



Episode 26 – Shihan Christine Bannon Rodriguez | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone and thanks for listening to episode 26 of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com) the only place to hear the most interesting stories from the best martial artists. I'm your host Jeremy Lesniak and I'm also the founder of whistlekick, makers of the world's best sparring gear available as well as awesome apparel and accessories all for traditional martial artists. I'd like to welcome our new listeners and remind our veterans that I really appreciate your help in spreading the show. You guys have been doing a great job lately so please keep it up. You can learn more about our products like our one of a kind strapless sparring boots at whistlekick.com and you can learn more about the podcasts including all our past episodes show notes for this one and a lot more over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and while you're on our website please sign up for our newsletter, it's full of information, discounts and lots of other useful martial arts content and if you're an Android user head on over to the Google Play store and download our free android app, just search for whistlekick. It's an easy way to stay connected with the show. So now to the review of the week and this one comes in from [acryllian1983](#). Great mix of New England and national martial artists. Each guest brings many interesting stories about themselves and the history of the martial arts. New England [01:18](#) makes me nostalgic for competing on the ippone circuit. Well, thank you [acryllian](#) for that review and thank you to everyone else for the reviews that you



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write in. Remember if you hear us read your iTunes review on the show, email us and we'll send you out a free pack of whistlekick stuff and now for today's show. Today we're joined by Shihan Christine Bannon Rodrigues. Shihan Chris is a famed martial arts competitor, instructor, movie actor, stunt woman and the list goes on. She's lived an incredible martial arts career and has worked with an amazing list of people. We had a great conversation and I was honored to speak with her. Shihan Chris tells what it was like to feel international pressure at a young age and dedicate yourself to proving the naysayers wrong. So, with that Shihan Chris welcome to whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Thank you I'm excited to be on today.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool, Well I'm excited to have you, you know, it's a personal victory to have you on the show as I told you I was a fan back in the 90s, still a fan I guess you never really stop being a fan so this is fun for me. But why don't we start with you telling us about how you got started in the martial arts and why?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Okay, I'm pretty much as a teenager was doing every sport that there was. I had tried softball and basketball and ice skating, figure skating, gymnastics, I did pretty much everything and you know unless you had a you know experience from being a young kid doing the sport you know a lot of stuff you know you learn [02:54](#) so you spend a lot of time on the bench you know just I did well in all of them but nothing really hit me and it was just a girlfriend asked me her brother was taking karate classes in the neighborhood and she asked me if I wanted to go with her, she was gonna try it out and I did that you know when I was 13 and probably within a year she had quit and I stuck with it I mean from the first day I was like ohh I love this great you know. I really enjoyed it and it wasn't you know like I was getting kicked on and felt like I needed to take it or anything like that it was just you know I was just trying to find my niche what I would wanna do and you know the sport I tried it and I really loved it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Put yourself back in that time do you remember what it was cause if you were trying everything you know some people will draw some similarities between gymnastics and martial arts for example, what was it about martial arts that stuck out for you in a different way?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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Well I think you know participation I was involved the entire time of the classes. The classes were quite long back then. Now I think we'd have like an hour and half or 2 hour classes and there was really not much of a limit I wouldn't get told like I'd only go to 2 classes a week or anything like that so you know I would attend even more and you know seeing those goals of you know reaching a yellow belt or you know your first belt and stuff like that was exciting so you know the more time you put in and the more practice the quicker you move. So, you know I just enjoyed it, there weren't many girls involved at all so you know it was in competition in that end as far as other girls being in the class but it was just it was fun.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So that's a good foundation and you've been training a long time we don't have to put years on there or anything but I'm sure you've got a ton of stories over those years.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I'd like so I'd like you to try and think about one you know let's call it your best martial arts story and share it with us.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh god, that's a tough one. I have a lot of stories. I don't know I would say you know probably one of my most memorable in my history would be when I actually went to the world championships.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

In 1991 in England and you know a lot of the countries and still to this day not just back in the 90s but still to this day very there's not equality between men and women and the women walked behind the men and you know there's certain countries like that, that still exist and so that you know they look down on women. I went to the world championships and won a gold medal in forms fighting and weapons and I had never been done before so it was like breaking the wako world record by doing that



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and my husband being president of wako in the United States you know would go to these president meetings when they'd have different meetings and so forth and you know he came back and just said well you should hear they talk about you, you know, it's just some fluke thing it could never happen again it was you know so you know that just aggravated me got me really upset and I was like I'll prove them and I was so I went back and did it again in 93 at the next world championship and you know I'll say you know won my gold medal in forms and weapons and then I was in my last final match for the gold medal when I I mean talk about pressure I was just like you know I gotta win this third win again you know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know that's one of the most memorable things I mean you know I have funny stories too I mean that's not really a funny story that's just it's just something that always sticks out in my head and still holding that world title you know that record title because still nobody has done it not once let alone twice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I'd like to hear one of those funny stories in a second but let's go back to that so you know here you do something that's never been done and then of course people you know, people like to hate nobody well I shouldn't say nobody at least I'd like to think in our sport people are generally pretty supportive but people are obviously critical. What was your attitude towards training before that first competition in 91 and on the second one in 93?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Well I think my attitude pretty much stayed the same because I was trying to accomplish that just on the NASKA circuit and on the National Circuit here in the United States trying to be number 1 in all three and you know when the grands and stuff in all three divisions here in the State so I wouldn't say my training had changed too much but I was definitely very determined to go back and do it again and I realized that people were gunning for me and knew you know I would win the division and you know it's not like today where they could YouTube you and stuff but you know they had the old video cameras and you know had me on tapes and stuff like that so you know I was very focused on that being my goal and being able to achieve that and you know so I would say my training pretty much remained the same, I might have brought it up another notch but you know I was very excited to go back and give it a whirl



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again and try to prove everybody wrong and especially all those men

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

From other countries, I should say

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course, does one of those triple crowns mean more to you than the other?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

No, I mean I they both were really important to me. England was nice cause you know a different country, it was the first time I achieved that more than anyone achieved it and you know it was I remember fighting a girl and she kept you know like a kickboxer does, bobbin and leaping so she would bob down and as soon as I saw the opportunity I drop an axe kick on her head. And I was getting warned because you couldn't hit the back of the head. So it was it ended up being the back of her head cause she was kinda ducking her head down like a kickboxer would you know and bobbin out of the way so when she's do that always just a reaction is you know so I got warn and then you know I did it again and I got another warning and my husband's screaming at me and - do not kick I'm like I can't help it you know I just automatic reaction so you know he's like don't kick again just punch her you know cause he knew I was you know [10:08](#) was gonna lose a gold medal and disqualified because you know of how she was positioning her body and that's my natural reaction to that opening and you know you don't really have that kind most girls, most fighters don't do that in point fighting as far as

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know bobbing like that and we don't really have that kind of rules here so just we try to be not to kick her in the head like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Was that the last axe kick you dropped on her head?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah, yeah. I tried to [10:35](#) It was hard but I tried to control so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You mentioned you have some funny stories do you have one you got ready you'd like to share?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh god I don't know you could have a you know a lot of fun times with all the teams that you know I was part of the Atlantic and Transworld [10:59](#) team back in the 80s and that was a lot of fun being team mates with [11:06](#) I mean it was just a cream of the crop you know and then I went on to my husband's team on to the Paul Mitchell team so you know between the team that I've travelled with I mean we always had funny stories and you know sometimes they weren't so funny at the time but I remember we were somewhere in ended up getting what happened we were in another country I wanna say we were in England I can't even remember what country it was but I just remember I remember we know we went in Italy I believe and we pretty much kicked everybody but you know everything was all good and we were getting treated like you know royalty there and we kicked everybody's but then all of a sudden we were lost we had absolutely no way of getting back to the hotel we're at like a subway or train station and you know they were closed pretty much all the trains had stopped it was late at night it was like alright how do we get back if you don't even speak the language and so you just feel like you know 20 or 30 big black belts you know all you know standing there just totally clueless on how to get back to the hotel it's like I was like go figure everything was good until we beat everyone else that [12:36](#) from here and then we get lost so you know funny things like that you know traveling with the teams and you know I remember one of the first times I ever competed in New York and not sure if it was in Harlem or in Brooklyn [12:56](#) back when the karate illustrated these when you would have regions and you would get your points and you know so it was kinda chase and point all the time regionally to be number 1 in New England and then you know went on to try to be National Champion but when I was doing that I remember going to like I said I think it was Harlem and I went there and I am the only white girl in the entire place and you know I went into the bathroom and you know had [13:31](#) ladies room and you know I had all these black belts looking at me and giving me all kinds of dirty looks and you know staring me down and I told my husband when I came out and he was like don't worry about it you know, take care of it in the ring and you know I got in the ring and I actually had a Joyce Sta Maria she was one of the officials and she's from Long Island and it was the first time I ever met her and the rest were all men and you know what I mean I was [14:04](#) the girl and I mean I kinda at the end, ended up being one of the girls that was in the bathroom but I ended up you know like probably out pointing her by 20 points but it was



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like

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know I'd have to kill her to get a point and you know cause I wasn't from New York and it was you know I just wasn't [14:26](#) girl or any

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

I was so that was my first taste of New York and seeing what that is all about and you know it's changed quite a bit New York I think you know it's really quite different than it was back then

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

And you know we had oh my god so many different stories I could go on forever. I remember one time we were competing in New York and we were driving and I believe it was myself my husband Richard Brandon who has passed away since and Rocky De Rico and we were driving to New York and you know we'd always get down to some ridiculous hours like you know finals until 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning and we were driving home which is about 3 hour ride and you know Rich Brandon has [15:26](#) he's he was always like wired and you know will spit fire and tons of energy and he'd be working out you know doing push-ups and all kinds of crazy stuff before he'd compete and I'd be like why are you spilling your energy [15:39](#) right now so he was like the only one full of energy driving home so he decided you know he was gonna drive you know here we are all of us in a car with the big his big quandos sticking out the window as we're driving down the road we these big [15:56](#) on a stick you know and we're driving and we fall asleep and would getting close to Connecticut and you know the numbers are supposed to be out in the highway as supposed to be going to some you know like 2 or 3 all the way up to 93 and all of a sudden the numbers we wake up the number are going the other direction.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Rich where are we why is the numbers going, why are they going down now, he's like I don't know all of a sudden they changed and started going the other direction so he had us headed the other direction completely the wrong way from home, God only knows and then one time with Rocky de Rico and Rich again we were all driving to another tournament in New York so we would just get together and just you know carpool together and stuff and Rocky de Rico had this car that was something was wrong with the speedometer so he was like 10miles off all the time so you know Rich ended up driving at one point and he must have been sleeping when we were talking about this or I missed the whole conversation but he was driving you know like 60 miles an hour but the car said 55 or 60 and you know people were honking at him and flying by and it was like you know I don't [17:22](#) 20 miles off on the speedometer cause people are flying by him and honking at him and he's like oh my god these people are crazy what is going on why are they you know [17:32](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, that's funny

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Thank God Rich [17:36](#) going like 40 right now so he had no clue he was always funny, he was always someone that would make you laugh definitely I had a lot of fun stories without him.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool and we'll have time for some more stories as we get through more of these questions but I'd like to take a step on to the next question now.

Sure

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I'd like you to think about your time in the martial arts and how it's changed you. How has it made you a better person?



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Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

I think through the martial arts I have probably my whole childhood I was an extremely shy person and I still carry those traits but I think the martial arts really gave me a lot of confidence and you know to go out and do things whether it was in the work field or competing or you know speaking at different places and doing different things or getting involved with some work you know I was extremely extremely shy and I think that has really you know changed me through the martial arts and then also you know once you earned your black belt you kinda feel like there's nothing else that you cannot achieve you know I mean I remember one of my students recently we're talking about my son and you know he had talked about entering the air force or something and one of my black belts was like oh my god boot camp is nothing as the black belt has boot camp is a piece of cake he would do far I'm like yeah but I really don't want my kids going off to war you know but you know once you achieve that black belt you feel like there's really nothing that you can't achieve as long as you learn that attitude you know I can do anything that I set my mind to and you can achieve it so you know I think on the shyness level a lot of time you know people come over and talk to me at tournaments and stuff and you know I'm very friendly to people like I talk to people but still have that shy quality so it yeah you don't come over and talk to me I'd probably not gonna walk over and just talk to you if I don't know you

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

So you know and so sometimes people say [20:04](#) and I hate when people say that cause they just don't know you know what goes through my head but I'll give you a story on that one on being shy I went to a couple of karate illustrated National tournaments when I was like 17 I went to the blue [20:25](#) with my first one and I went to Chicago and then third one I was gonna go to Washington DC which was [20:31](#) and my husband didn't tell me until the night before we were leaving [20:39](#) he was my husband [20:42](#) but we were dating and he said I didn't buy me a plane ticket you're going on your own and I'm like oh my god, 17 years old and [20:52](#) I'm like I can't that means I gotta talk to the plane personnel by myself I gotta talk to a cab driver I gotta talk to the guy at the hotel all by myself I'm like I can't do it I can't do it you know so he knew I was gonna have that kind of reaction so he waited for the last minute to tell me and you know he kinda pushed me kicked my butt out the door and slam the door and locked the door and you know kinda forced me to do it and you know from that point on you know I that was one of the things that kinda broke that shyness because you know when you have to do something then you find a way to figure it out so.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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It's a recurring theme through the martial arts for a lot of us that you know our instructors seem to have good instructors anyway have a good vision into what we need in forcing us to take that step you know even if it's not something that's directly in the dojo.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like being thrown on a plane by yourself

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah that was good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, think about a time in your life where maybe things were a little rough a little rocky and how you moved through it and how the martial arts played a part in that.

You know there's always rocky times or

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Tough areas but you know I would probably say when I went to the world championships in the 90s in Venice that was the first time I ever win the WAKO world championships and you know my husband didn't go I was went pretty much with the Atlantic team and you know some of the members of the US team and at that time my father had had a very bad stroke and he was only 48 like he's not doing well when he was in the hospital and so it was kinda like I didn't really wanna go and leave my mother with that I didn't know if something would happen while I was gone and it's a week trip and you know he's just kinda I could tell he wanted me to go and my mother wanted me to go so I went and you know I won one world title there in forms but I took a bronze a third or bronze in fighting that's why I was like you know after that I wanted to go back and win all gold medals and that was the end of it. So you know that was it was a tough thing to do but if I was there I had to make it worthwhile I had to make sure I



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was you know giving it my 100% and that focusing on you know he's being in the hospital and everything you know and it took that time to go and be away from home so I wanted to make sure I gave it 110% you know and then I came back and you know he right after that passed away and then immediately after that my mother was diagnosed with the worst breast cancer that you could possibly ever get so she passed away the same year. So, you know it was a rough year but I was, how old was I, was I 18, no I was probably I remember I was like 20, 21 and running my own school and you know dealing with that as well and losing your parents at that age, being a little guardian of my little brother. It was a lot to handle and I think you know the martial arts you know gave me the strength to be strong and you know do what I had to do for my brother and for everybody else that they [24:46](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

How much of your, I can imagine what it would be like to be 20, 21 and lose both of your parents in such a short period of time so I'm trying to put myself into that place but how much of your I guess motivation to carry on to follow through was about you and how much was about your brother cause that sounds like a pretty motivating force to make sure that he's okay that he's taken care of.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah. You know I think it was when my father passed away it was like you know I needed to be strong for my mother and you know [25:20](#) and you know and then my mother passed away it was me went dealing with my brother you know being the adult in the family and being the one taking care of a 15 year old at the time you know and you know so that was all very challenging and you know like I said the martial arts [25:44](#) and it's the one thing I can say about the martial arts if you I feel it through martial artists when you walk on that mat you know it could be the class the next class that I taught after going to see [26:01](#) doing everything or whatever but when you walk on that mat and all that is gone you know you're focused on your training with martial arts your students you put that smile on and you know you kinda it kinda gets you away like your happy place you know get you away from thinking about all the other issues so you know and no matter how bad everyday [26:25](#) I enjoy going to work I enjoy going and teaching and you know put everything all at the side and you know just focus on what I'm doing on the mat.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. So, you've had a chance to train and meet a lot of great people. I'm sure we could sit here for probably 10, 15 minutes and come up with a great list but I'd like you to think about all those people and then take your any direct instructors out, who out of that list had the biggest impact on you?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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Besides instructors you said?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

I would probably say Pat Johnson who is a you know phenomenal martial artist. He was part of Chuck Norris' undefeated competition team you know as a fighter way back in the day and you know he's choreographed or directed you know like choreography of so many movies you know all the ninja except for like the newer day ninja turtle movies you know with all the ninja turtle movies all the karate kid movies you know he's done the batman robin and mortal combat movies and he's just done so much as far as homework goes and you know he was a very good friend you know never talked to him about doing movies you know oh I wanna be in a movie and I so I mean it was never that kind of relationship it was just a very good friend. I would see him from time to time when he would walk to tournaments and stuff he has [28:11](#) and you know we had a good relationship and then all of a sudden, he you know decided to he was doing the karate kid film in Massachusetts. They were filming in Mass which is you know an hour from me and

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

They had a stunt women who doubles to Hillary Swank that did you know she did the if you saw the movie she jumped on the car with the pizza delivery guy and she went down this ladder off the building and she did some great stunts, she was a very good stuntwoman but she had put down that she knew martial arts but she wasn't you know she probably would maybe yellow orange purple belt or something like that you know and it wasn't really what Pat Johnson was looking for, he wanted someone you know ahead extreme speed and accuracy and you know very difficult techniques so that's when he called me and said you wanna come down to the set? Meet Hillary meet [29:08](#) the director and you know so you know that's how I got involved in you know [29:14](#) it's just that's how I got involved in [29:18](#) So I would say he was a very inspirational person for me. He was the type of person that he never seems like he's ever in a bad mood you know always very, very positive always you know confident and giving you the right pat on the back and being you know he's just a very positive upbeat person. So you know I would say him and you know we've had Chuck Norris in to our event I think 3 times now that we've had him in as a guest and you know so and besides those times that you know got to work with him on the world



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combat league 30:04 you know doing different things 30:08 besides those kinds so developed a friendship with him as well and you know I really liked the fact that out of all his accomplishments and everything he's still a down to earth type of person he's not cocky, he's not doesn't have that attitude and you know he'll remember if people if you know he had certain people 30:30 and you know helping watch as far as you know 30:37 from where and stuff and he'll thank those people and remember their names and I'm like wow how does he even remember those people's names and nothing like you know this is Bob John Mike and Paul you know and he remembers them you know it's very impressive that he 30:53 Hollywood go to his head as well I mean he's very nice person to talk to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, yeah, I've heard nothing but good things. I haven't been fortunate enough to meet him but we've had a few guests on the show that have talked about him in a very positive light just as you've done. So, the next question is about competitions certainly we talked about competition a little bit it's been would you agree if I said competition's been core to your martial arts training in your martial arts career?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah I mean up until brown belt level I mean I did compete all the way back you know I think as an orange belt like back in 1980 I competed you know it was my first tournament but you know I competed a decent amount of time up to brown belt but when I hit brown belt I got more serious about it and then it became World as a gold of mine and at that time they didn't do any kind of ratings on the belt you know it's just a matter of collecting trophies and trying to beat the person that you lost to last time or something but there were no ratings or anything so as I got close to the black belt I started you know watching the magazines and the karate illustrated regional ratings and the national ratings and the people that were on the covers of the magazines, you know and before you know it you know we're putting gear on and we'll grab nationals at my press national tournaments and 32:27 next to me putting her son and I'm like oh boy this is crazy and that was just wild you know so it was you know after I made my black belt when I got very serious about the competition and you know I think up until black belt my main focus was try and earn my black belt. I enjoyed competing but it wasn't a love and a passion that I had you know so I my main goal was earning my black belt and then once I earned my black belt I got a lot more serious about competition because I wanted to be number 1 you know and I wanted to be number 1 in New England, I wanted to be number 1 in the country and I went on to the world championships. So I mean I kept setting higher goals and once I had done that several times at the world championships you know I had 9 WAKO world titles so after I did that then it was like okay I mean I went like 11 months undefeated and the NASKA circuit you know went in every grand at every tournament, national tournament and it just kinda got 33:31 was like how many more you know like if it wasn't 33:38 hard challenge that kinda like starting to lose it a little bit and the desire for the competition because I had won at so many different times. So then that you know I had done the movie



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thing with the karate kid I was like you know I kinda I'm like a white belt there you know doing some of that. I don't really know what I'm doing I mean it's totally new and so you know I kinda pushed my way through so many stuff and put that more as a goal and kinda retired from competition and you know so then I had that as a goal and then it became you know my school, [34:11](#) seminars and you know I still like the to do the film work [34:16](#) when I can but I'm not gonna be living out in Hollywood and beating down the door and doing auditions you know 5 a day until I get something I mean it's that's not my main focus but if there's something local and I can get a job working doing some stunt work great I mean I love doing it but you know I don't wanna leave my school or make my kids pack up and move and go somewhere.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, what was the last fun project you worked on that people would've seen?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Well that people would've seen, well the martial arts kids that movie, they're premiering it out in California and New York coming up these months so that's being shown that was with Dan Wilson and Cynthia Rothrock and lot [35:07](#) same as martial artist are in the film you know it's kinda mostly about bullying so I mean it's a nice story it was a fun movie to work on. Before that I would probably say you know I did some work on the dog and some of the local films I mean that were filmed locally that went big, and I just actually did some work on a film a couple of weeks ago and it was a very interesting project because it was 2 teenage boys that were [35:49](#) 19 and they met at a special Olympic like 15 years ago and they both have down syndrome and they decided they wanted to make a movie and they went you know one full steam on trying to make this movie. They did a quick [36:10](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:

Kickstarter?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

They did a kick start they raised almost 70 thousand

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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They had the actual camera that filmed most of the movie donated to them from someone in California, which was you know ridiculous 36:30 80 hundred thousand dollars I can't remember it's really you know the expense and just have it donated was incredible and cause these kids just wanted to do make a movie and you know so I do some stunt work on it and stuff so it was fun you know they wanted to you know very interesting type of movie that they wanted to do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And that was just a few weeks ago so that's not coming out soon?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

No, it won't be out probably I mean most of the time when your filming sometime it takes 6 months to a year before it gets released so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay so all you know maybe after or in the future we can stay in touch a little bit cause that's the kind of stuff that the audience likes to know about when it actually does 37:17 so I'll keep my ears open for that and maybe you can help prod me a little bit when it's getting there.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Okay I sure will.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, of all the people you've trained with there's gotta be at least one that you didn't get to train with that you would've wanted to.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh god there's probably a lot of people. There's probably a lot.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Who would top the list?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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Oh god that I would like to train with?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah living or dead.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh, Bruce Lee would've been cool to train with of course.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know there's a lot of great martial artist out there that you know and everybody has something that they give you know it's like I've always told my students, my instructor would tell me when you go to a seminar you can get one thing out of that seminar. They might teach you 50 things you know but if you can take one thing home that helps you be a better fighter or better at your forms or really cool self-defense technique you know you get something out of it you can't bring everything back and then everything is gonna be geared towards you. So you know between the 2 teams that I'd been on with the Paul Mitchell team and the Transworld oil and at the Atlantic team I mean I've had the opportunity of you know fighting with some great fighters I mean some of the most outstanding you know people out there you know it's I don't know I mean it's I'm trying to think and then I'm also a member of EFC which is Educational Funding Company and a lot of big school owners are part of that and we get together, we have conventions at least once a year and I get to you know a lot of them will share a different technique and work out and you know got my chance to work out with you know Ernie Reyes Sr and Stephen Hayes and you know [39:16](#) and a lot of just really impressive people, Dave Kovar and different people like that so I don't know I mean maybe someone you know maybe someone like Ronda Rousey, someone like that you know that's not kinda like in my not really in my world as far as you know sport karate and martial arts, [39:41](#) as totally different but you know the I don't enjoy watching the pounding ground stuff but when they get into the like a lot the [39:53](#) lock and rolls and throws mean that's really exciting to watch but you know as far as the other stuff no, I'm not a big fan of all these all those grounding pounding especially with [40:06](#) I don't think that's really should be teaching you know a young girl to move on [40:13](#)

Jeremy Lesniak:



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We could have I'm sure a whole conversation you know or do a whole episode on MMA you know we've had some pretty strong opinions expressed on the show and I've got some thoughts as well but I think at the heart of it. I personally I like watching the amateur stuff because after they're done beating on each other, you know just as most of us are in traditional martial arts you know we hug at the end, you know most of the time.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Right, right

Jeremy Lesniak:

I mean there's gonna be some rivalries, there's gonna be some egos, that's always gonna happen but as the UFC has grown that seems to be fading a little bit as more money comes in as it becomes more of a spectacle but I'll still I mean we've got local MMA events that happen in gymnasiums and I went to one last year that was at a facility attached to a mall, shopping mall and these guys will beat the [41:02](#) out of each other and then hug and then you know a couple of weeks later they'll be training the other and I think that's great to watch.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah and I've had the opportunity to go into one of the Gracie's seminars and you know I think you know it would be cool if they have a school close by and you could actually train with you know someone like that and in something different you know in a different style but I mean I didn't have the opportunity of training with someone like it cause I'm a kenpo [41:34](#) training with Ed Parker and [41:36](#) by all of them and testing under all three of them so I mean you know I've had the opportunity to work with you know of a lot of people so there's not too many people like I can say would love to have the opportunity to train with cause I've pretty been very very fortunate with all the teams in different organizations I've been involved in and my lineage in kenpo of people that I've been under.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool yeah that's certainly an impressive list and I'm jealous of it to be sure. So, we've talked about some of the movies that you've been in and I'm gonna guess that you like martial arts films and then something you enjoy watching do you have a favorite?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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I would probably say you know the karate kid films are probably my favorite you know and the earlier ones you know like the first one you know just the it was just one of the first martial arts film that kinda portrayed similar to how things are you know in a way you know so you know having the bad karate instructor and the you know we all deal with that [42:54](#) guy down the street can be like that sometimes you know so

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know so I would say that was probably my favorite and you know the other thing that I really enjoyed was when I worked on [43:08](#) masters that Tv show and we went to [43:13](#) with that I thought that was a great show not just cause I was on it but just everybody that was on it were legitimate champions pretty much and you know so we were all working together we all knew each other we're all friends, we're all true martial artists we weren't doubling for anybody we were playing our self and you know and each time that was only half hour episode on fox so whatever it was I believe it was half hour but they will always try to keep something you know perseverance, or confidence or determination and you know so every episode had a point behind it even though there'd be a lot of fighting and a lot of martial arts and you know the lot of excitement but they were still trying to teach the kids one of the values with the martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah it was a great show and one that I think a lot of us wish had continued on beyond just that short time, how about actor, you got a favorite martial arts actor?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Oh god favorite martial arts actor well probably between Chuck Norris and Jackie Chan I would probably say you know 2 different type completely

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah for sure

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:



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You know but one's more on the practical and you know level with the other one's just so dynamic and does just such crazy stunts and fight scenes you know so they kinda cover both ends of the world there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And funny I always find myself laughing at Jackie Chan even in the fight scenes, he just there is a sense of humor that somehow works in that I enjoy.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah, yeah, he's a very, very creative person.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about books are you a reader any martial arts books you'd recommend?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

You know since I had kids I used to enjoy reading, since I had kids and running my business I don't get the opportunity to read as much as I like to you know but if I do have spare time to read it's motivational books for martial arts that I would like to read so Zen in the martial arts is always you know a good

Jeremy Lesniak:

Classic

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah and you know [45:44](#) was a friend of mine from up in New Hampshire just came out with a book very recent and you know it's martial arts school owner's guide to teaching business and life so you know he's a very positive instructor who teacher traditional martial arts in a very small community and has hundreds and hundreds of students and I say Ben the thing is that [46:13](#) I mean you know they're on 20, 30 years of training and now their kids are training so you know so he's a very family based and you know they don't go for the flash of you know crazy trekking you know whatever is hot in the new wave whether those cardio kickboxing or this or that you know so it means he just [46:35](#) and in a very traditional school so that book's I'm enjoying reading right now and you know for the most part it's mostly motivational books that I like to get my hands on but sometimes it's more trying to get like the CD or something and being able to listen to it when I'm driving because I tried so much to go into teach seminars and you know tournaments and different things like that so having something that I can have



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on my iPod or my in my car while I'm driving is nice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I'm the same way I listen to a lot of podcasts like this one, while I'm driving and take back that time and just to remind listeners we'll link to those books and the other stuff that we're talking about today in the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. So, you know we talked a little bit before about how you stepped away from competition when you felt that you had achieved your goals and so it's probably safe to say you are a goal oriented individual.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Yeah

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, what are the goals you know what's keeping you going now? What are your goals? What's pushing you forward?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

My goals are to really grow my school you know to get the word out where I see how much children benefit through the martial arts whether they're the bully kid that's picking on everybody and they're just going down the wrong road and you know they're gonna end up in jail or something down the road. They're just following the wrong types of kids and then you have the other kids that are being picked on and you know they're afraid of their own shadow they are shy timid, they have no confidence, some of them come from broken families whatever the reasons are you know I just see how the martial arts really [48:30](#) both ends of the rainbow there and brings us to the center and what a huge difference we can make with these kids when we're with them just like having a really good school teacher I mean my kids have the best kindergarten teacher coming up and you know and there's like one other teacher that really stand out to me and really made a difference with them in school but you only get them for that one year and it's not even a full year you know so as a martial arts instructor we have those kids for a long time and then you have all these people that come in that are the same way that you know shy and timid and no confidence and you know what I mean a couple of years down the road and they're walking around shoulders back and confidence going for owning their own business and just you know making new goals for themselves and getting that attitude that you know what I really wanna do this and if I really wanna do it I set my mind to it I can do it. SO, you see the changes in people's lives that you make. So, I mean growing my school and getting more successful is one of my goals still continuing to do some work whenever possible and having my students the ones that you know having them reach



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their goals and some of those are very small percentage I'd probably say less than 10% of my student have goals in competition. so, my son won a world title last year in Italy. It was one of the best you know best feelings a mom could have I mean you know it mean more than me winning mine you know just seeing him up on the podium there and achieving that it was just you know he went to Serbia several years before that and just finished out of the medals. Then the next the junior world every 2 years and the adult world [50:24](#) So he went to Serbia and then 2 years later he made the team but it was in Turkey and the US government advised us to not travel to Turkey especially in large groups that there was a lot of uproar there, there was a you know it was not a very safe place for Americans today. So we took their advice and didn't take the team so Dante you know my son had a week and until his one came around you know so it was like he didn't have to wait 2 more years to go back and try it again [50:59](#) so you know he was very determined to win that gold and he did, he won a gold and a bronze so you know having my students reach their goals in competition levels or whatever you know their goals are and you know spreading the word of my knowledge of you know going around teaching seminars and doing that kind of stuff. I enjoyed doing that, I enjoyed the traveling part and you know and also we have one of the NASKA tournaments one of the top rated tournaments in that country on the NASKA circuit and we were on the Ocean State grand nationals in April every year so that's always a big goal of us to you know make it bigger and better than it was the year before and try to have you know better awards than any other tournament or try to have you know top celebrities there and you know and just [51:54](#) friend all the competitors from each 5 year old white belts up to you know the seasoned black belts a good chance of some really good competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah sure.

[52:04](#) lot of goals

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

those are great and I don't think anybody listening would think anything different than for you to have a multitude of goals and big ones and honestly once that you're kinda defining the degree to which you're reaching them I mean you could always make a tournament better, you could always make your students better so it sounds like that's gonna give you the fuel to continue for as long as you want to, so it's great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. So, you've mentioned seminars and appearances a few times, if people wanna follow you if they wanna come to one of your seminars how would they you know stay up on what's going on with you so



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they could do that?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Well usually I do have a Facebook fan page, that's just Christine Bannon Rodrigues and you know I usually post to some teaching anywhere and keep people updated on stuff there and also to my school website which is donrodrigueskarateacademy.com. We have a calendar up there so pretty much list all the different events tournaments I'd be going to or if I'm teaching a seminar somewhere and you know we have that pretty much updated like a year in advance [53:26](#) when things pop up so [53:29](#) I would say.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay cool.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

On the other thing too is I forgot this you know I've been working for [53:41](#) products in early 90s and you know so I still you know been [53:46](#) events, product designer and models for their catalogues you know it's always a fun challenge to try and come up with a new design on a uniform or changing and make the gear even safer than it is now or more appealing as far the design and the colors you know so it's always a fun in the working with them and trying together you know martial artist we're the best competitors so we'd just use the equipment in the classroom.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, cool. those are great and again we'll have those all linked for people to check out and so I guess do you have any parting advise any last words of wisdom for people listening?

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Well I guess the biggest thing as a martial artist is you never stop learning and you know I always tell when someone brings their black belt in our school it's like okay now you're gonna really start learning so it's like everything before that was the basics you know now we're getting to the good stuff and it's you know a sometimes people thought black belt as the main goal and they think it's done there you know it's like graduating high school you gotta go on to college, you gotta go on team masters and you, you know, bachelor's degree an then your master's degree and doctorate and you know there's just so much to learn out there and you know even just in one style let alone if you jump around and do a little bit of training and a few other styles all through out so I would say to never stop learning you know



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always be a student, there's always someone out there that knows more than you or a different style than what you know so if you keep learning you know it keeps your desire and your excitement level up and also as an instructor you should be walking your talk I mean you shouldn't be you know asking students to make sure they're training hard and exercise and working out and you're not doing it so I think walking your talk is very important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great advise, absolutely. Well I really appreciate you being on and then taking the time and sharing everything with us.

Christine Bannon Rodrigues:

Thank you, thank you for having me on I had a good time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

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