



Episode 220 – Mr. Scott Bolon | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there everyone and thanks for listening to episode 29 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, the only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists. Like today's guest Kyoshi Dave Kovar. I'm your host Jeremy Lesniak and I'm also the founder of whistlekick, makers of the world's best sparring gear as well as awesome apparel and accessories for traditional martial artists. I'd like to welcome our new listeners and thank those of you returning. Don't forget our great products like our exclusive nutrition bars, great fuel before you train or just as a snack. You can find more information about whistle bar and the rest of our products over at whistlekick.com. All of our past podcast episodes show notes for this one and a whole lot more can be found over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. And while you're on our website why don't you sign up for our newsletter, we've got some good stuff in there and we promise not to spam you or sell your address to anyone.

And now to today's episode. On episode 29 we're joined by Kyoshi Dave Kovar and incredible martial arts and the founder of Kovar systems. Kyoshi Kovar has made a name for himself not just as an exceptional mrtst, and he is, but also as an educator. Kyoshi Kovar is passionate about martial arts and helping others reach their martial arts goals, whether it's as a student or as a school owner. He drops a lot of knowledge in this episode so be ready to catch it. And with that Kyoshi Kovar welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Dave Kovar:

Oh happy to be here.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I'm happy to have you here. Let's jump in, let's get going. You know I'm sure most of the people listening know at least a little bit about you. You're all over the web and teaching seminars and doing all that but how did you get into this? How did you get started with the martial arts?

Dave Kovar:

You know I started officially wrestling in 1971 but in the mid-60s I've only been 5 or 6 years old I saw a silhouette of a guy doing a flying side kick and I didn't know whether if it was a billboard or if it was a martial arts school but I remember it vividly in my head and I didn't know what it was but I knew that's what I wanted to do. you know it's kinda like it found me I didn't really find it and then I started wrestling when I was in 7th grade and I always wanna do Karate and finally my folks got me started in September '73. With that, I had to kinda give up that... I just couldn't do both so I had to I actually did both wrestling and in karate for a while but I ended up having to go with karate and of course happily do it. And I had never looked back it's kinda like I don't claim to be real good but I'm real good at loving martial arts I love it as much as [02:42](#) and I still train pretty consistently. So it never... the thought of



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quitting it never occurred to me. I identify to my students but for me it was like it's just kinda part of who I am, I guess.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow so even as, cause you said you started in 7th grade, so even through those adolescent those teen years you never thought about dropping out?

Dave Kovar:

Never. So you know it was like it was my place, it was kinda my [03:13](#) I'd take the my freshman year of high school, I started taking a bus over to right after school. So the bus, you know whatever time, 3:30 gets out and I'd there was a drop off right by our school. So I would, they'd drop off by my martial arts school and my folks would pick me up at 9 and that pretty much was my life through high school. And then [03:33](#) high school I kinda fell into a location in and that was November of 1978 and I've been doing this professionally ever since.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So you started teaching 6 months after graduating high school?

Dave Kovar:

Yeah, yeah. It was actually kind of an interesting story that my instructor is a gentleman named **Hanshi Bruce Juchnik** and he's who I started with and he, you know, I was actually... this is a long time ago and there was a some of you might have heard **Tracy's Karate Studios**, they were a pretty big chain in the 60s and 70s and that was my school, the school that I started at in. It just gone independent but it was kind of a Tracy's Karate School mentality and which is based on... you had a lot of good stuff for their timing it was based on the private lesson systems so every student got one private lesson a week. It was actually based on Arthur Murray Dance Studios, it's where they got the methodology. And so what happened was, I don't know how many students there was but let's just say there's 120 members in the school cause it was pretty packed, a pretty packed place that means 120 half hour private lessons a week. That's a lot of private. So what happened was is it once you've been trained for 6, 7 months you started teaching. And so for me, that was by 14 I was teaching classes but it was interesting as there's what private [04:45](#) there was very few kids trained, so I was there teaching adults which I [04:51](#) business doing, right. At a really young age and start teaching classes at about 16 and it wasn't cause I was the best instructor. It was like sometimes it was the only [05:02](#) that would show up [05:03](#) but you know so I did everything on my own but in the process that kinda spurred my interest in wanting to do this for a living. So like I said I fell into an opportunity [05:13](#) my folks but I knew it because I was gonna be away to get through college right. And at the time and then this is 1978, there's very few people, I mean there were people doing it, the very few people who are having any real financial success doing martial arts.



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There was a few and most of them you know it wasn't really the industry like it is now. And so it was kinda like okay, through college, you can do this and then get a real job and it took a really long time. I struggled you know [05:39](#) really the mid til late 80's you know. Cause the karate kid came out in I don't know 84, 85, and something happened. It was like a light switch went on and all of a sudden the kids just started coming and enrolled into the school. And of course I always enjoyed working with the youth anyway and so it was, I already kinda have a little bit of a jump on like the other schools. And so we just kinda started to really... I brought my brother on in October 1987, it's the same year as [06:07](#) got married and my brother had a really strong business back then. So we just, really that's when we started just blowing up and going in and still trying to maintain that bounce now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, that's cool. So, you know, of course one of the things that you're known for is you're consulting around martial arts businesses and everything. So, I mean I guess there's somebody out there kinda yelling at the podcast that they wanna know, were you successful initially?

Dave Kovar:

Oh, heck no.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay.

Dave Kovar:

I mean, success is [06:41](#) I mean, what's... You still have to work hard to maintain success, right? I probably still do tons wrong. I still don't have all the answers but I'm a lot better than I was, you know, 10 year ago certainly 20 or 30 years ago. And it's kind of like there's a reason why a lot of guys... This is a hard time to be in the martial arts industry [07:01](#) martial arts professionals listening. It's a different time, I should say, than it was in let's say, the 80's and 90's. And that it still look great to have been in the martial arts industry but there's a lot more competition not just martial arts school but a lot more activities per people. And you really gotta stand out and it used to be that male in the 80's or 90's, you could be a mediocre instructor, be mediocre businessman and you could do okay in this business. But anymore that's just not the case. I kinda like, you know, you act at your A-game, you know what I'm saying? It's like you gotta bring, you just gotta really know what you're doing, you work hard. And if you do that, it's a great time around school still.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Sure. So I'm sure you got a ton of stories. You've been training, teaching for the majority of your life, certainly. Why don't you think about your best martial arts story and give us that one.

Dave Kovar:

Oh man, the best martial arts story. So alright I'm 19 or 20 years old, this would have 1980, I'm remembering this is the Ninja craze, Stephen Hayes has just popped out, he was new at the equation, everybody [08:11](#) Nin Jitsu is it right in the 70's it was, of course, Bruce Lee and Kung Fu with the TV series etc. and so I would workout, I did all these crazy like in the middle of the night training sessions, we'd meet at a certain place at two in the morning and do martial arts training and we climb fences, we played. So what we would do one time in particular, I was gonna meet with a bunch of my martial arts friends and then we're gonna meet at midnight at the square in this college campus and we had a deal that once you had to sneak into it to loosen some fences and you know, we would train and spar and what not and we run the heck, right. And it sounds pretty, like I said, bizarre but this was the 80's and I was a kid so forgive me. But anyway, from the process I'm, I got camouflage fatigues on, I got like I don't know how many knives on me, right. And that was just kinda the rite of the passage at the time and you know, expandable baton, you know the whole drill, right? I probably even had like a Ninja mask on. And so I'm trying, I see a security guard car, the lights of the security car kinda rounding the corner and realize, I gotta run faster to make [09:23](#) I'm not paying attention to where I'm going. And I turned and looked straight ahead, right as I hit a pole connecting the chain fences and I knocked myself out. And I'm fortunate the security guard didn't see me so they drive on by and I wake up. I don't think I was out for more than a few seconds, I'm not really sure but you know, I have, I cut my head wide open and my nose bleeding from both nostrils so I realized man, [09:52](#) cellphones so I'm not gonna call my friends but I got a couple of fences to climb at that's off. I gotta go to ER to get this fixed. So I hopped to my car and I think I'm all sweaty when I drive to ER and I'm not really thinking it in of it until I get the reflection in the mirror at the ER and I see I'm in the camouflage fatigues and I'm covered with blood. And thought, I had never been held so fast in the ER before so, I ended up getting a bunch of stitches. But that was, [10:23](#) martial arts story but that's kind of the training story that stand out in my mind. Another one kinda along the same line, I'm doing this early morning workout and after we're running through a park by this river. But now is we call, what people call parkour or street running, we called that light body. We used to do it back in the day not near to the level that people do it now, of course. But we would do that, and one of the things that's just one tree branch that hung over this hill and what were gonna do is we reach out and grab on this branch and you'd swing your legs really far and let go and you know. We'd sail for 10, 12, 14 feet before you landed and your shoulder [11:00](#) right. And so I got a bunch of guys behind me and I'm determined to look really good. So I swung my legs out really hard, extra far and I pull my branch and the branch cracks halfway through. That's falling down this hill, landing on my head from about eight feet up. And it ended up, you know, one of my students come sliding down to check on me. Long story, short, they take me to the, we called an ambulance and they take me. By the way, I had a shirt, my friend of mine, we had this shirts made up that say on the back, I kick ass, right. And then I had a sweatshirt over the top of that. And so, anyway, I get to the ER and they take some X-rays and they realized that they can move me a little bit, that I didn't break. And so they take off, the doctor takes off my sweatshirt and I'm whining like a baby. It's about I'm



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complaining, he got looks on me and he goes, good I totally forgot I got the shirt and he goes, so you kick ass, huh. It was probably the most humbling, humiliating moment of my whole life. Of course I never wore that shirt ever again.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Those are two great stories and really vivid and I had to mute my microphone because of my laughter. [12:10](#) thank you. Thank you for sharing those. So let's switch gears a little bit. How do you think that the martial arts has made you a better person?

Dave Kovar:

You know it's really, it's not an easy answer because I've been doing it all my life. I don't really remember not doing martial arts, alright. But I think one of the things that martial arts brings to the occasion is, you know, the equation of, it gives you a certain amount of confidence that allows you to stay calm under pressure. So let's just imagine for example that I will ran into you, you know, in traffic and your maybe in a very aggressive, maybe you have predatorily instincts and you get out of the car and I get out of the car and you come up and your mad as heck. And let's say I know no martial arts, I have no martial arts training at all, I'm not very sure of myself so chances are, I'm gonna respond either one of two ways. One way, I'm gonna respond out of fear and I'm gonna tell him, I'm sorry about that sir and I'm gonna cut a [13:09](#) or bid. And if you have predatorily instincts, then you're gonna love that. You're gonna be all over me, right. Another way I might respond is I might not know how to stay calm so I might let my emotions get control of me and be right back on your face, right. And of course we know that's like adding fuel to the fire here, right? I mean it's just gonna make it worse. so I think one thing that martial arts has done for me is that it allowed me to stay calm under pressure because if that same situation comes up then you come up and approach in an aggressive fashion, I calmly talk my way out of it because in the back of my head, I'm thinking I'm not taking all my good [13:42](#) if I have to fight, I'm thinking okay. I can defend myself if I have to, I don't want to. I want to get out of this peacefully but I have that as an option and therefore I present myself in a much more calm matter-of-fact when I'm more likely to present a peaceful solution, so-to-speak. That one think. Another is just the whole aspect that makes your qualities martial arts is really founded on respect, right? And when you really instill that, you know, the main [14:06](#) in martial arts is self-discipline and respect and those are qualities, of course, are quite valuable outside the martial arts world as well. And so I think that been helpful in learning me and teaching me how to, you know, be respectful to other people and self-discipline allows you to kinda get stuff done, I guess.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How do you bring respect into your children's programs at your schools?

Dave Kovar:



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Well I think it's what we start [14:31](#) right. The very first thing we do is we teach them the attention stance and a bow, we explain to them what that means, we talk about the importance of polite reading, it's kind of the, one of the underline [14:42](#) of everything that we do. It starts by you can't tell people you gotta show people, right. So it starts by the instructors to be respectful of students or parents, right. and then it's a matter of [14:53](#) educating them more of the reasons why, like what are the things that we'll tell our you know children is hey man it's not enough to have respect, its important to show respect. Now you show respect, you should [15:02](#) you say, you know, yes sir, yes ma'am, you know how to... he looks you on the eye, we do a lot of role playing with that, right. and so that's... and then of course anytime they're in like [15:15](#) the partner, just the whole nature of like bowing to your partner, you can help. That can help affect your level of empathy and respect with your partner at what we do. So it's never a matter of demanding it, it's you earn it through your actions and through education.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So you've certainly had a lot of high points in your life. I mean you're doing great things, you get to meet a lot of people, you're travelling all over, getting to teach and learn from others. That's gotta be fantastic I know it'd be fantastic for me so maybe I'm projecting but let's lean the other end of the spectrum. Tell us about something maybe wasn't so great in your life and how your martial arts training and experience allowed you to move past it.

Dave Kovar:

Well you know, there's... in every stage, there's a great quote I believe it's originally [16:03](#) Plato and it goes like this, be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. What that means is now we all had challenges and they're on-going. Like at any given time someone may have a financial challenge, a relationship challenge, health challenge, who knows? I mean when you get on with this one, you're gonna have others. So it's like a... I've had my share and the pain is your pain. Someone else might have it worse but once you [16:25](#) your pain is still your pain, right? And so I've had several things like you know you definitely [16:32](#) plenty of reasons to lose sleep how I [16:35](#) of me, the most is we, from a few years back attempted, a national expansion. we had a little bit of [16:43](#) with the bunch of venture capital money we're gonna do a national chain of martial arts schools and at the time my brother and I had four locations and after being approach from a gentleman, I very low intended good guy that way, we can see if we can get a whole bunch of schools going. We started growing 4-20 schools you know by a year and a half. And these are quote renown these aren't franchised. And things were going pretty good. We had a lot of investor money, and loans but all of a sudden, the next round of financing that was supposed to come through didn't come through. And we found ourselves [17:18](#) massive amounts of money every month. Spending a lot more in these locations that may had been bringing and it cost, you know, it was pretty painful. I mean, we're still, to a certain degree, dealing with the aftereffects of that. And there was a point where you know little things like you've got a Monday morning staff meeting that starts at 9 o'clock, at 8:30 you just got a call from your bookkeeper saying, hey man there's no money. We cannot [17:42](#) you need \$20,000 to make payroll by 3pm tonight. What are you gonna do? [17:46](#) And then having to walk out to the staff meeting and saying to them, hey guys it's gonna be a great week,



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knowing that you have no idea how you're gonna do this right. And so I really thought like after, in probably 2007, 8, 9, we're just really challenging times but there's one time where we were being told by some newly mentors of ours and just two of our guys that we ought to file for, we have to declare bankruptcy, you know and cut your losses, still keep your business but it'll be different but you know, that's what you ought to do cause in no way you can do it yourself out of this hole. And my partner, my business partner and I, my brother had since retired and my new business partner, he's telling me [18:21](#) is doing a great job and he and I looked into each other, neither of us want to do that. And I had to stop the conversation and go down to the floor and do some training cause martial arts training has always been, it's kept me sane through challenges and I've been doing Jujitsu, Brazilian Jujitsu since '94 and I'm still pretty active and so that was especially the grappling in this time frame is really my release, my escape. And so, I'm training with one of my students and he said, anytime you work with someone that only has your less skill then you do, to make it interesting, you might put yourself in a bad position and kinda fight out of it, right. So I went to take my [18:58](#) let him start sneaking and choke and I'm gonna find my way out of it. And I realized, holy crap, this guy's gotten better, this choke is really tight, oh man. The third guy that was watching us, I knew if I passed out he's gonna stop the match, right. That's always a dangerous, just you guys training, okay? But... So I remember think and I started, in any way this grapple is to stop is [19:17](#) fatigue and you've got somebody's body weight on you and you're having a hard time breathing. You know, you're kind of a mild panic kick in and I'm thinking holy crap. And I remember I could tap and then I remember I should tap. I remember thinking you know, I could tap but I don't have to, not yet. so I calmed, took a breath and I adjusted my collar a little bit and the next thing you know it took a few 30 seconds to a minute but I managed to make it, fight my way out of it. Well, it's interesting when I got done with that match, and I thought that's what my business is. I could tap out but I don't have to - not yet. And my business partner and I kinda looked me in the eye and said, you know we're gonna fight through this. We're gonna figure it out and we did just that. And that, so that was a few years that was the lowest part and martial arts really kept me sane through that. And you know, it's like there's, it's kinda cliché but there's always a way when you know there's a way. And you know what, when people are having hard times, I can't say how many times that I've been in the lowest part. I remember what Franklin Roosevelt said. He says, when you get to the end of the rope, tie a knot in it and just hang on. And sometimes that's what you gotta do, know what I'm saying? Most people fail because they give up. They just stop. And sometimes you just gotta keep getting up and getting up. And the trick is, you don't need to feel like it, as a matter of fact especially when you don't feel like it. And if you can do that, you should [20:35](#) to work things to its ends.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now how about for somebody that maybe struggles with holding onto the end of the rope? I mean that's something that I think a lot of us who have spent time in the martial arts, you know, we've kind of learned that I mean sometimes it's trial by fire, sometimes it's cause we're sick of doing push-ups or whatever other punishment might be thrown at us or we're sick of getting choked out. But if someone wanted to train that, that resiliency, you have any tips for them?

Dave Kovar:



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Yeah. You know, it's kind of like you start small. I call it one of the things is voluntary deprivation. And what it means is that you... to control your ego, you're in-charge, right? If somebody does not have self-discipline, that's where it will lead us back to. And that the winds of their emotions right in their ego. And oh, I don't feel like doing this, they don't do it, right? Like really. Who... I get up every morning really early and I'm at the gym first thing. SO I'm usually at the gym by 5:15 or 5:20 in the morning and that's cause that's the time that works for me. And do I like getting up? Do I like the alarm that goes off at 10 to 5? Heck No. I don't like it at all. I mean, every morning, every friggin' morning, I come up with a bunch of excuses to why I shouldn't go - oh, I didn't sleep good last night I gotta hang in here, my back hurts. You know, and all that stuff that pops in your head. And every friggin morning, almost every morning, every now and then, you know I just get up anyway. I'm always glad I did. And so what I do is I try to anchor in so at the... and when I'm hopping in my car, drive home [22:09](#) morning workout is a run around the park from the house. When I finish, I try to take 'em all in, take a breath and remind myself how I was feeling an hour ago that I didn't want to do this and how glad I did it, right. I think the key to develop self-discipline are, you know, or to get mental toughness is to... first off, mental pessimist and physical pain are directly related, okay. So your ability to like hold a half push-up for a minute and just [22:34](#) and did your best that develops mental toughness. I mean, you put yourself on the line but the trick is that most people when they wanna get to the next level, they make things too difficult by having their goals too extravagant. So for example, let's just say I haven't worked out in years and I've had the need to get in better shape so I make a commitment that I'm gonna get up an hour early and I'm gonna go to the gym, I'm gonna work out really hard. Well what gonna happen, 99 out of 100 times, it's gonna last a week then it's gonna be too much, I'm gonna fall back into my old habits, right. However, if instead I take, man I need to start working out. I'll tell you what I would do is I'm gonna get up, I'm gonna get up five minutes early and I'm gonna do 10 squats and 10 push-ups and walk around the block once. And I'm gonna commit to doing that for a week. Now that is a realistic goal. So I'd do that a week, I'm successful, I'm able to put a check-off of my success box, so to speak. And then week I add [23:24](#) a little bit an guess what, six months from now, I'm up an hour early, training. So that I think, the key is to start small and set yourself up [23:32](#) at the end of the day, you want that inner rush that you get from accomplishment.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great suggestion.

Dave Kovar:

The [23:44](#) more successful.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Yeah I think you're right. Great practical, I mean we don't get into a lot of practical, so to speak, hands-on things on this show but there's a great one for people that are struggling with anything to move forward to find a way... Baby steps, I mean that's really another way to put it. And ---



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Dave Kovar:

--- Baby steps, right. Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Just to honor that, those small goals. Just because they're not the big goal, doesn't mean that they shouldn't be honored and you should take some joy from that. so I'd like you to think about all the people that you've had a chance to train with and other than those initial instructors, and you mentioned a couple of them, who's had the biggest influence on you and your martial arts career?

Dave Kovar:

Martial arts teachers?

Jeremy Lesniak:

One doesn't really have to be a teacher but you know, I just like to take out those...

Dave Kovar:

Yeah. SO I think outside of my initial instructors I spend a lot time for several years with Grand Master Jin [24:54](#) and I have the utmost respect for him as a kind of legitimate guy that really upholds what a [25:02](#) you know, martial arts master should aspire you. You know, he's dedicated lifelong martial artist, amazing athlete really and amazing high-level self-discipline, super honorable guy so I learned a ton from him. As far as... not to say I learned this hard and that was fine but that wasn't near the gist of it [25:22](#) example. I have one story by Grand Master Jin [25:25](#) was this is word in 1992, he was honored by President George Bush Sr. for a [25:31](#) light for outstanding Asia-America and he was given an award in L.A. and he called saying [25:38](#) email like straight from the President and it took me like a quarter second to say I'll be there cause I knew I ---

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Dave Kovar:

And so I met with him and so we went down and [25:48](#) and the day of the event, the night that I got to meet the President [25:51](#) it's very cool but kinda of the highlight of the story, I was at that



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time, [25:55](#) And he stayed at my house several times and I'd you know, I knew he was really good. But at that morning of the demonstration, we were sharing a room and that morning, did our workout which is 500 push-ups or I should say he did 500 push-ups and I can't to do 500 push-ups. And then we went by our day and then went to the Presidential dinner afterwards, he'd met up with some of his Korean friends that he hadn't seen for years and I went back to our room and about 11:30 or 12, and [26:30](#) to our room quietly. I just, cause I just talked and I was tired, I didn't want to eat but while he didn't know I was awake so I had to [26:37](#) and he quietly took off his dress top and bent down and watched him do five sets of 100 push-ups before he goes to bed. And no one was watching, even though I was watching but that's what he does. He does a 1000 push-ups a day and damn it, he's gonna do it. And so that was really what made him amazing, and pressure on me. So he... that was something that just kinda really stuck up. Other guys, there's so many that I'm gonna leave people off the list but [27:07](#) he's been an amazing mentor to me and just have the utmost respect for him an a role model he's been. And another guys, he's not really into his martial arts in every way [27:19](#) success to him. But a guy that really helps me, not directly although I did go to seminars with. And there was Tony Robbins, I was extremely involved with him for probably 7, 8 years, I actually had gone on blackbelt tests now, [27:37](#) He really helped me to kinda shape kind of how we look at our curriculum and how I can really make sure it's cutting edge and helped me to really feel like it's okay to change things, you know. In other words, up until then I kinda thought there has never be allowed to do it in the different in the way I taught. Cause that my right, what do I know. But so he kinda helped me look at the way I teach our curriculum and the majority of what we do and improve a lot. And there was still at the time, [28:10](#) and I has started doing some modifications. I had a lot of people look at me like what are you doing? You... How dare you, so to speak. And those very same guys now come back and say hey, show me how to do that it looks pretty cool. Your students look good. So a lot of that came from, you know, [28:26](#) Tony Robbins.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right. Well, you've never been to a martial arts even that we've been at as whistlekick but we run a push-up contest. So, the fans out there that are you know, are familiar with that, I'm sure, are gonna beat me if I don't ask, how were Jin [28:45](#) push-ups?

Dave Kovar:

Oh, not really good.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No?

Dave Kovar:



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But a thousand a day, by the way, if Grand Master Jin [28:53](#) was here, he would tell you, yeah, I think his [28:56](#) after three-quarter push-ups. But I'm only saying, he do a lot of them and... I recently did, I did 37 push-ups, I have pull-ups, excuse me. And once on my 55th birthday, about a year and a half ago, and I thought, [29:11](#) and I can't. But then I watched the video cause I actually posted it on YouTube and Facebook and I never knew that I was only doing like half pull-ups and I was like, oh this was humiliating. I swear I thought my arms were locking out but it's not even close. After that, I had a little [29:28](#) and push-ups a day.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'd say a thousand of anything, I mean, standing up and sitting down from a chair a thousand times, you know, is gonna be taxing for sure.

Dave Kovar:

Yep.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool. How about competition, was that ever your thing?

Dave Kovar:

Sure. I competed. My first tournament was February 1974, my last one was in 1989 so about 16 years, I competed a lot. Super heavy and all I did [29:59](#) I was... a probably pretty good regional competitor, you know. I was [30:04](#) back in the day but honestly, there were a lot of guys better than me. But I did certainly did enjoy competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What did you like about it?

Dave Kovar:

I think it was the training, you know. It gave you a reason to train and at that age, I kinda really [30:19](#) martial arts I need a reason to train, I just enjoy training. But back then, it was like, it wasn't the tournament that made you better, it all the extra training you got preparing for the tournament that made you better. And you know, it was a bunch of guys, locally we would kick together frequently just to spar, right. And that's a lot of Karate we did, we went in along the whole competition. I'm not really that into competition anymore. I respect it and I've got students that are, you know. But I've spent so many Saturdays in the [30:49](#) you know what I'm saying. I don't need to do that a lot anymore. I



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probably [30:53](#)one event a year, maybe two but only if you will watch. But for me, it was a very important part of my training. I don't think it's right for everyone but to certain people it's absolutely the right thing for.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Were you a fighter? Were you a forms guy?

Dave Kovar:

I was. I did both but fighting for me is probably, what I... I probably excel in that more. And I fought a lot of other guys in my day, you know. I fought Alvin Prouder and Steve "Nasty" Anderson and [31:20](#) some other guys from Tomy Gilbertson, some of the guys are from California Grates from back in the day, Johnny Giro, [31:28](#), [31:29](#) and I mean if you lost a lot of them, but anyway you got in the ring with them so that what's important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah. Good times. So if there's, if you could train with anybody that you haven't, and we'll leave it and open it up and say even if they've passed on.

Dave Kovar:

Oh that's easy. Bruce Lee.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. The number one answer to that question, for user. But give us your reasons.

Dave Kovar:

Well because he was so far ahead of his time, you know. He really was like, you know, he was a renaissance man not only a martial artist but in venture, you know, and artist and a poet, really, you know, so good at so many things and in just to feel his passion would have been really cool and I like thinking what would he be doing now if he was training, and what would it be to work with him so that's absolutely my first, second and third choice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's a great man.

Dave Kovar:



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Besides that, probably I've never have met him but my lineage in Jujitsu was under Tickson Gracie. I've never actually trained with him and my lineage is under [32:35](#) which are both like under Tickson but if I was to have this chance to like, if I was able to spend a week with somebody that I haven't trained with, that would probably be at the top of my list.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What would you hope to get from training with him?

Dave Kovar:

You know what I would do [32:51](#) and find out. I'm sure [32:53](#) with no expectations. You know what I mean? And no assumptions, I should say.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's as martial arts of an answers as one could expect. So we actually had one of our show fans writing this question for you and I'm gonna rephrase it a little bit but he's wondering how do you personally, as an instructor, handles a student maybe a struggling to wrap their bran around a particular technique, somebody who just , you know, he's just not thinking in. What's the typical teaching methods? What do you do?

Dave Kovar:

Well, for a start is a core that I learned from grand master [33:34](#) as a matter of fact and it goes like this, when you haven't found rich child or student, never ending correction with a smile will have his form correctly. With that basis I mean is patience, patience, patience. And as long as they're showing interest in trying to learn it, you being impatience towards them, never helps the process. And I have to remind myself because often I'd be, c'mon now. What's up with you? Why can't you get this? But [33:59](#) I mean patience, it really isn't about the image because I'm preoccupied with something else. In other words, I'm working with you and you put your wrong way back and I snap at you, right. Well the reason I snap at you is because five minutes that was on the phone and I kinda [34:13](#) repairs in a lot more than I thought it's gonna be 50 bucks instead of 500 bucks so I'm still thinking about that one while I'm teaching you. And you put your wrong way back and I snap at you, right. And so the point is that my experience as an instructor, if we go out there, we bow on the mat, you step on the form and think, okay man my goal today, I wanna have [34:32](#) effect, I want everybody to leave thinking I'm glad I came and I will leave, coming back for more time, you know. That's all I can focus on and if I do that, I will [34:41](#) you'll find yourself in way more patience. And that's where [34:44](#) and then you obviously, the technical stuff, you fill at different modalities, maybe you're explaining, maybe you need to see it. Maybe they see it but they need to understand it more through feeling it, right. People usually learn through different modalities whether it be kinesthetic, which is feelings, you know, auditory or visual a



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good instructor try to cover all three of those phases, sometimes in one person like I find if I got a kid that's for someone who's having [35:12](#) sometime I'll actually pat on her left arm when I simply step back to onto a side. And I'll pat on that right when they say you punch with that, right. SO they can kinda... and sometimes that's the trick. Sometimes its follow the leader, you know, I stand side by side with them and have them follow through the movements. But once again it's really just like being as patient as possible. That doesn't mean you're not hard on people, you know what I'm saying? you can crack the [35:38](#) as hard as you want but you gotta come from a position of love and respect not punishment and anger.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I... Dan I hope you're listening and I hope that that gives you some food for thought. So I'm gonna guess with your passion for the arts that you're also a fan of martial arts movies?

Dave Kovar:

Sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You have a favorite?

Dave Kovar:

Of course, Enter the Dragon.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. Now because Bruce Lee was in it or for other reasons?

Dave Kovar:

Well I think yes and just cause it's like the best martial arts movie ever made and [36:14](#) you know. Obviously, the thing about modern martial marts, there's so many stellar martial artists, you know. Not the one that people don't even, doesn't even know about it was Jackie Chan, one of Jackie Chan's first attempts in action which is called the Big Brawl, have you ever heard of it?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I've seen it.



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Dave Kovar:

It's a freaking great movie, right? but back to what I like about Enter the Dragon and what I don't like as much about a lot of movies now is that the fight scenes from a distance, you it was real. Not that they can't make it any look good because they're acting there. It's in your face, you know? You don't really see the full, you know, the full movie which I appreciate. That would be, like I said, the big brawl be way up there. Above the Law is a great one, I didn't really... I have of course love and respect for Steven Seagal and the rest of his movies I didn't really care for that much, but Above the Law, I thought was a, you know, like an excellent movie.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, absolutely. And your point about the legitimate martial arts choreography versus edited and CGI stuff is well-taken and I think that's a big delineation. I'd say that's kind of the line for me, personally, when I look into a movie is that the martial arts movie or not.

Dave Kovar:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, if there, as you said, hacking footage together to make fight scene, that's not martial arts. You don't get to do that in the street. And how about favorite martial arts actor?

Dave Kovar:

You know what...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Are we going Bruce Lee again?

Dave Kovar:

Yeah. Yeah. But Jackie Chan would be up there, not really like Jet Li. Jet Li has some certain compensation seeing in a Jet Li where, you know, a hero where he could walking in, and just walk into this temple to be punished and there's thousands of monks on either side and you'll see him from the back, walking from the back. But his posture is so freaking good. And he's [38:14](#) confidence like you not believe. He's just a really powerful, the way he commands. He's just a little guy but boy he really



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commands the [38:23](#) so I always enjoy his work. and just from sheer entertainment guy, Jackie Chan is amazing and because I've met him a few times and I've [38:33](#) respect for me [38:34](#) as well..

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, yeah. All three are great. And Jet Li is one of my personal favorites and I think one of the reasons why I love his movies is that you can see his skill come through.

Dave Kovar:

Yeah, totally.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Doesn't matter what he's doing, it is very clear. He knows what he's doing.

Dave Kovar:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I really, I have a lot of respect for that. How about books? Any martial arts books you'd recommend to people?

Dave Kovar:

So, you know, it sounds very cliché but the Art of War by Sun Tsu is an amazing read. And I probably read it 30 times. And the Book of Five Rings, I've read a bunch but I... it's too smart for me. I don't quite get it but I don't quite, you know, I wanna say boy that's so profound for me. But it wasn't necessarily. I mean, I maybe did as much of it as I could although I did used for concept of [39:27](#) fire, water, void as you know, kinda of a way looking at your training, [39:33](#) but the Art of War has really such practical and functional application. I mean there's a book that I've [39:42](#) I'm gonna jack up the name **Hakugai** as you pronounce it but it was written in the 17th century by a samurai and that... like I said, I am a [39:59](#) bad but it's got a great look at it like that and how samurai action looked and fought. Either way, a lot of what they, it was very war-like by today's standards, it's very racist and opinionated. But if you get past that, there is some real gems that you wanna... the gems that was a samurai that's written a book talking about it but you are 24/7. I've read [40:22](#) you're in the moment, you know. You're ready at all times. He wasn't just talking about being ready for battle as much as you are it varies in, right. But you know, present focus. You're alert wherever, whatever is going behind you and around you and that the idea is to be being at one place with your body and at one place with your mind. Cause then you're



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nowhere that, you know, wherever you are physically, you all just have to be mentally and emotionally and that's what, you know, powerful training we all need to be reminded of on a regular basis. I mean how often that I've been home at dinner and my daughter's telling me about her day and I'm hardly paying attention cause I'm thinking about some issue at the school. And I have to learn it like be in that moment. And that's just the couple of take-aways from that book.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great point. And of course I'll figure out that book and maybe you and I can [41:07](#) it's the right book and we'll have that on the show notes over at the website at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for anyone who want so check that out.

Dave Kovar:

Cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So what's keeping you going right now? You got any goals? Anything you're looking to accomplish over the next few years?

Dave Kovar:

You know, I always got lots of goals so yeah. We're... I don't plan on slowing down anytime soon. We've got, I've got a... like we're all busy. I mean you're busy, and anyone listening is also busy. [41:39](#) I've got a lot of projects I kinda split my time amongst the [41:43](#) schools and stuff. And I've got some on the East Coast that I'm kind of helping out with. Then I've got Kovar system where we help off the other martial arts schools throughout the, actually, the world now. We've got people that have our products in, Australia, Spain, and Germany, the UK, in Canada, and so that's cool, we're happy to do that. And that's a lot of time my time is focused on trying to... I want the public to be really more aware of the Tenets that the martial arts has for people. I think there should be a line of people to roam the block in every martial arts village [42:20](#) mean by legitimate. [42:21](#) normal style like a credible instructor that really wants to be there, right. That knows what he's doing I can [42:27](#) a line of people waiting here because what we do, what we keep, what we do for a living massively impacts everybody. You know, you seeing it, by seeing it, when someone does martial arts, they're just a better person. And [42:39](#) to be and violence and [42:42](#) and poor health and you know, poor little ones, just by any challenge you can think of, [42:49](#) is an answer for. And so that gives me lots of passion and excitement about the future and where we're going.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Why don't you tell us a little about it if someone wants to know more about Kovar systems or any of the other stuff you've got going on?

Dave Kovar:

Sure. Sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How would they find out more?

Dave Kovar:

Well they can go to kovarsystems.com. What we do is we offer, you kinda got a series of things for people of schools of all size so, you know, we have a program called the instructor's toolbox which is a series of [43:20](#) targeted towards making a great class. And with teaching strategies and skills and then also drills for kids, adults, smart different aspects of martial arts curriculum. [43:31](#) pushing almost 800 videos are there. So that's one product we are offering and then of course we have a program called Pro-MAC and Pro-MAC stands for Professional Martial Arts College and it's really, it's heart and soul [43:46](#) where we take schools and we help them get to the next level. And how do we do that, through consulting and I have a resource library that is literally google for how to run a martial arts school. Like every document, every video, every... it had [44:01](#) instructors training methodologies that we do. Like I guess a franchise of a franchise. It's all the stuff that we do to make our schools [44:08](#) that we offer to our clients. And so the bottom line is that a lot of people do just fine however everybody, mostly everybody benefits from a coach and we're really happy and proud of the impact we've been able to have on the people that we work with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great. Yeah and of course that stuff will, we'll get that linked up on the show notes, too. So you got any parting advice? Any last words of wisdom for the people listening?

Dave Kovar:

Take care of the days and the years take care of themselves, you know. It's a really complicated to where you're getting in five years, you know. It's great to have some long term goal but the most important thing you can do is like every day get up and start to eat right, exercise, and get enough rest, and treat your relationships right and work hard and enjoy the process. And then you do this in the next day and all of these years have gone by and you're improving a lot and your stress level has reduced, your health is better, and your [45:03](#) is more intense.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Thanks for listening to episode 29 of whistlekick Martial Arts Radio and thank you to Kyoshi Kovar. So head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for the show notes including a great video of Kyoshi Kovar speaking with, and doing self-defense with his father who was 90 when they recorded the video. It's a great example of the kind of man Kyoshi Kovar is. While you're there, if you want to be a guest on the show or you know someone that would be a great interview, please fill out the guest form. And don't forget to subscribe to our newsletter. If you wanna follow us of social media, we're on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram all with the username whistlekick. If you like the show, please subscribe so you never miss out in the future... If you could help us by leaving a 5-star review wherever you download your podcast, it would make a difference. Those of you who's helped new listeners find this show and you might hear us read yours on the air. If we do, go ahead an email us at info@whistlekick.com and you'll get a free thank you pack including some great stuff - shirts, stickers, water bottles. We're not gonna promise what's in it but it's gonna be great and we're even gonna pay the shipping. Please, don't forget to tell your friends about the show. Word of mouth is the way that this show is growing and your help is really appreciated there. Don't forget to check out the great stuff we have here at whistlekick - gears, shirts, pants and more all made for martial artists by martial artists. So until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.