



Episode 30 – Master Gordon White | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey there everybody, it's episode 30 of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com), the only place to hear the best stories from the best martial arts, like today's guest Master Gordon White. 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 arts. I'd like to welcome our new listeners and thank those of you returning. Don't forget our great products like our double layered shin guards. You can find more information about those and the rest of our products at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and all of our past podcast episodes show notes for this one and a lot more are over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://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 30 we're joined by Master Gordon White a WTF taekwondo practitioner, instructor, school owner, organization president and former international level gold medal competitor, that's quite the resume and for those of you unfamiliar with Taekwondo no WTF doesn't stand for what you may think it does, it stands for World Taekwondo Federation which is the style of Taekwondo sparring that's in the Olympics. Master White and I are extended Taekwondo family as both he and my instructor trained under the same man. I guess that makes him my uncle, well whatever it makes him we had a great conversation and really dug in to some deep subject matter, I hope you enjoy it and with that Master White welcome to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com).

**Gordon White:**

Thank you very much happy to be here.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well it's great to have you here and I'm glad that we finally get to talk and listeners are gonna hear the difference in the audio quality and of course people that have been listening for a while know the difference between the skype interviews or the phone interviews and this is an in-person interview so it's fun I get to gaze your reactions as we talk about things and...

**Gordon White:**

Right and I finally get to meet the person I've been listening to all these great podcasts do all the interviewing on.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well cool, cool. that's a, it's a little weird people you know come up to me at events now and they act like we're friends and I'm happy to be friends with anybody but it's kind of a one-way relationship, they get to hear my voice and some of these people I mean were this is gonna be episode I think 29 or so so these people listen to me for 25 close to 30 hours and I don't know who they are.



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**Gordon White:**

Yeah well especially coming to the show after you've been running it for so long you have 20 episodes it's kinda like you know binge watching something on Netflix you know you come and you're like oh my gosh there's 25 podcasts here that about martial arts that I can listen to so it tends to consume quite a few in a short amount of time which makes you feel very familiar.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well nice I hope people are binge watching I know the Netflix and 03:00 will binge watching that I do and if somebody's binge listening to this show that's pretty cool something that I hadn't even thought of, so nice. So how did you get started in the martial arts I mean you're a Taekwondo guy but you know how did that get started for you?

**Gordon White:**

Well in a very much karate kid kind of a story. I got beat up a lot in the 6th grade and at the time we called it junior high it was kind of like middle school 6th, 7th and 8th grade and 6th graders were generally picked on and I'd seem for whatever reason to just attract it, I don't know what it was but and so I kinda put up with it in the 6th grade and I learned how to hide and avoid and just kinda survive and in the 7th grade it was much better but it was still kind of a little bit was there of being bullied and picked on and I realized that the next year was gonna be okay, 8th grade was gonna be fine but I was gonna be a freshman in high school a year after that and then I was gonna be at the bottom of the pile again. So I hadn't really even thought or considered doing martial arts until I met my sister's boyfriend at the time I have 2 older sisters and my older sister was at UVM and she had a boyfriend who was practicing Taekwondo and he said hey why don't you come and check out a class I think it'd be really good for you and so we went and watched the class and then we had an interview with the instructor and there was an application to sign up and there was I don't know 20 reasons why you wanted to practice or join the school and so my dad I filled it all out and my dad took the sheet and looked at it and he just looked up and he said we'd like to sign up and I kinda looked at him and he looks down at the sheet and he says well out of the 20 reasons you didn't check off about 2 of them so I'm thinking this is probably something that you really need to do. So, I signed up it was 1983 I think it was March 13th or May 13th or something like that in that area and I was hooked from the start I my parents claim to have worn out a car driving from Lewiston to Riverside and back. The school that I was training at was called the American Taekwondo center and it was run by a Korean woman who is the sister of Dae Yong Kim who is the founder of Moo Gong Do so for us in Vermont we know the Moo Gong Do school and so I trained there very regularly for a couple of years just about 2 1/2 years and then the school moved to California and so when that happened my instructor suggested that I go see her brother and train in Moo Gong Do so I did that I went and joined the Moo Gong Do school Master Kim asked me to put a white belt back on and having just earned my first Dan it was difficult but I did it and I think I take it back he actually said well not a white belt put a yellow belt on and so I was almost like wow okay yes sir and I



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just put it on and put up with it and I think of you know and it was fine because he didn't treat me like a yellow belt. I just think he just needed to see that I was gonna be there and be committed to the school and he didn't want me to be a black belt in his school without kinda earning it or you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure.

**Gordon White:**

So 9 months later I tested for black belt there and it was a difficult change it was a very different school it was a very different style and I was used to being able to go to my instructor and ask questions and I can ask her anything about Taekwondo and training and what shall I do and he was very different and didn't just wanted you to do what he said and didn't want to have a lot of conversations and I was very interested in competing and so I went to him and I said Sir you know I really like to compete can you suggest some things that I can do to prepare for competitions and go to tournaments and he just didn't really wanna support that and so my mother..

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's talk about that for a second

**Gordon White:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know I know enough about you to know that we're gonna get into this competitive shyness it's gonna be a big part of what we're talking about but why do you think he didn't want you to compete?

**Gordon White:**

I think the feeling I had about it then was different than now as I look back at it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gordon White:**

So, at the time I just think he saw it as a hassle and not something that he wanted in school and so being an instructor now and having a school and students and having a very active competition team you know the competition team you put a lot of time and effort into them you spend a lot of weekends traveling you do there's a lot that goes beyond having a school and having students and training people



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to go from rank to rank. So, I don't know if that was the reason why he didn't wanna get started in that realm or that he had some other reason.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure

**Gordon White:**

But he just you know he didn't wanna support it and it was kinda clear that you know he just he didn't want me to do he didn't want me to compete so or he didn't he wanted me to compete but I guess at like the 2 or 3 local tournaments that were that he went to that were his friends and then that's came to his tournament kind of thing and I really wanted more than that. So, my mother ended up making some phone calls and ended up contacting the United States it was called the USTU at the time United States Taekwondo Union and just a short amount of background on that the United States Taekwondo Union was formed out of the original AAU Taekwondo Organization. This was all happening in the 80s and there was the push for Taekwondo to become an Olympic sport and so one of the things that has to happen for that is the world governing body so in this case the World Taekwondo Federation. They needed to have National governing body so each nation needs to have a governing body for Taekwondo and AAU is not allowed to be a national governing body because it's belongs to the amateur status sports so they created a separate organization called United States Taekwondo Union which has since been renamed to USA Taekwondo and so that was the national governing body for Taekwondo in the United States and the process for qualifying for a national team and going to the Olympics and all the championships and the world cups and all of the other sanctioned world taekwondo federation events.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure.

**Gordon White:**

So my mother ended up contacting that office and they said well the president for the state organization for the USTU is Master Bruce Twing and so my mother said okay great do you have his number and they said yes and they gave her the number my mom called him up and he said well I teach in Randolph and I would you know love for you to come and visit a class and talk to you about what we can do you know this was very close to the junior nationals for the year they happened or I think during the summer in July and this was yeah this was the summer of 1986 and so he said you know Master Twing said you know I'm not going to the junior nationals but my student who is the state president for USTU in Maine is going and you know Gordon's welcome to go and he'll coach him and so he said great and might signed up and went and I told Master Kim at Moo Gong Do and he wasn't happy about it but he just kinda let it happen.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Tell us about that conversation a little bit, if you're okay with it.

**Gordon White:**

Sure. I'm okay with it again this is a long time ago right so

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you're young then how old?

**Gordon White:**

I am so 16, 15, 16 in that range yeah 13, 14 about 15 or 16

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gordon White:**

Oh, I was actually just turning 16 I remember now because when we went we drove and I had my temporary license which was a folded-up piece of paper which when I got my first speeding ticket that police officer laughed at me as he looked at it we're over New York we left here we were like 3 hours into the trip and I got caught in a speed trap on the other state and ended up getting and so that was exciting part of the trip to welcome my first speeding ticket. So yeah so, the thing about Master Kim he I think that he had been burned in the past by some students who were very you know trained very hard and were very dedicated to the school and then they wanted to do something he didn't wanna do and they just left and so I think he was being cautious about that. So I mean I trained everyday, I went to the gym 5 days a week, I took 2 classes a day if I could this was my life I loved it I would go early enough to hit the bag before a students showed up and I think that he really appreciated that and wanted students like that but I also think that because of maybe something's that had happened in his past he was cautious about that and so when I started asking questions and wanting to do things that weren't necessarily his plan I think he just started to back off a little bit.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

He got nervous he didn't wanna lose you.

**Gordon White:**

Right I think he figured that he was going to lose me because I don't think he was willing to do what I wanted to keep me and so I don't know I hope that doesn't sound presumptuous but that I think is the you know the I think that may have been what happened and I don't really know you know until you know unless he was here and gonna answer the question but that was how it felt and so I explained to him that I would be going to nationals and that we've been in touch with Master Twing and he



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respected Master Twing you know very much and that was fine he didn't have anything negative to say there and so I went and fought and lost terribly but it was a pretty great experience I spent you know it was in St. Louis and my dad and I drove.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow it's a long drive.

**Gordon White:**

You know we camped out a couple of nights and it was really fun and I met a man named

Dennis Moore and who was Master Twing's student and the man that 14:51 blue wave at the time and he coached me for the fight that I had there and then I got to know a lot of his students and they said hey we have blue wave summer camp in August you should come. So, after nationals and I got home and started talking to my parents some more and I said hey they've got this blue wave summer camp thing what do you think if I go? and they said sure so they brought me to Lake Willoughby and set the tent up and took off on Friday night and there I was by myself for the weekend at blue wave summer camp and during that weekend was when I realized that that's where I wanted to be you know Master Twing was you know a little scary yet approachable supportive you know yet demanding and the feel that I had from that group was just such camaraderie and community and that always what I felt was missing from my martial arts experience and you know the fact that he was very supportive of things I wanted to do didn't hurt of course I mean that's you know part of the deal here but so you know I got back from that summer camp and I had a sit down with my parents and I said I wanna join this school and they being the amazing parents that they are they said okay I guess we're driving to Randolph a couple of night a week which is 50 miles from the Richmond exit to the Randolph exit on the interstate each way and I started traveling down to Randolph to see Master Twing and train at the Blue Wave in Randolph for sure, where I met your instructor Mister Master Rotta so and so boy just took the story bus here for a ride.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, no that's good that's what we do here.

**Gordon White:**

So, then I started training in Randolph with Master Twing and so I guess what we're talking about is why I got started which was you know the fact that I was getting picked on and beat up and stuff in 6th and 7th grade and realized that I wanted to be able to take care of myself and have some confidence going into high school and that certainly is you know what ended up happening. I entered high school without any fear of being picked on about 3 months into my freshman year I got pushed into a corner and a whole bunch of people saw it and I never got picked on again. I was successfully able to defend myself against a much larger individual which was pretty great you know so and then after that it's funny after





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that the whole aspect of self-defense for martial arts became less of a focus for me. It was all about training and experience and improving and quite honestly the competition part of the things was really what was exciting to me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, not because you didn't need it because you were pushed you had to step up you had to prove yourself I guess is probably the best way to think of it back then as a high school freshman.

**Gordon White:**

Right

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you did and you're kinda glossing over the details so I'm guessing that you know it came to blows I'm guessing that.

**Gordon White:**

It did I'm happy to share the details I just you know I got pushed into a corner and then I can't it's crazy how long ago this is and I can still remember it very very clearly but you know I was pushed into a corner and I stepped away and I just kinda gave the hands up you know what are you doing I don't wanna fight you and then he kinda ran at me and I stepped to the side and he went by and then he came back and threw a punch at my stomach and it was just like in class I just did a low block a middle punch and follow up at a front kick and it was literally a combination we had practiced hundreds of times up and down the floor.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Gordon White:**

And I think for a moment I was shocked and here's this kid bent over on the floor in front of me and I'm looking at my hands and feet going oh my god that worked that just happened you know and then there was a little bit more of a scuffle and he kinda pushed me down and I got up and I kicked him a couple more times and he was pretty done and the teacher showed up and then the teacher said you guys need to you know don't fight leave each other alone go your separate ways and I said no no no he started the fight with me I need to talk to somebody and so the next day we got, both of us got pulled into the principal's office and I was feeling like I was in the right you know I was like hey this guy started the fight and I just defended myself and of course the principal had to take of the line of you know there's no fighting in school and you guys need to be able to get along and you know that whole part of it so.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah and I think that's a story that I don't know if I wanna say most but at least a good number of us that have been through the martial arts through our younger years. We know that story and our parents quite often know that story too as they got called in I don't know if your parents were called in and had to talk to the principal but that whole dilemma of you know a zero tolerance for violence which you know if you would held to that what would've happened you would've 20:34 beat out of you and it's good that you know I think those of us that teach martial arts you know we hold that line a little bit differently to say don't use it unless you have to and you clearly had to you were defending yourself and you did it and you did it effectively and you took it to the point that you needed to in no further and I don't think there's anybody listening to this podcast that wouldn't agree that you were in the right.

**Gordon White:**

No I still I mean I feel like I was in the right absolutely it was a you know it was at the end of the day and looking back at it now it was a scuffle between 2 you know 15 year olds and I think the outcome of that was huge for me in that it was a such a dramatic change from my 6th and 7th grade life that I suddenly felt like okay I don't have to be afraid I can walk up and down the halls I don't you know I'm not concerned about that you know like I said enough saw it and you know high school people talk and it was all the chatter the next day but..

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Did people treat you differently? Maybe for a little while?

I don't think I was treated differently and like I said I never got in another fight in high school.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Ok

**Gordon White:**

You know I was I'm pretty easy going and you know I like pretty much everybody and I you know I didn't have any problems that way at all it just this one thing happened and I haven't I still don't know what the beef was he had with me but but yeah so that was that and that was it was a big eye opener for me I think just in looking back at the way my life was in 6th and 7th grade and my confidence levels and then after a couple of years of training the martial arts you know not at beating somebody up or defending myself was necessary to kinda have that confidence but it was definitely nice bonus to kind of have proven to myself that yeah you know this does work the work you know the effort you're putting in to this is paying off not just in your physical skills but in your ability to carry yourself 22:49 school.





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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah and I think the other piece I wanna pull out of that man I would just wanna underscore for people that are listening is you fell back to something that was pretty basic and that was a drill that you worked on many many times and I think a lot of us that have trained for a long time we get bored and that's actually a subject that's come up on the show a number of times you know as martial arts as black belts you know we're not supposed to get bored we're supposed to love this so much that it's always exciting and we live to throw reverse punches and front kicks even individually but of course that's not the case but here we're illustrating the importance and one of the lessons that I've learned and the best way I've ever heard that expressed is you fall back to your lowest level of training not your highest you know you're defense wasn't jump spinning hook kicks even though I'm sure you knew how to throw them your defense was low block punch front kick.

**Gordon White:**

Yeah it's really interesting and this is you know the self-defense topic comes up all the time in the martial arts instructor and being a martial arts instructor a lot of times parents coming with their kids and they're like I need them to learn how to defend themselves do you do model mugging type stuff where and I think that there's certainly value to kind of the realistic self-defense we you know a lot of our summer camps and winter camps we do Tony Blauer's stuff the black suits and the you know and I think there's a lot of value to that I would also say that the benefit of traditional martial arts for a you know middle or high school or in terms of defending themselves comes down to 2 very basic things you know 1 is that you are on a regular basis learning how to control distance with somebody who's trying to strike you and the other is that you've learned how to deliver an effective strike and so you're not going to get a you know it's very unlikely that you're going to get bullied and into a fight with another skilled martial artist it's just probably not gonna happen you know at the middle school and high school levels what we're talking about is traditional martial arts teachers or you know traditional martial arts training that is forms and basics and things like that which are absolutely beneficial. How does a low block why do you do a low block, when would you ever do that in a fight? You do you don't realize it it doesn't look like maybe exactly what you're doing when you go up and down the floor but it's similar enough and the reaction is there that it is very effective and that ability to just control distance and deliver an effective strike is most of the time oh that's really necessary at that kind of age.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Gordon White:**

You know obviously gets more complicated when you're an adult and there's a robbery in a store or something right? We're not talking about that, we're talking about kind of the basics of being able to defend yourself.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, so that was probably the longest origin story that we've had here on the show

**Gordon White:**

Oh man I'm sorry

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No no I'm not saying that in a critical way but what's great about it is you tied in about 7 stories and as you know we're all about stories here that's the whole focus of the show the motto is what's your story? But I'm sure you've got a lot more so.

**Gordon White:**

I have a couple more

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay well

**Gordon White:**

I could share with you

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Throw pick your best one why don't you throw that at us?

**Gordon White:**

It's hard because there's some of these subjects you know so I'd like to talk a little about Master Twing, GM Twing and a story with him because which has nothing to do with the physical training of martial arts but it was a story that I think really speaks to the kind of person he was. It's interesting you know GM Twing started teaching Taekwondo in the State of Vermont in 1969 right the first Taekwondo instructor in the state and I now have students who are 4th degree black belts who have never met him so when he passed away in 1999 you know it was a big change for the Blue Wave association and now that we're 15 years later to see that there's all these martial arts blue wave Taekwondo black belts and instructors that never met him I feel like this particular story will probably explain a lot about you know the community the friendship and the way we treat each other and it's 1986 and it's my first summer camp this is when I was talking about earlier when I decided to join blue wave and I visited summer camp in 1986 and so my parents had helped me set the tent up and they drove back home and left me there and so I'm in the tent and it's you know I was very serious about this, I was like this is martial arts training and we're here for the weekend and you know rah rah and so I was gonna go to bed early it was



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like 9:30 or 10 o'clock and I was like well you know and saw Master Twing and I said goodnight sir I'm gonna go to bed and he just kinda gave me a funny look and he said alright we'll see you tomorrow so I headed off to bed and I get you know so excited that I was having hard time sleeping and so I'm lying in my tent and I'm all of a sudden I hear some like rustling out at my tent and there had been a rumor that some of the black belts were gonna go around and pull sticks up on the tent and so on your tent right and fold it over on you and that kind of thing and playing pranks. So here's a rustling and I kinda ignore it and I hear some more and like what's going on outside figured that someone's messing with me so I opened the tent and I jumped out and I'm like and I said what are you doing like kind of annoyed as I looked down and see somebody with one of my tent sticks in their hand and when the face turns it looks up its complete shock to me that it's Master Twing and so he says man I don't know what your parents used to put these sticks but that took me forever to pull out of there he was like look we'll leave your tent alone come help me pull these guys tent up. So we headed off and began some evening shenanigans at summer camp but that was who he was, he was very serious about the blue wave he was very serious about his taekwondo and his teaching and he was very serious about having a good time with his students and knowing that you know there was more to it than lining up in rank and bowing in and bowing out and so we carried that forward many years that kind of attitude and that teasing of each other and so many years later like a little more than 10 years later in 1997, summer camp had been moved to tunbridge fairgrounds and Master Twing wanted it there because he lived in Chelsea and so he wasn't really a fan of camping anyway and so he could stay at home. So, in 1996 so that a year earlier he purchased a laminating machine and so we would get in the mail flyers for all these different events coming up testing, a tournament whatever and everything was laminated and so became this little joke about you know what are you gonna get next from Master Twing that's laminated. So about you know so summer camp's Saturday night about 2 in the morning, 4 of us crawling to a car and drive to his house and we bring with us the largest roll of plastic wraps you've ever seen and we proceed to laminate his car. So in his driveway and so we had somebody under the car we'd pass it under and we wrap the whole thing up front to back and side to side and so you know the next morning everybody's out lined up at summer camp and it's like 15 minutes go by before we're supposed to start and all of a sudden he comes flying down the road in his car he pulls in he comes out and his instructor who we can talk about later GM Lee he was there at the time as well and he's just laughing and laughing and so Master Twing understood that you know what comes around goes around and he was he told me many years later that that was one of the best practical jokes that had ever been played on him but that's kind of the character of summer camp and the way you know you spend so many years together with people doing things you become you know the best of friends, you become family and you know that was who he was he loved the practical jokes into kinda tease the people that he cared about.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, I have and you probably have to train with people that you know are on that end of the spectrum the joking the fun and having a good time and then people on the other end and maybe your original



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instructor that you talked about is more on that end of the spectrum that you know but 32:22 all business. Why do you feel, why do you find the value in the other side in the fun side the joking side, you know is that more than just enjoyable is that does that fall into your teaching philosophy?

**Gordon White:**

So, it can be a slippery slope right so you don't wanna be too familiar with your students initially because when discipline breaks down in the gym then you've gone too far right? So, when your practices are inefficient because people are joking you know when that carries over to the training floor then you have to be careful and that can happen. So, you have to be careful about it and I think that it, it's truly a skill to learn how to balance that and how to you know keep the discipline on the dojo on the floor and then you know when training is done how to come together with your students at a level that's very human and fun and I keep coming back to the word community because that's really what it's about you know you're really a family. You know the dojang's kinda like you're close family you're immediate family and then the sister schools are kind of cousins and you know and then you kinda get together for these events and then it's like a family reunion so you know I think that you know and in that example you know there's always respect for the elders for the parents for the grandparents and there's still joking right so the grand kids are in and they're teasing the grandmother and so I think in a lot of ways it resembles that and I do think that it's an important part of being an instructor at least the kind of instructor that I wanna be you know there's kind of a couple different approaches when you're a coach right? So, if we go through a you know a coaching seminar, typically they say you know you can be authoritative with your athlete and you can tell them what they need to do. You can be supportive you know of them or you can just try to be their friend and so you know you have to figure out which combination works best and so you know that I think is the balance I think that's part of the reason you're called a master you gotta be able to balance all sides of that. You're not just, there's lots of people who are great trainers but maybe they're not all great masters I don't know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Very well said I like that.

**Gordon White:**

I had one other short story if you want.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah no please please.

**Gordon White:**

So this is a competition story and so in 1990 what year was that 1996 I qualified to travel with the US team to the world cup in Brazil which is a big event and I'd been to a couple other international events



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with the US team and then it had been my goal in my competitive one of my competitive goals to medal at a World Taekwondo Federation sanctioned event and so not an open you know not an invitational but you know world championships or world cup or you know pan American championships the Olympics something that is sanctioned by the World Taekwondo Federation as an official event and so I was feeling in that this was really gonna be probably my best shot to do that I was you know the timing was right I was in a good place in my competition career and things were going very well for me and so I traveled with the US team to Brazil and my first fight ended up being against Mexico and I was you know I did not know I hadn't been going to tons and tons of international events like some of the extremely successful competitors at the time they were there every year every event you know and I wouldn't get on a team once in a while and get to go to an event you know so successful but you know certainly not at the same level of some of the very you know the athletes who were doing everything and so I was you know I was nervous I was excited but I was really determined I wanted this to be a good event for me and so my first fight was against Mexico and so one of my team mates pulls me aside and says oh Gordon no problem I know this guy from Mexico I'd seen him fight, if you can get a head shot early you're gonna destroy his confidence and you know you'll have a much better fight with him if you can kinda score early and especially a head shot, he's kind of a head case you know he's very good but you know he's you know I think you can probably you know get in on the emotional level with him a little bit you know and try to so I trusted this guy he had been around and so I got up on the floor and I don't remember planning it but I ended up scoring a nice ax kick 37:50 right out of the gate and true enough I get through the fight and we're having a good fight and I ended up you know winning the match and so I get off the mat and I come back and I'm like wow you know thanks so much that was such a good advice, I said I'm surprised though you know he seemed pretty good and he goes oh that was William de Jesus he actually won the gold medal at the Olympics in 1992 and I was like so why is he a head case if you kick him in the head early, he goes oh he's not I just told you that and so I kind of went out and he said you know sometimes you just need to believe something and you know give yourself a little step up and so I was always grateful for that little bit of advice that kinda you know it was a little bit of a white lie I guess but it was you know it worked for me and I always fall back on that story because for other parts of my life where you know sometimes you just have to believe you know if I remove all of the doubt, if I remove all of the negative talk although you know convincing myself of all the things that could go wrong and just focus on the things that could go right and a lot of times that's just what you need to be successful so.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's a great story I like that and I you know I really felt like I was there with you and there is always this visceral response from me when you kinda gave the punchline. He lied, he lied to me oh not me I wasn't there this was you but wow that's really cool and now do you employ that tactic with your students?

**Gordon White:**



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I haven't had an opportunity to do exactly that but I'm big with my competitors you know my big pep talk is about focusing on the things you can control and not the things you can't. So I spent you know many years losing at national level competitions because I convinced myself that I wasn't going to win you know you watch the competitors there you see bad calls being made, you see the guy you're gonna fight kicking paddles and you think he's way faster than you you know those are all things you can't control and so my pep talk at a lot of times falls to that which is you know you've been training hard, you're smart in the ring you know you can kick fast, those are the things we can control. We can't control who your opponents going to be we can't control whether the judges like your points, we can't control those things focus on the stuff that we can control. We can control you and your performance the rest of it has to take care of itself.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And clearly anybody can have their day.

**Gordon White:**

Absolutely yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool so think about all of your time in the martial arts and if you had to imagine yourself now without the martial arts was people that have listened for a while know that I'm tweaking this question a little bit. How do you think could be different at your age you know everything else is the same maybe same job same place but no martial arts, you'd never gotten it, how might you be a different person?

**Gordon White:**

That's a hard question because I've been doing the martial arts for so long I thought you know I get to see the questions, I got to see the questions before this so I thought about that question and my you know my response is going to be it's very difficult to kinda separate you know how the martial arts has impacted my life versus just my life because you can't.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right and that's been everybody's answer so that's why you know I like this question I like where it tries to go.

**Gordon White:**

So, I'd had amazing parents and 2 fantastic older sisters and a very strong family unit and I think that I would be a very similar person in terms of my morality and my character and you know how happy I am and those types of things and I don't think that there'd be a big difference in kind of the person I am at my core. I think that I would be involved in some other athletic endeavor I don't know what it would be





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and you know my the middle child my older sister but the younger of the two was you know was a fantastic athlete she was an Olympian she went to 92 Olympics for 42:27 skiing I mean so for a long time growing up I was kind of in her footsteps I went to all the bike races that she did, I went to the 42:37 training that she did, we played soccer on Sundays and she you know was a real role model for me and so I think I probably would've if I hadn't found Taekwondo I'd probably would've tried to pursue something else athletic, athletically. So, it's a very difficult question I mean I met my wife through Taekwondo

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Is that a good story?

**Gordon White:**

I don't know it's semi interesting maybe so I was graduating from UVM and I went to a tournament in Connecticut and I had a job lined up in Boston, it was a 9-month you know contract based his job to kinda get my foot in the door and so I'm at this tournament and I'm you know I'm thinking about where am I gonna train when I'm living in Boston and Master Twing had said you know oh see if you can talk to some people and figure out where there's some gyms down there and so I ended up having a conversation with this team of four women from Jae H Kim Taekwondo which was right in Boston literally around the corner from Bentley park and so my wife was one of them and I met her at this tournament. So I don't I know we definitely felt something then I guess so I was kind of a chicken in the dating world I guess I don't know but so I ended up moving down to Boston and ended up finding an apartment that was in Kenmore square and walking distance to the Taekwondo school and so I contacted her when I got there and I said hey so I've moved down here can I come visit the school and she was actually instructing at the school I don't know if you know anything about Jae H Kim Taekwondo in Boston but the Boston school is I mean I think it had in its heyday probably at a thousand students it's probably come down to maybe 7 or 800

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But still huge

**Gordon White:**

It's a giant giant school and they've got you know 3 training floors and it's a wonderful place for advance practitioners because you can go and train and not have to take a class to get your training and there's a heavy bag, there's mirrors, there's some equipment, there's a place to stretch there's a place to do forms so you know there's lots of classes to take too but if you wanna just go get a martial arts workout, you've got that facility. So, I met her and started training with the team there, this school is big enough that Master Kim actually would hire new graduates from the Taekwondo physical education programs in Korea and bring them over to do teaching. So, we had some exceptional coaches you know during the



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time that I was there to train with and so we you know started hanging out socially and then dated and then moved in and then we moved back to Vermont and got married.

### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool it's a great story. I always like when people come together through martial arts you know I've known a few that actually we've what was that episode 21, 22 Sensei Katie Murphy met her husband through a summer camp.

### **Gordon White:**

Right

### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, cool yeah that's always fun when 46:13 So we've talked about a lot of positives so let's kinda flip it let's go the other way. Think about a rough point something you struggled with and how your martial arts training or experience allowed you to move passed it?

### **Gordon White:**

Well, I have given this question some thought and I didn't come up with a lot of great stuff I just because I think for the same reason where it's difficult to think about the kind the person that I am without martial arts. So I don't know if the things that helped me in tough spots were because of my martial arts training but one particular story comes to mind about this which was in 1990 I believe it been 3 or 4 years of Nationals not getting on the podium you know losing first fight second fight quarter finals and so in 1990 I felt like this was gonna be a year I was gonna place this year I was gonna have a good event and I ended up losing I think in the quarters and so GM Lee I have to kinda bring him in to this story so GM Tae Sung Lee was GM Twing's instructor so the story is that they when Master Twing was in air force base in Korea when he was in the military he was stationed there in the early 60s he met GM Lee at the Chung Do Kwan school on base and they you know they spent a lot of time together and trained together and lost contact after he left 48:12 and came back to the states and then were reunited in the mid 80s which is when GM Lee started visiting the Blue Wave coming back to the states so GM Lee had really taken me on as somebody interested in learning the WTF style of sparring because the Blue wave up until that point had done all ITF style Taekwondo so I had a very close relationship with him I spent many weekends at Master Twing's house getting up and training in 48:44 with GM Lee and so he was very much my instructor in a different way than GM Twing was it was very much kind of a father grandfather relationship you know between Master Twing and Master Lee and me. So here it is 1990 I had put you know my heart and soul into my training and the thing about the process at the time to make the national team was that you first went to a state event and you qualified for nationals which was very easy especially in Vermont you basically showed up right there wasn't a lot of depth in the divisions and then you go to qualify at the nationals and then if you place in the top 4 at nationals you



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are invited back to team trials and team trials has already took the top4 people from nationals and the previous year's team member a new round robin and then the winner of that event was on the national team.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Just one?

**Gordon White:**

Just one and they had B team so the second-place person at team trials was 49:50 B team and a lot of times that they would have other events for you to go to.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

True.

**Gordon White:**

So, I had been going to nationals since 1986 and that was 1990 and I was feeling like I had put a lot of time into this and it was time for me to place and I did lose and you know wasn't in the podium and I just sat down and started you know I got out into the hall and I sat in a chair and just kind lost it. I started crying and I was like fed up and I was gonna be done and it was a really it was a tough place to be and it was you know 50:30 because you had so much in it for so many reasons. It wasn't just about me it was you know about all my parents support and all the instructors support and letting those people down and not feeling like I was doing what I needed to do and so Master Twing comes over and he just kinda stands in front of me and he turns to another black belt and he says go get his back we need to get him out of here and so very protective very you know we're gonna take care of Gordon he's in a tough spot and then Master Lee walks over and looks down and he says what are you doing and I said I just kinda looked up and he goes are you crying? He says you wanna cry you can cry but then we're gonna train some more because that's what you do when you lose, you train some more and then he walked away and I was like you know that's what you do when you lose, you train some more and it just made so much sense to me at the time and it really snapped me out of it and it brought me back to some lessons I'd learned from my sister about some conversations we've had about training and preparing for big events and not reaching your goal and about realizing that it's about the process you know you put your sights on the goal and if you don't stop to enjoy the process along the way and you finally reach it it's not really that great you know you gotta make sure that you enjoy along the way. If you don't love the hours you have to put in the gym the sacrifices you make you know the school dances you give up for Friday night training practice or you know the time that you give up with friends to go train or the 6 hours you spend in a car to drive to some place in Maine to fight one guy you know if you don't enjoy all that then at the end it's not really worth it and so when you don't reach your goal you gotta remember that it's about that process, it's about enjoying it and realizing that you know every



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hour in the gym is making you better, making you stronger and pushing you forward and that's really the goal is just to make sure you're still going forward.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, you know I think the thing it was most striking for me as you were telling that story was it was really clear you were bringing yourself back to that place and you know we've considered making this a video podcast and of course we haven't because it makes, it's so much more complicated but in that moment that you were telling that story I kinda wish we had because your face changed your whole demeanor changed and it's something that I wish the listeners were able to see and maybe they were able to hear it but how hard that was on you but at the same time how pivotal that moment was.

**Gordon White:**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

As soon as you were speaking what GM Lee told you about you know okay you cry but then we train and even in retelling the story there was that epiphany all over again for you and just everything came back to normal for you I mean you're you came back up your posture came back up and you looked like you were ready to take on the world again and I really hope listeners you know maybe even rewind the last 5 minutes or so and listen to that part again because I think there's something really brilliant in there especially in its simplicity so it's great. We've kinda covered a couple of these questions already so I'm gonna skip over them I mean the competition we've talked a lot about that so I don't think we don't need to go there specifically so we're gonna jump into the who would you wanna train with question. So, you've been fortunate I mean you've trained with you know of course I trained Taekwondo in Vermont so I know a lot of these names, I haven't met all of these people but I've heard a lot of stories about these folks so it's kind of a who's who of Vermont Taekwondo and even a bit beyond but who haven't you trained with who you know living or dead who would you wanna jump out on the mats with right now and learn from?

**Gordon White:**

I think there's quite a few people that I would like to I would have at least like to observe or you know maybe in my prime experience training with certainly the founder of Chung Do Kwan. So, for people that aren't familiar with kind of the Kwan's system of Taekwondo so before Taekwondo was formed there were all these Kwan's in Korea right so there was you know about 7 major 1 but Chung Do Kwan and Moo Duk Kwan, Ji Do Kwan, Song Moo Kwan and there was Chang Moo Kwan, there was a bunch of different ones. Chung Do Kwan when translated is gym of the Blue Wave right so that's where the blue wave name comes from and so the founder of Chund Do Kwan was a man named Won Kuk Lee and so I you know obviously I would've love to have trained with him I think back when GM Lee was training you



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know I think that year it was just so different it looked it was actually a lot more like Japanese Karate right because the influence of Japanese karate and those pioneers really the Taekwondo pioneers are the Kwan founders.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Even looking at the old photos they're wearing Gis

**Gordon White:**

Absolutely right? It's like Japanese karate

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know they look like you know I trained Shotokan karate for a while and then it looked like old Shotokan,

**Gordon White:**

Yes

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The stances you know

**Gordon White:**

Yeah and I you know and then kind of the second man in charge of Chung Do Kwan is a man named Woon Kyu Uhm and so GM Lee really trained with him a lot and he was kind of known for being one of the creators of jumping kicks and so there is this fantastic picture of him like jumping over a bicycle doing a flying side kick and it's I think one of you know flying kicks and jumping kicks clearly had been done before but you know to kind of really dig into them and do them and making a more common place certainly in that school was something that was credited to him. He's still alive, I've met him several times but again kind of back in the day of when those guys were training and Taekwondo was really being formed you know there's a lot of you know arguments I guess was the best word or differences of opinion around the history of Taekwondo and I'm not interested in that I think you know somewhere between everyone's version lies the truth you know and so clearly General Chae was you know in very involved and pivotal in pushing Taekwondo as the national sport in martial arts Korea but I think what's often lost is that in that story is that he was really no more than a Kwan founder of ITF style Taekwondo so you see man like Woon Kuk Lee and other founders of the various kwans who really had more training than General Chae did at the time of all of the kind of the jelling of Taekwondo and the coming together of the various kwans to form what we call Taekwondo today and so when you see the differences between ITF and WTF style of Taekwondo a lot of times the ITF Taekwondo to me it looks closer to karate than it really does to WTF style Taekwondo a lot of times



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right

**Gordon White:**

And again, I'm not picking a fight or anything like that or casting you know judgement but I think that there were a lot of people that were involved in what Taekwondo looks like today and it certainly you know isn't something that can be you know attributed to a single person.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are politics everywhere.

**Gordon White:**

Absolutely yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Even in and some might even say especially in martial arts.

**Gordon White:**

Right, Master Twing used to say the only thing more messed up than religion is martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I like that that's good. So, let's get to some of the more fun questions, we've gone pretty deep I think we've got a pretty good sense of who you are and what made you the way you are you know with your passion for the martial arts but let's talk about movies.

**Gordon White:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Are you a movie guy? You like martial arts films.

**Gordon White:**

Oh yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You got a favorite one

**Gordon White:**





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I've been thinking about this one cause there's way too many.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There's so many

**Gordon White:**

I sadly am a fan of the older cheesy versions of martial art movies. I love like oh god The Last Dragon I watched about a thousand times cause that was you know that was the target audience for that at the time it came out Big Trouble in Little China you know

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, it's classic

**Gordon White:**

We love that kind of that stuff; Blood sport was another big one that we watched over and over again. I think current ones I like the Ip man series

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gordon White:**

Yeah, I think those are really great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Are you up on the third one that's coming out?

**Gordon White:**

I saw the trailer yeah definitely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Which trailer?

**Gordon White:**

Oh boy I don't know I am not sure. So, the one that I think has me most pumped up because it's it could be so wonderful and yet so ridiculous at the same time is the fact that Mike Tyson's gonna be at it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I did see that.



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**Gordon White:**

So, you know of course who knows some people are listening to this so they may have already seen and said oh my god Ip man was great up until 3 when they brought in Mike Tyson but I know I'm anxious to see it I think that'll be good. So, I don't know I'm a fan of most of the bigger one you know I love all the Jackie Chan and Jet Li stuff and you know and some Jason Statham stuff I like that too

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah you know there are another one that mentioned Jason Statham you know it's he's probably the most mentioned non-quote unquote martial artist that people talk about you know and for anyone that hasn't watched especially his early stuff you know the Transporter you know go back and watch some of those fight scenes and you just look at him and you know especially knowing him now and seen all the stuff that he's done what's the movie that he did recently with Melissa McCarthy Spy.

Oh right.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know which is a comedy and it's kinda ridiculous but then to watch him really putting it together and beating the hell out of people with technique that you know we martial artist look at and say that's pretty darn good.

**Gordon White:**

Yeah, it's nice definitely it's nice to see somebody who can and again opinions vary but I mean he can act and do martial arts so it's nice to see that combination.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We don't always get that in martial arts.

**Gordon White:**

No, we do not.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

The priority is usually on the martial arts over the acting.

**Gordon White:**

It's kinda fun to see some of the well certainly well Ronda Rousey now has made a couple of debuts right in the movies and who's the other female MMA fighter?



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Gina Carano

**Gordon White:**

Gina yes, she was in a couple of movies as well right so it's kinda fun to see some MMA fighters come in and

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah

**Gordon White:**

I remember when Steven Seagal's first movies came out and everyone was like you know cause at the time I mean I and my high school I'd started at martial arts club and then there was everybody you know from kempo guys to karate guys, Taekwondo to Aikido people were in there and the Aikido guys were all like you know how are they how is he going to use aikido as an offensive martial artist just not possible you know and I went and saw the movie and everyone's jaws were just dropped because it was like really violent and really aggressive and it looked awesome on screen it just is 1:03:52 Above the law was the first one that kind of get out and really brought aikido to the screen and I have to say it was pretty awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think that people see Steven Seagal now or even his later movies I think it's a shame that's gonna be his legacy and I too remember his early stuff and watching it and just being blown away cause he's the first person that I remember bringing that kind of grappling fighting style

**Gordon White:**

Right

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

To the movies and it worked and it looked good and as a striker you know at the time I'd only done karate with a little bit of grappling through self-defense I was just I was in trans I thought it was amazing.

**Gordon White:**

I agree yeah, I thought it was different enough and very cool and 1:04:43 you know side kick the guy out the window.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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So, if I had to 1:04:48 for a favorite actor?

**Gordon White:**

Oh mean, boy favorite martial arts actor or just favorite actor I don't know if I can name one. I'm trying to think. I guess I'd have to pick Jackie Chan he's just so diverse and he's just done so many things and think about the combination of acting skills and acrobatic and martial arts stuff I think I'd probably have to pick him.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And he brings such a sense of humor...

**Gordon White:**

Absolutely

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

To his movies that I really like and I think one of my favorite things about Jackie Chan movie is the outtakes at the end where you get to see him you know I distinctly remember pretty sure it's Rumble in the Bronx with the ladder you know what I'm talking about and for anyone that hasn't am I right is it Rumble in the Bronx?

**Gordon White:**

I think so.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, for those that haven't seen the movie first shame on you because it's a great movie and you need to go see it but there is this fight scene where he's using this ladder as a weapon and it's one of the most creative things that I have ever seen martial arts wise on film but of course with those outtakes he screws up so badly and what looks to be so painfully so many times.

**Gordon White:**

Yeah there's a scene I can't remember if it's that particular movie where he's supposed to slide down behind the pinball machine and there's somebody who's fighting him who pushes the pinball machine and tries to squish him against the wall and he's supposed to slide down and he just doesn't quite make it in the outtake and gets his head you know his forehead drilled against the wall and the pin ball machine of all things but that was probably my first of the big brawl was like his first American made

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I think so.



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**Gordon White:**

Movie and that I must have watched that a thousand times, I love that movie the Big Brawl was a great film.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So how about books are you a reader?

**Gordon White:**

I am not as much as I'd like to be but you know I like the classics I think every martial artist should read you know karate do you know way of life and I think Zen in the martial arts and I think those are fantastic and they're quick and easy reads. Some books that haven't been mentioned on your show at least from many of the podcasts I listened to I haven't heard but are think are great. I really like 1:07:20 either I think it's angry white pajamas it's called

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay

**Gordon White:**

It's a fantastic story it's the true story about a I think it's a guy from England who spends a year or more in Japan and having no previous martial arts experience joins an aikido school and it is a fantastic read I would highly recommend it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Is it funny I mean, it's certainly a funny title.

**Gordon White:**

Yes, it is it's funny it's very funny. I think not specifically martial arts books but the recent, recently I've like when recently I kind of been studying this book for the last year and a half or so it's called the little book of talent and it's by a man named I think it's Daniel Coyle is the author but this guy was hired to go and travel the world and visit hotbeds of training facilities that produced you know high performing people and it was every it was not just sports, it was music and math and lots of different areas and he visited a you know beat up tennis club in Russia that has just produced more you know top players than most countries have and I think he went to the Suzuki Violin headquarters and so he was hired to basically go and travel around to all these places and then write about them and he wrote a book called the talent code and the talent code is an interesting book but it's a it could be a little heavy and he along the way while writing this book he came up with tips and he wrote the second book called the little book of talent which is 52 tips that he's he picked up from traveling to all these different training facilities and I think as an instructor that book is really beneficial it just forces you to kinda look at the way you teach,



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the methods that you teach are you doing things because that's the way you've always done then is there a different way is there a better way and I so as for the instructors certainly I think anybody can benefit from it cause it's very applicable to lots of things but the little book of talent I'd recommend. Cool and then one other book that I read a little while ago is an instructor called by the name of Kelly Muir I think M U I R but she wrote a very short book called instructor revolution which you know she has extremely successful school in Columbus it's only I think it's under 18 years old only and she basically was tired of kind of you know the commercial martial arts schools that were belt factories you know cranking out students that didn't really have any skill level and just kinda cuts through it and has an approach that you know I don't buy into wholesale but I think she has some really great points I think against it's definitely worth the read it's a short one and then it's well written.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool. How about goals what have you got for goals?

**Gordon White:**

Well I have a lot of goals for my students so I have a lot of things I'd like to see my students accomplish and I'd like to help them accomplish them you know I've got a very wide range of students here kids adults you know people that just wanna train in the martial arts and are working towards their black belt have you know athletes who wanna who have competitive goals I've got people who have fitness goals who are just trying to improve flexibility or range of motion or you know when I see what I'm doing contribute to my students accomplishing things I feel a little bit like that's reaching something for me to at a personal level you know I've just moved my school after being you know in down town Burlington for 15 years and now up here 1:11:54 street you know I have a goal of this school being successful and being successful the way I wanna teach. I've never thought my school to survive on the income I've always had a day job and you know that paid the bills and provided insurance and I think that's given me a lot of flexibility in teaching the kind of school that I wanna teach and producing the kind of students that I wanna teach. I don't have to you know I don't have to go out and find students and do a lot of you know more a commercial or promotional things I guess and kinda give up more of the way that I wanna teach the kind of classes that I wanna have and so you know that's a goal is to make this school successful so I'm maintaining my...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What does that mean though? What is success, what does success mean to you?

**Gordon White:**

What success mean? It would mean I guess you know there's I guess it would mean having more students than I have now I mean I you know I'm happy to share my student based on from around 70 or 75 students and you know I'd love to see a gym of a hundred students I think that's probably a good





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goal. So, there's definitely a goal in kind of building the student base for me and there's you know there's benefits in that and in that it's just a lot more fun to have full classes you know. We have a lot of depth here I have thirty active black belts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool

**Gordon White:**

And I want to provide opportunities for my advanced students to be able to continue to learn and grow and have opportunities to do things and one of the ways to do that is to have an active school. So that's definitely, I think that's right up there for my martial arts goals yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So now is your chance to kinda I guess promote yourself you know, if somebody wanna go reach out to you or maybe they are visiting the area they move up to Vermont, they wanna go to UVM, they wanna come train some WTF Taekwondo you know would you be open to that?

**Gordon White:**

Absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How will they get a hold of you?

**Gordon White:**

Yeah no I'm online you know you can go to the website for our organization which is [bluewavetkd.com](http://bluewavetkd.com) and you can google search Gordon White and taekwondo I think I am the only one that comes up at least in the top few results anyway. [gwhite@bluewavetkd.com](mailto:gwhite@bluewavetkd.com) is my email address but yeah I love visitors, I got people that come in a lot you know we get we tend to get a lot of visitors if people are in town because we're really about the only school that does WTF style of Taekwondo so after looking for WTF style of Taekwondo school then they tend to come here if they're at UVM then there's a UVM club that also does WTF style Taekwondo you know I have for you know one of the things that Master Twing asked me to do as I was finishing my competition career and he got sick and it was gonna be it was clear that I was kind of in the position of leadership with the blue wave association I wanted to think that he asked me to do was to take what I'd learned you know I feel like I was selfish for a long time it was about me for a long time, I trained I competed I learned I went to seminars I traveled and you know not everybody gets to do that and so I think that I had so much support from Master Twing in doing that stuff that I really wanted to give that back and that was something that he saw too and so he basically said to me look you need to take all that stuff that only athletes are doing and you need to make it work



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for recreational students. But we need a sparring curriculum that is fun and safe and that everybody can do and learn and if we're going to be able to teach this to everyone you need to be able to present it in a way that everybody can do and so you know I've that was essentially my you know a big part of what I've done in the last decade, the last 2 decades is really create a curriculum around Olympic style sparring for everyone and so I have taught many many seminars at schools that wanna try to integrate Olympic style sparring. I'm totally open to being

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, you're available for that?

**Gordon White:**

I'm going and doing seminars on Olympic sparring

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay okay great

**Gordon White:**

If people have an interest in that

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah cool that sounds like some great stuff and so of course you know listeners know we'll have all these links and everything up on the website at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) and your email address and the link to the website so if people wanna get a hold at you and find out more or bring you in to teach some stuff I'm sure that'll be great

**Gordon White:**

Yeah definitely open to that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, let's tie it all up you got any last words of wisdom for everybody?

**Gordon White:**

Oh, I had to think about that a little bit and because there's a lot of things it depends on the subject, it depends on the student it depends on the audience, right? But I guess I have a couple things that came to mind one was something that I'm stealing from a book I wrote which is a phrase it's keep your eyes you know off the belt. So I think as martial arts students a lot of times, there's a lot of emphasis on the belt and what belt you are and what your next belt and what you're learning to get your next belt and I think that there's value in that and I think that it can sometimes and I think you know the process of



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earning belts and moving towards black belt is a good one but I also think that if it's if there's too much focus on it there's a lot that is lost around just doing the work to improve you know you learned front kick when you were a white belt but when you test for black belt the front kicks should look a lot different than when you did it as a white belt right so I think sometimes people are like oh I know how to do front kick check and they're not continuing to develop and evolve that technique for themselves and then when they go and test for black belt they know a lot of things but at a very limited level.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right.

**Gordon White:**

You know so I think you know be a good student, dig deep, put the time in, do the reps, you know I'm all about the reps, I'm you know I don't care if my athletes have done 100 slides back round house kicks in one night we're gonna do them again the next night you know because it's just so important. So, you know I think eyes off the belt a little bit and focus on the skill set. Are you improving are you getting better you know, the belt come you know you show up at the gym long enough and you put your time and the belts come but are you improving are you growing. And Then oh sorry

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I just you reminded me of something that I probably I've even thought of in 20 years and my original instructors when if there was a kid that seemed a little bit too focused on their belt they had just got their belt they were obsessing over the next belt they would made them take off their belt and say are you any different? and of course the answer is no.

**Gordon White:**

Right

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You know it's just about so sorry I just wanted to share that.

**Gordon White:**

That's great

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's like oh I just remembered that.

**Gordon White:**



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No, that's great and then the other point I guess I wanna make and I don't know if this is advice so much as it's just kind of a question to put out there is you know my background is very you know I have a lot of competition back ground and now I have nearly as much coaching back ground and a problem or a challenge that I run into all the time with athletes is big fish in a little pond, small fish in a big pond and I think that what's really important is that people kinda look hard at themselves and they ask themselves what they want for started and if what they want is to be a big fish in a little pond that's fine, they just should recognize that that's what that is and if they want more then they have to understand and be willing to accept that they're going to be a small fish in a bigger pond and if there's you know value in both of those things and there's lessons to be learned in all of it don't wake up 10 years later and look back and wished you had tried to be a small fish in a big pond you know what I mean, don't just kinda settle in to what's comfortable you know and just doing what you always do, doing that you know going to safe events you know. Challenge yourself, go out, step up because you know you there's something to be learned from all of it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Gold fish grow to the size of their bowl.

**Gordon White:**

Right, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Cool awesome. Well Master White thank you this has been a lot of fun I really appreciate your and you know we got into some good stuff and some pretty deep stuff and I appreciate you being so open and honest with us.

**Gordon White:**

Thank you very much I really enjoyed it, appreciate it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Thanks for listening to episode 30 of [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio) and thank you to Master White. So, head on over to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) for the show notes, while you're there if you wanna 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 on social media we're on Facebook, twitter, Pinterest and Instagram all with the username whistlekick. If you liked the show please subscribe so you never miss out in the future, and if you could help us by leaving a 5-star review wherever you download your podcast, it would really make a difference. It's those reviews that help new listeners find the show and you might hear us read yours on the air, if we do go ahead and email us at [info@whistlekick.com](mailto:info@whistlekick.com) and you'll get a free thank you pack including some great stuff shirts, stickers,



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