

But I want to hear more stories

Robert McQuade:

Okay.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And if I was to put you on the spot which is exactly what I'm doing right now and say what is your favorite martial arts story, what would you tell me?

Robert McQuade:

Okay. I have, I have a couple both but I'll try to keep them a little bit you know not like super long stories but my the first one that comes to mind is the first moment when I knew I wanted to be an instructor. It was an instructor college which what we would do is we would have leadership team and instructor meetings which would be like a half hour or an hour and then there was the instructor colleges where it would be like four or five hours of just constant working on your skills and developing. There was one college that was held by a man named Greg Silva do you know who Greg Silva sir?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't.

Robert McQuade:



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Okay he's actually really amazing too. He is I would possibly put him in with the the group of you know master Kovar master, master Raphold and master Townsend but anyway master Silva he has an amazing book to building black belts from the inside out and so he was hosting this college for us and I've never met him before and it was one time. I was, we were doing inside Crescent kicks down the mat I was holding a clapper target for someone else we were practicing our drills and it was all the way down and I was trying my best because I again. I never met this guy before I wanted to you know I'm not gonna lie I wanted to impress him a little bit and you know I had my intensity dialed to about a 10. Actually I say about a nine now cuz what I used to think was a ten mastership Townsend I heard his ten and I go about a nine at tops. So I was doing it I was coaching this kid Greg Silva I saw him look over at me and he calls freeze and I'm like oh no what did I do and he has everyone sit down and he highlighted what I was doing and he said look at this guy listen to what he's saying you know and he he had me do it again and he's like and he literally said the words is he not gonna be the best martial arts teacher we've ever seen and I was like holy crap that's crazy. I couldn't believe he said that but that moment was huge for me I'll never ever forget it and that's when I was like man I gotta do this. I gotta make this into something because if he thinks I'm that good then I must be pretty good and that was probably one of my favorite moments ever. There was one more moment and this was once I was already teaching a little bit there was a child it was about by this time just to give you a glimpse I was uh I got my first teaching job had action karate when I was 16 years old and I started teaching and at this time I was about 17 maybe close to 18 there was a little boy named John. He had Bell's palsy so it was hard for him to move around sometimes it was hard for him to speak clearly but he was the sweetest kid you could ever imagine and we would have belt promotions every three months his father was asked to speak on one of the promotions and I had no clue who's gonna say it but he was asked to speak and he was reading a speech and he called out me by name and talked about how I was John's biggest influence. every moment I spend with him it makes him happier and he respects the heck out of me as a teacher. You know John loves me as a person and I couldn't believe it because I didn't know I mean sue me I was like an 18 year old kid and I was hanging out with kids and I was like you know asking them about their life I was treating them like a normal person so to me it wasn't really anything special until that moment. until I realized that man this kid probably doesn't get that anywhere else well maybe not anywhere else but you know you you figure someone who has a hard time a hard time and who has those kind of challenges there has to be people in his life who talked down to him unfortunately and teachers who don't treat him as as a kid which is what he is and when his phone his father said all that. Man, I'll never forget I was tearing up and then I didn't know my dad was gonna be there that night which my dad he came to a lot of stuff my mom and I came to a lot of my martial art stuff in the beginning and then it got to the point Jeremy where I literally I was going every day so at that point it was like okay you don't have to come to every class anymore it's fine I can go by myself. And I know who's gonna be there but he was and he heard that speech and I think that was the first time he realized what an impact martial arts had made on me and in turn allows me to make on other people and he walked out because he was crying and I was like wow. I've never seen that I've never been able to I've never been able to put my dad in a position like that and not that you know you you want your parents to cry but you would like them to cry for the right reasons because and being proud. So, I would say and that was huge I'll never forget that I'll never forget that kid or his father ever her as long as I live and then master Greg Silva again you know the other moment I mentioned I owe my life to that guy he was you know his moment made me



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want to become a teacher. There was a lot of things that led up to that that kind of planted the seed a little bit that made me want to teach but that was. If I hadn't had that I don't think I would have been pushed over the edge at least not yeah. So those are my two all-time favorites. Yeah, I think those are my favorites right there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Those are, those are great stories I appreciate you sharing thank you.

Robert McQuade:

Of course general of course.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Martial arts clearly is a huge part of your life. We can say that of anyone that's going to come on this show.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But is it the only thing in your life are there things that you're passionate about outside of martial arts?

Robert McQuade:

No actually. Uhm in May of last year so 2016 I got involved with something I fell in love with as well improve comedy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Really?

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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That's a first. that's the first out of all the episodes that I think pretty truly

Robert McQuade:

Really?

Jeremy Lesniak:

First person yeah yeah

Robert McQuade:

Yeah awesome that makes me excited. Great so we would have my stories about improper awful they're better than everyone else's so far that's pretty excited.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Without a doubt

Robert McQuade:

So yeah. I am, I, I took another break from martial arts at the end of 2015. I took about a two-month break and it was basically the same thing again it's all I've ever done. I was burnt out I was ready to take a little break and I actually took the biggest great guy ever did I was calling for two months which for for most people you here two months do you like God dude be quiet that's not long at all. But for something I've done my whole life it was it was huge it was very scary but I was I was at the point where I was so burned out and super like I was getting the point where I was getting unhappy and it was affecting my teaching of acting my students and I had to take myself out of it for a little bit. So, during that time, I ended up stumbling across another hobby improv, improv comedy and I looked at it and I was like hey that sounds kind of cool but I didn't do it yet. I kind of put it in the back burner for a little bit. About three or four months maybe five months later. I, I looked online I, I googled improv comedy and a place called fit comedy came up the Philly Improv Theater and I took a free intro class, which is just basically like a two-hour beginner's like hey here's what our classes are like. If you like I'm great, if you don't like them that's fine and I was like oh my god this is like one of the coolest things ever. It was the first experience I had falling in love with a hobby since martial arts and those are probably the only two except for being a big professional wrestling pin but I save that story for later. So I started improv comedy and that's another thing I had just hit head on. I started 101 class and they have four levels a year and some change later I started officially in July took an intro class in May. I started in July of last year, a year and some change later I've completed just about their whole curriculum at that theater. I've taken a couple sketch writing classes I'm into I'm very big into writing comedy now. I enjoyed a lot it's a very good stress and anxiety release and I actually just finished this week a class at a theater in Chicago.



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It is a online class at their online theatre called this the second city which in comedy is one of the big the biggest theaters.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah second is a big deal.

Robert McQuade:

Exactly, exactly it's it's where one of my heroes Chris Farley trained. And, and I was, I was very proud of that and I think I did I learned a whole lot. And again that's another thing I just kind of tackled head-on, so I performed there I did a bunch of clay shows and invited some of my students, I performed outside of class shows I was on an improv team for a little bit. I write often I was writing last night. Yes that's another thing that I was just like huge into because comedy has always been like a big thing for me. Anytime I take the world supersuit serious. It just seems stressful to me, so I always try to find a funny outlet or I always try to see things in the best way possible and comedy really helps me do that. Besides, the fact that, that theater and action karate should fit comedy and action karate are the two places I believe in the world that has the most positive people you could ever imagine and it's just like incredible it's amazing it's everyone's your friends everyone will let you do. You know, I'll let you talk about what you want and not judge you and it's just cool that I was able to find those two places because I'll tell you Jeremy, I don't know where I would be if I didn't. I really don't. So I think that was the biggest hobby except for karate I think I've ever found.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I can certainly see the synergy between the two anybody that's spent time in a martial arts school and especially if you've trained in multiple schools you know that the instructors that are better able to craft a story and integrate humor to their lessons are the ones that have the larger schools and the more engagement especially from the younger students. So I would imagine that as you've improved with your comedy, you've seen more of a response from those you're working with.

Robert McQuade:

Oh absolutely. I've been, you know I've been happier. I've just been like, I think more like pleasant to be around since I started comedy. I tried I think the hardest part is finding a fine line between being fun and always being funny and that's actually a quote I'm stealing from master Kovar is to be, to be fun but not funny. Because you don't want, you don't want to be the clown in your classroom because of course you want to be respected so and I think I'm finding a pretty good balance with that and like I said just like the fact that I'm happier and it's just like a cooler experience that even if I have a stressful day my, students pick me up because I, I love my students to death. I can't tell you enough about that and which actually reminds me I would like to tell a story at some point about a student who just moved but I'll



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save that for a little bit later but um, yeah, just you know I think the fact that if for whatever reason I'm having a tough day at the Dojo I can go see an improv class or not or sorry an improv show and everything just falls together sorry everything just feels better after that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Rough days are universal I mean there's nothing more Universal than the ups and downs of life.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I mean everybody gets that. I'd like you to tell us now about a time where things were rough and you didn't lean on comedy but rather martial arts. To help you move through it.

Robert McQuade:

Okay, so here's, here's one times in ups in particular the first one that really comes to mind my mom passed away when I was 19 years old. It was December 23rd, 2009 and I remember she was pretty sick for a while and of course as an adult I knew that she wasn't gonna be around forever but the kid in me still wanted her to be around forever of course. I think everyone does and so my instructors knew very well that my mom was sick she wasn't able to make it to a lot of my Belt promotions as she went to the first few and then afterwards she got sick, more sicker I should say she's you know she was always for as long as I can remember. I had, had some illnesses so she was very tired a lot so she wouldn't be able to come see my classes or belt promotions as often as I like but she always watched the videos and she clearly cared and she's the one who says who signed me up for a martial arts which again. Had I not you know had she not done that again I don't know where I would be. So when she passed away it was, it was extremely challenging of course, of course we don't always get along as some mother and son duo never really to always get along. You know, we were very much the same person in terms of we were very hard-headed and you know how when two people who were hard-headed you know sometimes they get along very well and sometimes they butt heads of course. So, when she passed away it was extremely hard. I was, I had just received, can't remember which belt it was I think I had just gotten my second-degree black belt at that point so I was I was very focused on that. You know, she passed away it was, it was very hard you know there were a few days where I didn't feel like I had direction. I didn't feel like I had motivation to do anything it was very hard for us to plan she was cremated so she just a ceremony versus a like a full a funeral and a burial. So, it's very hard it was very inspiring though to see my instructors Bill Williams and Michael St. John. They should, they showed up to her ceremony that day and I, I thought they would but I knew they didn't have to and they were there and they were there the whole time and it was really just like wow these people are gonna be in my life forever and I kept my



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chin up pushed through and I use martial arts as, as a huge memory of her and I think if I didn't have that, it would be a lot harder of a road to go through. So when I think of her and I think of martial arts I think of what she gave me. I think of, you know, how if she hadn't signed me up that day and had it pushed me when I fought her and told her I didn't want to go. I wouldn't have what I had now or I wouldn't have what I have now and I wouldn't have met the people along the journey and it was huge. I was, I was very down and I think my instructors were there to kind of help push me along I went into work the day she passed away I found out around 12 o'clock. I texted my boss and I told them and I didn't hear back because I, you know, I don't know I guess I didn't know what to say or I guess they you know they would talk to me in person but I went to work three hours later and my boss look, looked at me and said, "What are you doing?" and I said I don't know I thought I had to come in and he said, "Are you okay?" I turned around broke down in tears and said, "No I'm not" and he said, "Okay go home." So I went home and then I stayed home that day I came back the next day and you know they were there for me every, every step of the way and I can't help but think that well no, it's not that I think it's what I know. I know that a lot of other professions in the world while there are many who are that are absolutely amazing. I can't help but think that the connection I had with my instructors was so strong then I don't know if I would have had that in any other job I would have got especially not as a 19 year old kid. So that was probably the biggest one that I leaned on for martial arts because if had I not, I don't know where I would be or I don't know what I would have I don't know how I would have moved on, you know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Not really powerful and it's it just adds another layer to why you're so tied into the martial arts and so loyal to these folks that have treated you so well.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I know that you know, I, I have you know I both of my parents are still alive so I don't have anywhere close to the same story but I have similar story. Stories where, I was surprised at the kindness that a martial artist would show someone for no reason other than they could and I know that a lot of you out there listening have similar stories and I'd like to thank that we as martial artists as a community. A worldwide community, we treat each other better than probably any other community on earth.

Robert McQuade:

Oh yeah, I would absolutely agree with that sir.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Now we've talked about your instructors we've talked about your mother and how important she was in getting you into the martial arts. You may not have started we may not be having this conversation had it not been for her.

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now outside of those folks who has been the most influential on your martial arts upbringing?

Robert McQuade:

Oh, there's a few names that come to mind immediately and I mentioned. I think, I mentioned most of them already. You know we got master Dave Kovar our who if you guys hadn't listened to his episode on whistlekick, please do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Will definitely link it in the show notes.

Robert McQuade:

Oh absolutely extremely powerful individual. The first time I met him was at an instructor college for one of our schools and I remember. It almost didn't happen because we had setup we were a brand-new school. We set up a program that day at a Girl Scout Troop. We told our boss, our owner that we had set had set up that program and he said cancel it and I was like wait, what? what do you mean? and keep in mind we're a brand-new school so we're like and any, any student we can get you know we're trying everything we can just to survive at that point and he said cancel it. I couldn't believe it, could not believe it and I was like, why? He said, "cuz you need to be at the seminar" and I had never met master Dave Kovar. I didn't know anything about him. I didn't hear anything before then, I went to that class and I was hooked on every word he said, you know there's quotes out there you know when the real when the real leader speaks people listen, that's him. A hundred and ten percent and I have gone to every master cohort seminar I could possibly go to since then I have read his book multiple times it is probably one of my most influential. It's probably one of the most influential books I've ever read in my life and I go to him for advice on a constant basis so that's master Dave Kovar. Master Chip Townsend I only had the pleasure of meeting about a year ago. I had a board breaking seminar but he has been just



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like extremely. So what I'm looking for like reachable I guess I would say like it's it's extremely easy to to get a hold of him and ask his advice

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Robert McQuade:

And to talk to him and you know so whenever I do a live video. I'll try to you know if I mentioned him will share it even if I don't mention him if he loves the story he'll share it and that's just like huge so it's like such support from a person I've only met once. But he's incredible, I mentioned you before I was trying to get master Christopher Raphold on the show and I still hope that episode comes about one day. I just know he's extremely busy but he's bee, he's another just like extremely influential martial artists in my life. One of nicest guys I've ever met, extremely knowledgeable so master Chris Raphold is the, he was the coach either the coach or the founder I can't remember but a team Paul Mitchell. And he is a multi-time sparring world champion. He actually designs action karate sparring curriculum and he helped master Kovar in producing the done with bullying program which is a program that we were able to host at our school recently so, I think without those guys I wouldn't have that program and I wouldn't be as passionate about it, as I am. But those three are the first names that come to mind in terms of people I know specifically in terms of people I've met and encounter then yeah, I think those three are huge.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course the first two that you mentioned our past guests on the show

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And we're hoping to get the third on the show. For anyone that might be new we'll link to those episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com

Robert McQuade:

Amazing great.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And as you were talking about Mr. Kovar

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Where are things that struck me a memory that I'm not sure that I've shared on the show I've only met him in person once and it was at an event in upstate New York. One of these multi day seminar events and that this particular one is called super summer seminars a fantastic event I'd encourage anybody to go if you can and the first year I went Sensei Kovar was one of the the, the head guest instructors one of the guests of honor and he taught a couple sessions that we can but when he wasn't teaching? He was watching what other people were teaching know here's a man with legitimately ten black belts.

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Out early outstanding martial artist who is known worldwide for being one of the guys that people go to for knowledge about how to run a school as well as actual martial arts practice. But here he was observing what everyone else was doing watching trying to learn from them and that right there like once I realized what he was doing that told me everything I needed to know about him and it was because of that, that I made such an effort to reach out to him because he's a busy man and it took us a bit of time to get that interview coordinated. But I wasn't gonna let up because I knew he had great stuff to share.

Robert McQuade:

Oh yeah amazing I very much enjoy that episode.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you could train with someone you haven't anywhere in time anywhere in the world living or dead who would you want to train with?

Robert McQuade:



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Okay so there's of course the obvious answer that I'm sure everyone says, Bruce Lee's up there. I'm gonna go with a little bit I'm gonna go with someone different though just to be, just to be more original and again I would absolutely pick this person as well I would choose Tony Jaa, and Tony Jaa is for anyone who's listening who's not familiar he's a, he's a Muay Thai martial artist who, who starred in some pretty amazing martial arts movies but it was a movie called the protector that came out when I was a teenager which was right in the excuse me right in the middle of my like hype about the demo team and stuff but this movie called the protector and a lot of it's like really really cool like flippy stuff that you would see in some martial arts movies but there was also a lot of like he showed a lot of the Muay Thai-style and you know the knees the elbows the brakes and all that cool stuff and I just thought that was super fascinating. And Muay Thai is a style that I've always been fascinated by but never really trained it and I think who did you know it would be him I would love to learn from him I think that would be amazing and, and if I didn't pick him I would go with my childhood martial-arts idol which is Jackie Chan. And I used to love Jackie Chan I used to watch the cartoon on Saturday mornings the Jackie Chan show or Jackie Chan experience or whatever it was called where he would just be an animated fighter and I used to watch a lot of his martial arts movies and I would, I was a huge fan of his rush hour movies with Chris Tucker and I think that was like I love them so much because they were a combination of martial arts and comedy and I was like this is me right here. So I would say Tony Jaa or Jackie Chan are my two biggest more shorts influences who I've never met. I think those are those guys are up there for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely wonderful actors, Tony Jaa. I think when I look back over the last couple decades there's someone that I, I wished we had seen more from something happened something you know just didn't translate for him. I don't know what it was or if he has a bad manager or what but hopefully we'll see him at some point because he's still young and still has tremendous skill I'm sure.

Robert McQuade:

He's incredible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now when it comes to Jackie Chan. I don't think there's anybody out there who isn't a fan of Jackie Chan if you are.

Robert McQuade:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I want to hear from you because I want to know why.

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you mentioned rush hour, rush hour is classified as a martial arts film which makes it the top grossing martial arts film of all time.

Robert McQuade:

There you go. Hey you got by because I've seen it so many times.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is entirely because of you and

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And well, I certainly helped with some ticket sales on that one.

Robert McQuade:

Yeah of course, of course are there supposed to be making a TV show now which I don't know how I feel about I will see.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah we'll see what happens. Now you you mentioned the demo team and I'm assuming the demo team did some demonstrations at competition, as well is that?

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, so let's talk about competition and your experience and what you took away from it?

Robert McQuade:

Sure absolutely so we performed that a lot of, we've never done like this circuit as a competition martial arts experts usually refer to it as you know the Nazca circuit or which is national American Sport Karate Association for anyone who doesn't know and that's like the national tournaments we very much just competed within our own action karate tournaments and I did a couple. I actually did not attend my first tournament until I was a red belt which is right before black and I think most styles but especially in ours. I guess not especially that sounded quite arrogant but so yeah only our style idea what else is wrong but now, so we competed at the tournaments we were never really like the best but I was always proud of just just how we clicked and how we just got along. We just had fun you know, and my first tournament is actually a story I'd like to share we still have time right Jeremy?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh by all means we have all the time you in the world

Robert McQuade:

It's beautiful. So it's a story that my students very well know but so, I was training for my first tournament I didn't go to a tournament so much a red belt because my parents didn't have a car and it was, it was never at our school it was always at like a central location with where all of our locations were able to get to a little bit easier. So is that like a high school gymnasium you know the deal you know wherever we could find a good spot. So, I went to my first tournament I opted to spar, I did sparring and I did our creative kados. I had no idea how hard either of them were gonna be. So I prepared, I practiced, I trained, I sparred a lot and I was pretty like I was older so I was a little bit, I would say I was probably in that you know our school isn't new or [52:31](#). I don't mean to sound like I don't want to sound arrogant but you know because I was older I trained every day I was one of the better spars at our location and, and because of how much I attended I had I was confident there's a good word confident in my abilities. So it's confident my abilities so I expected to go to the tournament and I was like all right it might be a little bit of a challenge I think I do pretty well I'll probably get like first place or second place you know and it means I'm really good. I go to our tournament and I spar first, I get there I throw on all my gear which I know some schools you know you do last gear some schools you do more here we have a pretty, pretty hefty set of gear. You know helmet, hand guard, chin guard, mouthpiece, corncob, foot gear, chest gear we're pretty you know we're pretty stacked in terms of how much gear we require for our students. So, I went to spar my first round was against a student who and again I was a little bit taller but it was, it was more broken up by age and belt rank. I think he was a little bit younger than me. I was, I was a lot taller maybe maybe a look at least almost a foot taller. Now



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maybe less but I was significantly taller than this child, I'm not child we were both kids. Anyway, I went to spar I was pretty confident, I said, okay I got this and he destroyed me. He just like, I mean it was two three points I got one point he got the other three and I was out and it was a tournament there was a tournament when it comes to sparring especially. So, I didn't get to spar again that day. I was like oh my god I was devastated and I remember and I remember being devastated and my dad was there to watch and I went over to my dad and, and I of course expected him to say something along the lines of you know comforting or you know be like it's okay buddy you should have won or I even expected him to take my side. I don't know why but I expect him to be like oh man you know that shouldn't happen you know I feel like you got a point that time, yeah you know I expected to kind of argue for me or like having my back that's why I thought having my back was at the time. What he said to me was oh man you lost huh I show up to try harder do it again next time and I was like was it, "what?" that's the only fatherly advice you had? and I was upset that I lost and I was upset that he didn't comfort me. Looking back on it, I tell all of our parents at our school you should say the exact same thing and tell him to push harder because that was my, I didn't appreciate that moment enough at the time as I do now. Because had I not, I would have been like okay I don't have to train harder I'm just gonna keep doing what I'm doing I'll go to the next tournament and I'll win. I would not have won if I kept doing what I was doing but what I did was I heard that advice at first I was upset a week or two later it sunk in and I was like okay I'm gonna train harder. So I sparred every chance I could possibly get for the next six months our tournaments happened twice a year. Six months later I sparred again, I didn't spar the same gentleman I don't know where he was or what he was doing but I didn't spar him again and that tournament. I got first place, had I got first place the first time I went it wouldn't it would not have mattered nearly as much and it was the struggle and the persistence and the perseverance that I had to do or had to show the next six months and training every single week even though I didn't want to all the time. That's what made it mean more so that's what I tell all of our parents all of our students that if your child doesn't win, that's usually better especially with their first tournament because if you win you get that sort of like oh I'm good now I expect it every time. And, and that's just not good you know we want to teach our kids that, you can't always get what you want, you have to try your best push really hard, practice and again and then guess what you still might not get what you want because that's what life is. You can give a hundred percent and still not win and I think that was the best art lesson I've ever learned from a tournament by far ever and I still tell people that to this day. I have that story all written out on my Facebook page and I post it every single tournament because I, I think it's super powerful and by the way I didn't win you know my first tournament I didn't win my creative form either you know I got last place with that and last place went home with nothing. So I literally, our tournaments are usually designed where if you do the set curriculum you can at least leave with a medal or trophy and I opted to do two events where I wasn't guaranteed either. So I went home that day with absolutely nothing and was I upset heck yeah, I was upset was it, was it worth it at the time. No, weeks later, months later and especially now years later that I can share this information with listeners and students and parents at our school. It was extremely worth it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Powerful stuff



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Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You've just mentioned. What you've just outlined to me is the entire reason for competition?

Robert McQuade:

Oh my gosh, absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It is, it is a carrot is it is a way to motivate yourself that a lot of people don't have within their school. Most schools have time requirements and skill requirements and all kinds of things before you can progress before you can be recognized for what you've done for the hard work. Excuse me, and especially when we're younger we tend to crave that outside validation a little bit more.

Robert McQuade:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak

But consultation is a great way to receive some of that validation in a shorter time period you know to go work hard for two three six months.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And to go back and say, I did better you know to draw that connection and that's why I love competition.

Robert McQuade:

Absolutely, I would 100% agree with that sir.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about the future.

Robert McQuade:

Future? Okay.

Jeremy Lesniak:

look what are you working towards for what's your still clearly hyped up on martial arts you still love it that's clear it's coming through.

Robert McQuade:

Yes sir.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Very well, but I guess the question is why? What, what is it that you're hoping to accomplish in the rest of your martial arts career?

Robert McQuade:

I would love I mentioned you Mr. Jeremy when we first started speaking about this podcast. That the most passionate thing I think. The thing I'm most passionate about in the martial arts strictly is the done with bullying program. As a kid I was, bullied heavily and for a long time I didn't really know how to deal with it. I and it's getting worse sir it's getting a lot worse these days kids are getting bullied earlier they're getting bullied more intense. People are committing suicide it's an, it's a, it's a, it's absolutely crazy to me that it's getting this much worse and I think the done with bullying program is something I really try to make my own every single year of course. I, I used the program for Master Kolbar Master Raphold but my goal for that program and this year we've gotten closer than we've ever gotten. Which is anyone would like to watch I do have it on video but on my Facebook page I don't know if I can get that to you somehow, but my goal for our done with bullying program is to run a program with our entire mat and parent area 100% of all. There's no reason I see that people can fill up a, I don't know you know what a you know like a concert or you know another super fill it up and popular event and, and we can't fill up this free empowering program that's gonna help somebody and that's one of my biggest goals in terms of teaching. I am going to be testing for my fourth two degree black belt suit, so I'm working toward that that's very exciting. And I'm not yet an owner of the school so that is in my long-term goals as in two is to own my own martial arts school one day so those are my three biggest goals right now. Yeah I think that's and I just I just want to impact as many people as I can, and for my



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students to understand that they have somebody who cares about them and and these people mean a lot to me you want to keep doing it. You know what I mean, do you mind if I share a story about a student who moved away this past weekend?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Not at all,oh please do it.

Robert McQuade:

This was really powerful for me, um so we had a student a student who, he was very he was about three years old when he came as me maybe four he's been with us for about two years now so he's about five or six years old and it's just kid he was a challenge in the beginning. He would spin around on the mat and you know he would run off the mat and he would call out and if he didn't win he would freak out. I'm not gonna lie for a little while it was the point where if he came in the school I was like okay, I was preparing for our stressful class. One day I changed that, and I changed that with him and multiple other students and I don't remember what made me change it. I'm sure it was some sort of master Kovar speech because that's always what motivates me to begin with, but it changed and in instead of being upset that he walked in the door. I started doing everything I possibly could to be excited and to treat him like he was the most important person in my life and I did that with a couple other of my challenging students. And a boy oh boy did it show, he, he went from being too challenging to smiling more he still wasn't able to get what why me he always smiled he got very excited but he got less disruptive. He tried harder and he loved being here and it really showed and I loved having him here and was he still a challenge sometimes of course what a lot of people don't understand he's a six year old kid he's a five year old kid. They're always gonna be challenging sometimes, there's no getting around it. I found out a couple weeks ago he was gonna be moving and he's moving across the country and for you know privacy reasons I won't say where I won't say his name because he's a student and not like a instructor or co-worker. So he's new across the country and I was really upset and I think the main reason I was extremely upset was because you know a, I got genuinely happiness to see this kid and to see him made me happy and a lot of my students do but I think this one was special because I think he really responded to me showing how much I care about him and his family and, and he taught me about life man. He really taught me just to be like positive and, and upbeat and he's overcome so many challenges since he's been here so Saturday was his last day at our tournament and I said goodbye to him on Friday because you know we have a busy day in our tournaments who are judging the whole time and he saw me on Saturday he ran up and I was in tears like not heavy tears but I was too tearing up a little bit and I couldn't believe it I was like I, I don't cry at every student leaving because if I did I wouldn't have any tears laughter I'm sorry to say but people quit all the time man you know how it is I'm sure. People quit for reasons here and there and I taught a lot of people their last class I'm not proud to say it but I did and just this was different you know, I've seen him grow and he taught me a lot about life and you know he said goodbye and he saw me tearing up and here's this, this six year old kid who, who says it's okay I'm not going away forever, I gotta to do you got to go and because I couldn't stop I couldn't hold it in. So I gave him a hug, he left he literally was his mom told me that they were in the car



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with their animals ready to go right from there. I don't know this the situation and why they had to leave she assured me that it was it was better for their family so of course I'm very happy for them. I don't know why they had to go I don't know if it was something urgent I hope, I hope for gosh not and if it is something urgent to where they were in some sort of trouble or danger or whatever I'm glad they were able to get to safety. So I calmed down a couple people I saw at tournament you know they asked, "Am i okay?" and I said yeah I'm fine I'm just sweating from my eyes man it's really hot in here and I walked away. So five minutes later the kid comes back in and I'm like oh no I just composed myself and his mom said he started to get upset he wanted to say goodbye again. And it was powerful and I think you know I was, you know every once in a while I get to the point where I'm burnout and I'm tired of doing this every single day we're not tired of it like I said man I just get burnout you know it happens to the best of us and it's like you said you know ups and downs are a huge part of any business of any job of any career but him on Saturday it just showed me why I do this and I've never, you know there's been times where I've got upset that people left but I think when I realized that man he taught me more about a life and I could ever teach him. And I think it was the, it was the moment I stopped getting upset at him walking in the door and changed that to, I'm gonna make this kid a black belt I'm gonna do it and I know I'm gonna do it and I'm gonna do it with the help of our instructors and not by myself and I'm gonna be happy as heck I did it and I see that in him and I think that there was a thing on the website about doing the podcast today that you know I should do them I should think about any advice I can give to any other martial artist but you need to be able to and this is the biggest one I'd say you need to be able to see the potential in every single student because you don't know what kind of impact they're gonna have on you or that you're gonna have on that and you have no idea what their life is like and how much they need you and I think he was just like the biggest example of that. So I tell you it's it's funny every time that you know there's a picture that someone captured of you know the exact moment of me with my super ugly trying to hold in tears face and saying goodbye to this kid. And every time I see it I'm like man I start tearing up again so, I think that was like I definitely wants that up in this house I got to share that on Tuesday on the podcast or you know for listeners I get to share this on insert whatever day you're listening here. So I think that was my biggest moment recently and I tell you ever since then I've been motivating this heck to keep going.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sensei McQuade is one of the more interesting people I've met. He's not only a martial artist and an instructor but an inspiring improv comedian. I love that combination, Sensei McQuade has made teaching martial arts his passion and I'm sure everyone in his classes can tell. We can see how martial arts transformed him and I thank him. Thank you Sensei McQuade for coming on the show today. If you want to check out the show notes with photos links social media all that if you want to reach out to Sensei McQuade the best way to do that is through the show notes whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. If you want to contact me the best way is by email Jeremy@whistlekick.com and you can find all of our social media at whistlekick.com not dot com just that Whistle Kick. I want to thank you for tuning in I appreciate your time, always open to feedback we've got some great topic episodes guests suggestions that have come in lately love it. Not only does it help us build the show that you want but it makes our



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job easier. You tell us what you want and we do it, perfect. That's all for today until next time train hard smile and have a great day.