



Episode 262 – Sensei Thomas Brown | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everybody, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 262 and today, our guest is sensei Thomas Brown. I wanna thank you for tuning in, thanks for spending some time with me in this digital space listening to the amazing stories from these amazing martial artists that we bring you each week. I have the best job in the world and if my voice is new to you, my name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm the founder of whistlekick sparring gear and apparel I'm your host for martial arts radio and I love martial arts so that's why I started this company, that's why I started the show, that's why we do so many of the other things that we do. You can check out everything we've got going on at whistlekick.com and you can check out the show notes with photos, video, links and so much more to every episode that we've ever done including transcripts, I don't talk about it too often but we have transcripts in most of the episodes, were going back. We're even doing all the old episodes, bringing them forward because that's something that we had feedback from you all. If you want to get a hold of us, the best way is to find us on social media we are @whistlekick Facebook, twitter and Instagram are our primary accounts, but of course you can email us, you can email me directly even jeremy@whistlekick.com. If you want those show notes that I mentioned because my brain just wandered off on a tangent, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com that's where you're gonna find all that great stuff. If you're not subscribing, you should be subscribing because we put out two episodes a week, we work really hard on that content and we love the feedback that comes through from all of you. Thank you for doing that, thank you for subscribing and here's a little hint, if you subscribe we know about it. We can see it in the numbers as to when you download really and watching those numbers go up is really satisfying for all of



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us here. So, thank you for those of you that do that. If you want you can listen on YouTube, you can listen at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, you can listen to pretty much any podcast app, you can listen thru Spotify, there are tons of ways and if we've missed one let us know, we will make it happen, we want to make it easy for you to listen to this great stuff that we've got going on. Let's talk about the show. Sensei Thomas Brown started martial arts as a young boy in the 90s watching the same movies and TV shows as many of our other guests but his passion took him on his own unique path. He started in another sport but ultimately, he chose martial arts. Why? Because he just knew deep in his heart that he wanted more. So, let's welcome him. Sensei brown, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Thomas Brown:

Thank you have me it's a pleasure to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

The pleasure is mine. We were just chatting listeners, we're just talking and you know, it's always fun to have someone who kinda gets the process you know, the idea of not being over prepared. We've had guest that write down a lot answer, you know I can hear them flipping pages maybe you can even hear that sometimes in some episodes and then we have folks who, say wait, you sent me questions? And of course, they're the same questions but not everyone's familiar with them and our guest today did the exact, in my opinion, right amount of preparation, glanced through the questions.

Thomas Brown:

We'll see if it turns out being the right amount of preparation, I hope so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, we will find out, shortly won't we? Of course, no stress you know, this is just us. It's us chatting, it's a conversation between two hopefully pending friends and everyone out there just gets to listen to it and feel like a fly on the wall as we talk about martial arts.

Thomas Brown:

Yeah. I've been looking forward to it. I've been looking into your stuff, I checked out your website, I think it's interesting thing you have going on. The podcast business model, excellent marketing and I say that because it's something where you're adding value not just to your listeners, but to the people that are your guests and then it kinda becomes a perpetual marketing cycle where, I'm assuming your guests then go in and promote your stuff because they're excited be a part of it. So, I think you have a good business model going on for you.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Thank you and you know I'm not sure how much they promote the stuff that we do a whistlekick at the very least they tend to promote the episode that they were on right and you know were all just, it's the martial arts and were all just trying to help each other out and I think that that's an important piece to find your niche and I love what I do, I love that here it is. We started a few minutes ago you know, 230 on a Tuesday afternoon when it's I think the thermometer has crested zero here in Vermont, it was 22 below when I woke up there was frost inside my house and I get to call this work. So, what's better than that?

Thomas Brown:

It's been brutal lately, were not that far apart. Massachusetts, Vermont.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well hopefully you're staying warm down there I've got a fire. I shut it down a bit because it makes some noise. It's toasty inside right now.

Thomas Brown:

I've got their heat cranked up here that's for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good. Of course, this is a martial art show and were gonna talk about martial arts and in order to do that with any kind of context, we need to know about you in martial arts. So, let's go way back, however far that is, and why don't you to tell us how you got started?

Thomas Brown:

So, it was mid 90s was when I got interested, when I got started and I'm not sure when you started, I think were about the same age so maybe around the same time period. It was the ninja craze and everything was three ninjas, ninja turtles. It was karate kid movies still coming out and I think it was three ninjas it was the first movie I saw and I was hooked. Like I was obsessed with the idea of martial arts before I even set foot in the dojo. I remembered nagging my mom constantly, I want to do karate and she'd say well when you're older. It would seem like it was a year that would go by before I'd ask again, it was probably only a couple of minutes. But I keep nagging or she keep saying when you're older and I just remember that moment where she said, alright, get ready to go were heading out, I said, where we're going and she said, well I'm taking you down the karate school and sign you up and that was one of the most exciting moments in my life just finally being able to get enrolled in karate after



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feeling like I wanted it forever. You know, like a kid waiting for Christmas and setting foot in the dojo even before was my first class going down there to sign up, I just remember walking in and being in awe of all these kids in their karate gis and belts in my instructor, my what was gonna be my future instructor and his you know black belt just thinking, wow. And yeah so, that's really how I got started once I was enrolled I was hooked. So, it was something I know I loved before I did it and then once I did it, I even loved it, you know, even more. I was pretty much obsessed, constantly practicing, getting in front of the TV in the living room annoying my family.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was it you found in martial arts that really hooked you?

Thomas Brown:

You know that's an interesting question. I don't exactly know. You know, there were other things I was interested in. I did hockey for a while growing up again, that was mighty ducks was coming out and I was addicted to hockey and we did street hockey all the time and then I was, I played ice hockey for year and I remember when we were the team went to a Falcons game and I was in the stands watching the game with my mom and she said you can continue to do martial arts and hockey but during hockey season, we have to cut back on martial arts and it took me maybe 30 seconds and I said okay I'm not doing hockey anymore. I love hockey, I still, we actually have street hockey games every now and then in the back-parking lot at the school. So, what was that got me hooked, I don't know? It's just, I think it's the level of self-awareness, self-control you develop in terms of, not just the discipline that I see the kids get and even the adults in classes, but I mean the does the awareness of how to move your body and having the precision of movement, all that stuff I think is really what got me hooked. The constant challenge, the new skills that you're working on and then working to develop that precision of movement to accomplish the task.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can I ask how old you were when you chose martial arts over hockey?

Thomas Brown:

So, I started martial arts when I was around eight or nine and so it's probably around nine or ten when I made that decision and I've been playing hockey since I was a real, not on the team but we would have family games, my cousins and my brothers and I would play hockey almost every week, have a game so I've been doing for many years but I just knew martial arts was what I want to do. And shortly after starting, I was telling everybody as a martial arts instructor I got older. I actually have video evidence of that cause my brothers and I used to create our own video TV shows you know, with cheap VHS camcorders. And so, there's still some footage somewhere that when I was just starting out, I was



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already telling people I was gonna have martial arts school and be a teacher.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow. And you know we heard that from a number of folks that I think there's something, and I don't know what it is, and of course any of the school owners out there might be listening thinking wow, somebody chose to bail on another sport for martial arts. I mean, that it's typically the opposite so there was something about martial arts that really resonated for you and you knew that early on and you're not the only one. You know, here we are 200 and whatever episodes and quite a few of the guests have said that very early on they found their calling. Whether it was calling as a practitioner or as an instructor or a competitor, whatever it was, something just clicked.

Thomas Brown:

Yes definitely. And I consider myself very fortunate for having that happen in my life. I know a lot of people I talk with a lot of different students have sort of mentored through the years that struggle to carry out what is it they really want to do and not and so to find that so young and just know it's what I want to do, I consider that a very fortunate occurrence in my life. Of course, that, it took me down a path that was not necessarily the path I have planned when I was younger cause, I don't know about you, growing up, my martial arts instructor, he was actually a teacher and I'm meaning obviously our martial arts instructors a teacher. He was a schoolteacher by day, martial arts teacher by night. My father had a buddy who owned a martial arts school, he had a day job I don't remember what it was but he had another job by day, taught martial arts by night and so growing up, I figured this is the path. I'm gonna, since I love teaching, that was another thing I knew very early on even before martial arts, I know I want to be a teacher and all I could say but I just I knew. And I figured well, I'm gonna be a teacher by day, martial arts instructor by night like my instructor. Then I was 19 when I started my business, I was going to school and this is when I separated from my instructor to start my own business. We remain connected but I want my own way in terms of business because that's what I always wanted to do and I very quickly realized that after I made that decision, I should probably learn how to run a business. And once I started looking into that I discovered that hey, this is something other people are doing, I can make a living doing this and so that's what, that's when things started to change. And I'm you know, again I consider myself very fortunate that I discovered those things, I made the right decisions at the right moment and things sort of fell into place. Many times, actually along the way to where I am now there's just certain things that kinda fill in the place for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Such as?

Thomas Brown:



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Well, I'm glad you asked.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Almost sound like we planned it, isn't it?

Thomas Brown:

When I was starting out, I was subletting with different gyms in the area. I actually have multiple locations going on for different gyms and here I am and it's getting towards I think in my freshman year of college, where this was when, this is back 2006, 2007 when we had the recession, when it hit and suddenly all these gyms are starting to close. So, now I'm thinking oh crap. Here I am, I might go out of business, I just got started all the gyms I'm teaching at are closing. Of course, in that moment you think this isn't going my way so I started looking for other gyms to partner with and that just wasn't working. They weren't looking to partner with me. I was 19-20-year-old kid didn't and not it was hard to actually even just find a place to rent at that age. But ultimately that's what happened. Now if those gyms didn't close who knows if that would've happened or when it would have happened but as a result of that we've now been in the same building for 10 years now. I have a great landlord means taking care of me and we've been able to expand our programs actually, couple years in we took over all the upstairs here at the facility I'm in and so, again and I think that it's funny how certain things that you think aren't going your way, and up working out for the best in the end. So here we are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Love it. I love the stories, I love how pieces just fall into place for folks. I think that can give you a lot of comfort especially as time goes on when you deal with something difficult you can look back and say you know I always seem to end up where I'm supposed to go. At least, that works pretty well for me, how about you?

Thomas Brown:

Now you do you teach? If you don't mind me switching things up and asking a couple questions.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. Sure, I do not have my old school. I did for a couple years, but my teaching now is confined to a bit of one on one. That I do out of the whistlekick facility and then also just traveling around, you know, there are schools that have invited us to come, invite me to come down and share some of the stuff that I know and you know once in a while I'll you know, to class at one of the schools I'm active in, you know things like that. It's it allows me to scratch the itch for teaching but without having that commitment that I couldn't satisfy with whistlekick and the amount of travel and the other things that are going on



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because of it.

Thomas Brown:

Right. I think it's that passion for teaching too that helped because I knew when everything was going wrong or what seemed like everything was going wrong, then no matter what I was gonna still teach. I was gonna find a way to teach whether it was at another gym, whether it was at the time I was going to school so weather was out of my dorm, whatever the case was, I was still gonna find a way to teach. So, I think it's important to find what it is you're passionate about, because in the end when things are going seemingly wrong, that passion helps to carry through and keep driving forward.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love the way the phrase that awesome. Here on martial arts radio it's about the stories. I know you said that you can check in some stuff out behind the scenes so you know how the story driven this podcast is and really that's just because I like hearing martial arts stories and its turned into a podcast. So, I'm hoping you'll indulge me the listeners out there and tell us your favorite martial arts story.

Thomas Brown:

So, this question actually was the one that I've been pondering and I've been thinking about it and the stories that I what I was actually recalling also martial arts business related. So not sure in particular what, if it's a sort of an action type story you're looking for, a training story, I was having a hard time identifying what the best story would be, but I do have a business story for you. Again, when I was just starting out, it is to me it's entertaining, it was even entertaining back then, sometimes a little frustrating. So, I start my business, I'm a 19-year-old kid and I have a gentleman if you ever watch any of our videos, he's in several of the videos we call him Moses that's his nickname and he's been with me, I've known him since I started martial arts so I started out he was assisting at the school and so here's this this older gentleman and the seemingly young kid. So, everybody that would come in, they turn to Moses, they'd be talking to Moses and saying, I like to get my kid enrollees in classes, I'd answer the question then they turn and talk to Moses and asked the next question. I'd answer the question and so this was sort of continual thing that, a recurring theme, that I faced when I was starting out. Now, what I think is a really funny story is we open up in our own location, what I was talking about earlier, this the facility where we are now, we have our open house and a couple parents come in they want to sign their kid up, their kid's four years old, now I usually do five and up but I'm just starting out so I'm like okay I'm in a take anybody I can and so I said okay well he can come and try the class, we can see if it's something that suits them. They could come next Tuesday at 430, I don't know whatever the time was then, I they said okay well thank you and and not will come in next week. So now, Monday comes at this point it's intermediate classes so they couldn't have been there, I answer the phone because phone call away so that's why you answer the phone and uh, and it's them. So, I said tika martial arts how may help you and they start off the conversation they said well, we stop there last week we spoke with some kid



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and okay just gonna keep my mouth shut and let them go on I said okay, they can come in for the Tuesday class, yeah definitely. So yeah well, we weren't sure we just want to check as we talked with that kid last week so I want to confirm so that's the second time they referred me as some kid. And then yet again, I don't remember was it, I know it was three times, so actually I'm that kid, I'm the owner. No, I'm so sorry and so to me that was entertaining moment at least in my career.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And a bit of a couple I think, too right? You know the idea that

Thomas Brown:

That I was so young?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Someone, yeah, someone came away and thought you were really young and you know, I think people often get offended when someone thinks you're young but the same time in society we tend to value that, youthful energy and you know, I could offer some other examples from personal relationships that people tend to hold up but, yeah it to be young and energized and owning a martial arts school I mean, I think that's a wonderful example to the children that they can see someone who doesn't seem, a least doesn't appear to be right? Because you know we we all quite a few of us in martial arts have a chronological age and the age that we act and it's often quite disparate. I mean, there's generally a bit of separation between those two.

Thomas Brown:

[00:21:06.15] is the age of the kids in the classes think we are which is usually far older than I want to be perceived.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Or sometimes much younger. Here I am on I'm knocking on 40 and kids routinely you know, think I'm in my early to mid 20s and I'll take that all-day long.

Thomas Brown:

I see I need you look young to me. Not that 40.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Its working, it's working.

Thomas Brown:

So, you're how old?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm 38 and you know what what's happened is that instead of turning gray, my hair just fell out.

Thomas Brown:

That's the same problem I'm facing. Gotta find the right camera angles when we film now. Sometimes, I go back and watch the recordings and ugh.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You just got own it. That's why it's shaved out as far as it can be with the Clippers. I do it you know about every other week and just let it go. I had one bottle of shampoo in college and don't even use it now. Outside of martial arts and you know, you mentioned your passion for hockey when you were younger you still play some street hockey, are there other things that you really excited about? Other things that really engage you?

Thomas Brown:

Yeah definitely. So, it's interesting again for me that early on there were, there were certain passions that I think I have that still kinda carry with me today. So, martial arts obviously one of them. Teaching in general, I'd be a teacher of something that I'm passionate about regardless whether or not it was martial arts. But also, when I was younger, I always enjoyed editing videos together. The video editing process more than actually the video shoot process. I'm fascinated by that more now with the equipment that we use and different things were trying but I was always interested in editing different videos together. I've used a double deck VCR and you know, I'd cut footage together that way which is really a hassle. I don't know if you've ever done that or if you can imagine doing that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I have, I have.

Thomas Brown:

Really really painstakingly, it is just so time-consuming. But I really enjoyed editing something together



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and then seeing the final result and so that's a significant passion that's still they are in fact I'm trying to put stuff together for martial artists with regards to learning how to effectively use video because I think there's certain things martial artist could do better with their video to use it to help communicate ideas to other fellow martial artist and also to promote their schools more effectively. So, video is one of one of my passions also just personal development in general. Constantly trying to learn different things and in psychology and motivation, personal growth, hugely passionate about that. Always reading something new, taking notes, capturing ideas. I just recently actually read book just to recommend for you and in the listeners, "go for no" an interesting book usually I don't read fiction. Usually I'm reading nonfiction, personal development, motivation type books and this was a fiction book. It's a really short book it's like 78 pages, 80 pages max and the thesis is that, in terms of achieving success, many people look at it as their standing in the middle of failure and success and that they want to go toward success and move away from failure. But thesis is that the actual path you take is that you go through failure to achieve success and that you should fail more regularly and it references this is more oriented, the book was I think written for network marketers and salesmen. It's the idea that instead of setting the quota for yeses that you get for for sales that you close in a week, set a quota for the times that you get told no. And, if you choose to go for the yeses you might hit three or four whatever your quota is for the week, and you know, okay I'm done. But if you set a substantial number of no's you'll likely end up not just meeting your quote about going beyond it as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's a lot of power in no, a lot of power in a letting go of that fear of rejection or failure, however you want to term it, and it's something that seems to really resonate strongly with martial artist. We've had quite a few self-improvement books you know, kinda like that, they're really aren't about martial arts but at the same time are about martial arts. If we assigned, if someone learns a new movement you say I need you to do it wrong 50 times. That for someone who's struggling you know, especially an adult whose you know, really second-guessing themselves, that idea to do something wrong 50 times rather than I need you to do this right 10 times. That could really resonate.

Thomas Brown:

I think that what you said, you know, martial arts I think is a self-help, self-improvement activity. I think one of the masters in kempo who I'm familiar with, I heard say once that you're gonna learn how to fight, it doesn't take much to learn how to defend yourself. I think he used the metaphor you kick a dog long enough, it'll start to fight back. But at some point, we continue because we want to go beyond that, we're doing it more prudent for more than just fighting and I think that's very true. At least it's been my experience and it's been expansive many martial artists with which I'm associated, you stick with it because of the personal growth that you're achieving.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Agreed. I'd love for you to kinda roll back and think about a time in your life where things were negative. You strike me as a really positive person, you're talking about the good stuff, but I know there's stuff that's on the other end of the spectrum, we all have it, but I find that martial artists have this unique tool kit to handle life's challenges. I'd love you to tell us about one of your challenges and how you were able to use your martial arts tool kit.

Thomas Brown:

Sure. So, at first when you asked the question, I'm like jeez, I don't know. But, actually it's a great question and I have something that's very specific to martial arts. When I was 16, I was teaching a martial arts class my instructor was there, I was running the class and I was doing a jump kick, I must not of landed right I don't know what happened and I dislocated my kneecap. Now, at this point I have no clue what's going on. I looked over at my leg which hurts and I see my patella is protruding, so to me it looks like that, just my leg just snaps in two, is the bone sticking out, what's that bone sticking out? And my instructor was across and way I remember I said to him, excuse me, I think I broke my leg and so, he comes over, a couple of other adults that are there come over and stayed with me that they're looking at it. I don't really remember much being said in terms of like, you're gonna be okay, like I think people like whoa, that's not good. And I just kinda laid on the floor and my kneecap popped back in and so flash forward because now I've had the injury. Then the difficulty was dealing with that injury, not being able to kick and actually through the years having issues with my knee, I end up a year later, I dislocated the other knee cap. But in particular that first injury was such an impact, you know jumping up in the air and landing, the second one was just kinda got bumped and popped out by somebody is wrestling with. But that first injury kinda took its toll on my knee and I am doing well now I've I kinda overcame it and figured out how to get around it and rehabilitate it. But when I was younger, it was a lot more difficult and when you're in high school you're very active. Your gym class and even martial arts training, I wasn't as in control of my schedule and being able to say okay need to pull back a little bit right now or I'm gonna end up hurt, and so it kept becoming a recurring problem and the real difficulty was, when the doctor told me he was talking about a surgery and I remember my mom, was there and she said to me well what you want to do about your knee? And I said, he sounds like he wants me to do the operation he said no I don't need surgery, I want you stop doing karate. In that moment, I remember getting furious and I might've even yelled at them I was like no that's not gonna happen. That's ridiculous, I'm never gonna stop martial arts. But dealing with that and in particular, having a doctor tell you basically that you shouldn't be doing this anymore and then having this [00:31:11.43] well not listen to what you say, I'm gonna figure how to get through this. That was a struggle that took years really figure out how to rehabilitate the knee and get it to where I'm not in pain anymore.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you have any lasting effects like, are there things that you avoid doing or extra warm up stuff that you subscribe to?

Thomas Brown:



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There are definitely lasting effects. The warm up, it is not an issue yet. There are certain stretches that I do, certain things that I've learned from different physical therapist that I've seen one in particular that really helped me and actually, I met with him last year, were talking about injury prevention in general for martial arts. But so, there are certain stretches that I do still go to foam roller, myofascial release that helps. As far as lasting effects, I do know okay I shouldn't do too much kicking. I can feel them starting to get a little irritated, maybe I should call it a day with the kicking take a day off and work upper body or whatever. So, I'm more aware of what's going on down there now too but lots of kicking, deep stances and things like that definitely, definitely can take its toll and irritate it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Did that, you know, when you look back, do you think that, that this has changed the way you approach your training?

Thomas Brown:

It's definitely change the way I approach my teaching. I do a lot of injury prevention stuff with my students because I'm more aware of of what can go wrong because I've been fortunate or unfortunate, however you want to look at it, of having many different things go wrong with my body through the years as far as joint injuries and such. So, I'm more aware of that like I said my implement certain stretches and in different physical conditioning, different strength development protocols to help make sure that people are avoiding imbalances and avoiding injury as such.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice and I'm curious what with the response from your students? Injury prevention isn't something that we do much of in the martial arts just generally. So, I'm curious what feedback you get from your students.

Thomas Brown:

Not too much, I don't think they know the difference. I do introduce them to why we do it, I'm really big on that, I'm principle centered in everything that we do, I want the students not just to know what to do, I want to them to know why they're doing it. But I don't know, you know, when it's when it's something that you are always familiar with, when you don't know anything else when that's what your training is, there is no significant response. If maybe if a student comes from another school and now they are introduced to this new-wave training, which it isn't radically different, it's just making sure that you're doing certain, in particular, certain stability exercises with all your joints to make sure that you're not just developing the explosive movement but you have the strength to stabilize that structure when you are performing that explosive movement but is not to radically different like I said. Just more stability training and in all areas, proprioception training.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

We haven't talked much about your instructors. I mean, you mention a little bit about your initial instructor, yet martial arts clicked for you. And you might be the first but perhaps not, it seems like everyone has at least one person that you know, when they think back on their past, if it wasn't for them they wouldn't have stuck with martial arts. You know quite often it's our first instructor who really just sets the path out for us, for others it could be a coach I mean, there a lot of possibilities and we've heard so many of them on this show. Is there someone like that for you? Someone that when you think of you say ah, I really needed the lessons that they gave me.

Thomas Brown:

Definitely my first instructor and he actually, I don't want to get emotionally, he actually last year, I was teaching class and I got a message that he passed away and I was really sudden. He was only in his 50s so, it was sudden and shocking for all of us his former students and especially his current students. I can't even imagine the younger ones. I try to put myself in their place and if I was a little kid and that happened, I lost my sense, what will that do to me? So, that was another tough time actually dealing with that. But he definitely sorts of have laid out a path for me, he helped me in many ways. I learned how to be a, not just a successful martial artist but a successful teacher from him. And what's interesting actually is going back to how certain things happen that lead you in a direction. He helped sort of lay that path as far as teaching was concerned. When I was going to school he help me set up the different programs, I mean when I was going off to college only set up the different programs at those gyms that I was teaching at and when he passed away he was teaching at a gym at that point. He was getting towards the end of his career so he closed up his school, he was gonna to retire but he was teaching a few last people, out of a gym in Westfield and so now we have another program that we're running in Westfield. So again, it's interesting you know, even in his passing he still kind of giving my life direction, taking my career in new ways but he was definitely very influential. I learned a lot from him as far as having proper energy when you're in front of classes, keeping the students highly engaged and wanting to come back. So, I owe him a lot that's for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. And if you could train with someone else, someone that you haven't. Anywhere in the world, anywhere in time. Who would you want to train with?

Thomas Brown:

So anywhere in time. I we're looking at people from the past that obviously, I would find it difficult to believe there be any martial artist would want to meet and interact with Bruce Lee. So, he'd be on that list but being that I come from a kempo background, I would love to have met Ed Parker. He is somebody that I greatly admire, his contributions to the martial arts is theoretical understanding. I think



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he was a conceptual genius in his approach to developing his system and so I would love to just meet him and train with him and be able to in particular do what we're doing right now is to sit down and ask them a bunch of questions. About the interview him and see how his mind works try to get to better understand his process.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, Ed Parker certainly all that short list of folks that man I wish I'd started the show just a little, little bit sooner.

Thomas Brown:

Definitely. I wish there were more videos out there of him. I think that nowadays so many of us are putting videos out there that future generations, our students' students and so forth and so on will be able to still see what we were teaching and how things were. I'm happy that he was able to shoot some videos, I love that Larry Tatum one of his top protégés has so many videos out. I wish there were more of Ed Parker teaching.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fortunately, they're still quite a few people who train directly under him. So, while it's not the same, you know you can still kinda read between the lines. When you get half a dozen or a dozen people together who all trained under the same person you can start to see the commonalities and say ah, they must've gotten that from.

Thomas Brown:

Oh yeah, definitely and sometimes you can see the exact same lesson being taught when you do have that reference material that is out there of him and you see that okay there explaining exact same thing and maybe they're expanding on it a little so that's definitely still there. I think that there's a lot of people that are keeping his teachings alive.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, absolutely. Let's talk about competition. Tends to be a bit of a polarizing question on the show. People usually love it or very diplomatically dislike it. Where do you fall?

Thomas Brown:

So, I wouldn't say that I fall in an extreme. I, I'm definitely for competition. I don't we don't overly emphasize it here at our school. We have our own little tournament it used to be every year. I've been



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kinda getting away from doing that, I've so many projects going on but I see tremendous benefits in it and I think it's also okay if there are schools out there that don't do it. I think that is different reasons that people trying. And I think what's really important is that you get clear on what you're offering so that people can make sure that what they're getting from you is in line with the reasons that they want to train, that they want to participate in martial arts. So, if people want to be competitive, they better make sure they find it a competition oriented school. If they want to learn how to defend themselves, they better be practical training, sparring and maybe you know a little bit of competition mixed in with that. So, for me well, one thing when I was younger we do tournaments and compete, after I injured my knees, I became a lot more cautious especially the second time when I was just sort of wrestling around with somebody and they pop my kneecap out. For me I prioritize being able to continue to train over being able to compete. But one of the reasons that we do have tournaments and one of the reasons I'm for tournaments is getting students to step out of their comfort zone. Getting them to do something that it forces them to confront their ability to still perform adequately under stress, under pressure and a lot of kids when we're having tournaments, there's a lot of kids don't want to compete, that it is afraid of getting out there and competing. And what I found is, when I'm able to talk some of those kids into usually when there's this one kid that's absolutely ah they want to do it, they were even gonna do it but then it's absolutely no I'm not. I'm too nervous and too scared and when I can talk that person into competing, they end up taking home a trophy. They end up performing better than most and so I think that, that a huge value is being able to just get up whether its sparring or performing forms and do what you've been trained to do in an environment that pushes you outside your comfort zone and I think as far as achieving success in life we have to constantly push ourselves beyond our comfort zone because either were expanding our world or it's gonna start shrinking in on us.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love that. It's so well put we had a number of folks come on the show and say that in in very different ways but I really like the way that you put that. You know. If you're not, if you're not, swim, you know sharks, if they are not swimming they're dying, if you're not growing, you're shrinking. There is a lot of different dichotomies that you can use for that analogy and there's a fear isn't it to doing whatever it is that were uncomfortable with. The things that we don't do often regardless of our age, regardless of our rank and the irony is as we move up in age and rank, we almost seem to be more afraid of tackling those new challenges.

Thomas Brown:

Oh, definitely and I think that the physical and the mental it's interesting how they are linked because I see as, you know, as you get older you lose your physical flexibility but also if you're not careful, as you get older, you lose your mental flexibility, your mind starts to tighten up and you're not willing to accept new ideas. I put a lot of content out online and I find that those that have been in the martial arts the longest, let me not generalize, it's not if you've been in the martial arts the longest this is going to happen, but I'm sure you know, you have 200 and something episodes, you must've encountered people that disagree with ideas that your sharing and feeling the need to, feel the need to email you or I don't



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know how podcast work if you can comment on them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We just did an episode within the last couple weeks all about the hatred that we get and why we let some criticism end up being posted publicly and others we take down and yeah, I wake up in the morning to hate mail.

Thomas Brown:

Me too yeah and so what I was gonna say is I think there's a couple different people that fall into that group, there's those that just don't do anything that they are stuck too afraid to push themselves forward in their life to kind of expand out of their comfort zone, that it's easier to attack those that are doing something that they're kinda jealous of the fact that they're doing it. And then I think there's those that have attained success that when they see something new like I was saying their mind is kinda tightened up and so to admit that hey there might be this new idea or in a new way of expressing an old idea which is really I think what happens more often than not. When they see that, they reject it. Cause they don't realize that with age they've lost that mental flexibility in their becoming more close minded to new ideas, I think it's sad. I know plenty, I do want to reemphasize, I think that the percentage of people that do this is actually small when you look at how many people there are, the sad thing is the majority people that comment online are the negative ones and I think that there are smaller demographic, but because they're the ones that come and it feels like it's everybody so I know plenty of martial artists that are open minded I train with several different schools and I have different instructors that I train with continuing on my training and in a very open minded. They know what I'm doing, they help me figure out how what their teaching fits in with what I'm doing in there. They have that, that mindset that the arts should continue to push forward and so, I definitely don't want to generalize and say if you are in the martial arts for a long time, you're not open to new ideas.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No for sure. And your point about the negative comments being a small percentage, right. If we think about it when do we contact the company? The rare occasion when we we're just so blown away and we had the time and you know, we really wanted to support them, we might say something positive or for a lot of us when they do anything at all wrong. The majority of exchanges you know, you go to the grocery store, you buy your groceries and everything is just fine, you're not going to that, that's what's expected so, we don't tend to give feedback when things are good. We of them in their super duper great or they're bad.

Thomas Brown:

Yeah definitely. And there's this new trend [00:47:55.49] I don't know if you're a member of century



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martial arts school group on Facebook...

Jeremy Lesniak:

I am.

Thomas Brown:

I see so many people that they have an issue with something, and he decided to posted on the group and I just don't get that. As far as when you feel frustrated with a company like you're saying and you sort of jump into that I need to, I need to complain or I need to post a negative review, is now getting, well, I want to contact the company with my issue but instead of contacting them to see if it can get resolved, I'm in a make it up a matter of public record that this is an issue I've had to see if I can get sort of that mob mentality that jump in and support me and I just think that's going about it the wrong way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and you know the irony is someone that I know, not well, but so that I don't did that. Did that very thing and ended it doesn't take long to figure out that whistlekick and Sentry are competitors at least when it comes to selling sparring gear, you know. What a lot of folks don't know is that Leon Rogers who is one of the vps over there, he and I have a great relationship. We talk no few times a month, just a really nice guy and he's been really supportive of whistlekick and you know where do I buy, whistlekick doesn't make uniforms, where do I buy mine? Generally, from sentry and this particular individual posted something and you know I reached out to Leon at Sentry and said you know this, I was really saddened that this person did that and you know, not covering for them cause it's not someone I know that well but the exchange just seemed so counter to what I knew of this person. And you know we don't always know what's going on in people's lives and I think that these semi-anonymous frame of the environment, I'm sorry, of the Internet allows us to lash out a way that we never would in person. I have a rule when I'm communicating with people and don't think anyone out there, knows has has experience this because I have good relationships with pretty much everyone, and I think is gonna be listening to this, but if I'm writing an email or a text and I start to feel any kind of negative emotion, I will delete what I'm writing and ask for at the very least a phone call, if not meeting in person. I think that was a good [00:50:21.16] Because it goes sideways so quickly.

Thomas Brown:

Especially when you misinterpret the written word so easily too. So, even if it's is partially [00:50:33.11] negativity there, frustration or whatever, that emotion is, that could be blown out of proportion very easily.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And it's so important that we have these strong relationships, not just in life but especially in martial arts. It is so easy to get put into a camp and not talk to others in other camps and we look at styles we look at geography we look at the million and one ways that we are dividing. You know, when some and there are there are growing efforts to bring some common ground some unity to the martial arts you know, this this show whistlekick in general is one of those efforts but there's so many others and I just wanted I want to connect people. I don't want to draw more and more lines between cause at the end you're just left as one person in your own little box.

Thomas Brown:

Definitely, yeah. I advocate cross training and experiencing other systems, it's a big part of what we do. I wouldn't advocate trying to become a master of every system that would make sense but training in other systems, taking seminars and things that push you again, outside of your comfort zone to experience something new. It is something that I try to do on a fairly regular basis and I've learned to sort of fall in love with the experience of that feeling like a student again. Sometimes when you reach a certain point, you can start to feel like either you have all the answers, you definitely have more than you think you do and so to put yourself outside of your own world and into another system, that can be really humbling really quickly and so, I like continually doing that in my career, in my training just to kinda keep me grounded.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. You mentioned earlier your affinity for any ninja movie from the 90s, you mentioned three ninjas, specifically it's a movie that a lot of us have seen, lot of us loved despite you know, kinda quirky. Is that your favorite martial arts movie or are there other films that occupy your top spots?

Thomas Brown:

So, it's interesting because I've definitely, I've rewatched that movie recently in recent years, because during camps and things that we have at the school here, I'll have the kids watch it so they can experience it too. And I'm still there's definitely nostalgia there, I actually do still enjoy the movie, I do like it. I love the karate kid movies, I love enter the Dragon, I don't know if I could pinpoint like this is my favorite go to martial arts movie though, but I definitely up there is enter the Dragon, the karate kid series. I'm again, partial to a lot of those movies that I grew up with, I still love the 1990 I think it was ninja turtles movie, not the biggest fan of the new movies that are coming out. I've seen them I'm sure if I should admit to watching movies that are more geared towards kids..

Jeremy Lesniak:

You absolutely should. Absolutely.



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Thomas Brown:

I have definitely watched them and been somewhat disappointed. So, what's your favorite movie? Martial arts wise?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It depends on why it's my favorite cause they're not all the same. You know, that the original karate kid is the one that I think has had the biggest impact, it's the one that I am most likely to watch if I'm flipping through channels. But it's certainly not the best choreography, it's not the best acting, it doesn't have the best story. You know the reason I asked about three ninjas, is because there seems to be this correlation between movies that you watched at a certain point in your martial arts career. You know that early time for a lot of folks it's Bruce Lee, people that watch Bruce Lee films at or before they started training quite often that's the movie that holds that favorite space for them. I think there's something to be said for, that just kinda overall culturally, we tend to love the music that came out when we were teenagers, when we got to make our own choices for the music we're listening to. Clothing, you know we tend to stay in this, it's more likely to change but a lot of us will stick towards the clothes that we were able to buy when we first had her own disposable income. You know, teenagers or maybe even a little bit older and I think that's why karate kid is that movie for me. I mean, I'll watch anything with a great fight scene or anything with a great story, it doesn't have to be all of those together.

Thomas Brown:

I'd have to agree, I mean the movies that I go to in my mind when you ask a question are the movies that I watched early on. So, I'm still partial to three ninjas, enter the Dragon, I remember always watching that whenever I was getting ready for a tournament. So, that was my go to tournament movie.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, that's a perfect example movie that hypes you up. You know if I'm gonna go out and train, you know, I might watch a training sequence from you know one of Van damme's movies. You know, one of the that 80s montages, movies today don't have great montages.

Thomas Brown:

I love the montage.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We need more montages. I wish someone would make like a, actually maybe it's out there. Somebody



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show me like 60 minutes of fight scene montages. You know, not the actual fight seemed like that the training. You know, just somebody that's uploaded all of those best chunks to YouTube and I, I'll just watch that all day.

Thomas Brown:

As far as kempo montage goes, and I'm actually not about the plug my own stuff here, as the listeners might think,

Jeremy Lesniak:

But you can...

Thomas Brown:

There is, there's one from an instructor in, that I'm familiar with, he's an excellent instructor, it's called kempo rocks on YouTube and it's a training montage, he made it when he was celebrating, I think it was his 20th year in martial arts and it's definitely, it's a great martial arts video, kinda gets me psyched up for training in martial arts. He's in incredible physical condition, I mean he does pull-ups where he launches himself up in the air and then claps and catches the bar. Stuff that I would just wreck my shoulder trying but it's a great montage, you should check it out if you haven't seen it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool, yeah. Will find it, we'll add it to the links. For anyone that might be new, you can find the show notes to this or any of the other episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, that's where we drop links like this kempo rocks montage. Photos, all the other good stuff we do.

Thomas Brown:

Now if you want to see a montage I put together for my school, I can also give you a link to that as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah yeah.

Thomas Brown:

But as far as training goes, I think that his is a really, really well-done video.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Who's your favorite martial arts actor?

Thomas Brown:

Favorite martial arts actor... Probably Bruce Lee. It's interesting these questions too. I did see them on the list so, you know earlier you asked me story and that one was difficult and then the movie thing is difficult too because when I was younger I was much more into watching the martial arts movies. That kind of slipped away, where yeah, like you said, I love seeing a good fight scene, I love, I love watching different movies that have martial arts in them but I'm not as addicted to watching martial arts movies as I was when I was younger. I'm much busier working on training and building my business and any other projects that I have going on. So, it's kinda fallen out of my schedule.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There's something to be said for watching martial arts movies with other martial artists. And I've heard of similar short schools that will you know, once a month or so have a movie night in the school whether that's for kids or teens or adults. But I think there's something kinda fun about watching movie like that together and then even you know at class the next week pulling some elements out of that to work on it. There's, no watching a movie by yourself, that's one experience but I think we've all been to the movies and especially with a funny movie you can, you can feel it more there you watch a funny movie by yourself, you laugh. You watch a funny movie in the theater with everyone else laughing you will fall out of your seat. It's just a whole different experience to share that with someone and I think you can say the same about martial arts films.

Thomas Brown:

Yeah. I mean, my only fear is that students will realize that that's where whole curriculum came from.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well if you're showing them the perfect weapon, maybe and maybe it should. There's some awesome kempo in there.

Thomas Brown:

I actually I've never taken a class in my life. I've just documented different things that I've seen in the movies and [00:59:53.51] together. I paid different people to pretend to be my instructors in videos just so that I can state this back story too. It's really elaborate.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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There you go. Well, you know if you have them start shin kicking palm trees, then they may have the proof that they [01:00:10.52]. How about books? Are you at all a reader?

Thomas Brown:

Oh. Definitely yeah. I have all of the Bruce Lee with the John Little Bruce Lee books where documented his notes, the Tao of jeet kune do, Ed Parker's infinite insights in the kempo, encyclopedia of kempo, Master Young cause I do white crane with YMAA. So, Master Young has several books, I have his chin [01:00:40.12] books, his white crane book, basically just about anything I can get my hand on books, dvds. I have a huge DVD library of different martial arts videos, instructional. So, anything that I can consume that can help me better understand what I'm doing, cause usually I find that that's what you're attempting to do in that environment, it's not that I'm reading this book to learn a whole bunch of new skills, if that's what I'm doing that's probably a flawed approach cause it's pretty hard to learn from a book. But if this book can give me greater insight into, okay this is what they're doing in their system and I understand why they're doing it now maybe I can make a connection with something that I've been doing for years and I can see it from a new perspective. It gives me a greater depth of understanding, that's my approach.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What are your goals for the future?

Thomas Brown:

Well this one's making me think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's half the fun for me.

Thomas Brown:

I know. One of the reasons making me think is how much do I want to actually say? Cause this different research that depending on talking about your growth goals with people, it can help you achieve them or it can actually kinda connecting your brain like, okay I get that sort of hit of that same feeling you get when you've accomplished it, now be become less likely to actually achieve the goal. I think the key there is making sure that the people that you are sharing your goals with are gonna hold you accountable. So, some of my bigger goals with the school of course, I wanna constantly continue to develop my depth of understanding, so that I can continually improve my teaching methods and help my students get better and better. I look at the students that I have now and when I think back to when I was at, you could pick any, any level not necessarily beginner, but if we look at intermediate advanced



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students and I compare to where they are versus where I was when I was their level, they're beyond where I was. I think my teaching and my understanding has evolved that I'm able to take the next generation a little bit further. And so, I'm constantly working on, on trying to improve upon that. Not the most tangible goal, it's hard to exactly define what the criteria is but that's in the list of goals. And it's in one of my journals which I write down goals. And another thing is I want to continue to release online courses this year, I want to release at least three and right now were getting ready to release one on understanding power dynamics. I have a background in physics that's what I was going to school for before I realized, I could run a martial arts business. And so, I'm using my knowledge of physics combined with what I've learned from my different instructors to explain conceptually in terms of the principles what power dynamics are. And so that course actually, I'm not sure when this is going to air, when you're gonna be releasing it, but it will probably be up on my website by the time people are listening to that. We have a course on Shaolin White Crane fundamental training and again these courses really focus on principles cause that's my philosophy. My approach in my own training when consuming books and video is to understand the principles that fits in with my training, and so I'm trying to provide the same resources for those that are taking a similar approach in their training, so that's a big goal. I'm passionate about teaching like I've a couple times and so I wanna teach, I wanna make available all the resources that I can tell people be successful in their training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And if people want to reach out to you, if you know that they want to check out those courses, you know, social media, email, website any of that, what do you have?

Thomas Brown:

They can go to my website which is tigonkarate.com they can email me directly tom@taigonkarate.com. They could go to my Facebook page which will give you links to all of this. They can learn more by going to our YouTube channel, we have upwards of around 300 videos up now and now that it's a new year I'm getting ready to get things going and start adding some new content there this week. There's a lot of ways that people can reach out, out to me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And some final words for the folks listening.

Thomas Brown:

So, I guess and in keeping with what has been a recurring theme in our discussion, I would say, as you go for in your training keep an open mind and consistently expose yourself to new ideas. Push yourself outside of your comfort zone and not try different things so, that your continually experience in growth and you don't find yourself moving backwards.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Sensei Brown is such a positive person. His passion for teaching is exceptional and I'm impressed at his choice of martial arts over hockey. All too often I see children choosing nearly anything over martial arts, but here we see Sensei Brown choosing his child and turning it into a career that he loves. Thank you, Sensei Brown, for being on the show today. You check out the show notes with everything we've talked about today, photos and a whole bunch more at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You can find all the great products, links to our other projects online, like martial arts calendar you can find those at whistlekick.com if you want to get a hold of us on social media or see all the cool memes and everything that were putting out every day, you can find us @whistlekick on Facebook, twitter and Instagram. Hopefully are subscribing to the show, you're subscribing to our newsletter and you're seeing all the great effort that were putting in to make your life your passion of the martial arts better. Cause really, that's our goal. That's all I got for you today. Thanks for tuning in. And until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.