



Episode 276 – Sensei La Royce Batchelor | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey and welcome to whistlekickMartialArtsRadio, episode 276. Today we're joined by Sensei La Royce Batchelor. Thanks for stopping by and my name is Jeremy Lesniak I'm your host for the show I'm the founder of whistlekick and we're the ones that make the great quality sparring gear, the fun apparel, training accessories and so much more. Seriously if you saw the piles of products that we have in development right now it is well it's out of control and expect in the next few months you will see quite the roll out of new items and I'm so excited and I wish I could talk about them but I can't. What I can talk about though, how is that for a segue? I sell the great stuff that we've got going over at whistlekick.com you can find the show notes for this and the other episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You can check out martial arts calendar, you can check out memes you can check out martialartspodcast.com we're just every couple months we turn out a new idea, we spin it into a website or a product just something because it feels like we want it and we expect that some of you out there will want it too. The hub to find all that stuff really is whistlekick.com and of course the newsletter, if you sign up for the newsletter we're gonna send you an email once or twice a month, honestly that's about it, once in a while we'll do three or you know around the holidays we might send you a couple of extras, discounts or something like that, we do send you discounts once in a while but we're definitely not gonna spam you we were absolutely not going to sell your information to anybody. Let's talk about today, today on the show we have an incredible martial artist,



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somebody that I was fortunate enough to speak with twice. Some of you may recall recently we had a number of episodes go belly up on us and today's guest was kind enough to come back and record again for what honestly became a better episode a better conversation than we had the first time. An academic mind can be both strength and a weakness in martial arts, some may find a martial arts education easier than a conventional school education while others find it the other way around. Our guest today is one who has seen success in both worlds and even borrowed from the traditions of one to expand their teachings or the other. She is both Sensei and PhD, Sensei La Royce Batchelor and we can say that she feels equally comfortable and even benefits from her time in both of these worlds. Her story telling is compelling and entertaining so let's welcome her to the show.

Hey Sensei Batchelor, how are you?

La Royce Batchelor:

I am actually just La Royce is fine.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh well didn't we talk about that when we talked before in the reason that we kinda strung on that formality into this? I don't know if we talked about it

La Royce Batchelor:

I think same thing I get whenever I see a Sensei it's says how are you today Sensei yep.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And on a personal level you know I appreciate that and if we were you know we we're in the same realm I would accept that I would call you by La Royce but on the show, it's funny because one of the goals of the show is to appeal to as broader group of people as possible and I don't think anybody's gonna get offended if we're using formal titles in the introduction but there are people that would and it's so silly that we but there are people that would if we didn't you know.

La Royce Batchelor:

Probably

Jeremy Lesniak:



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All the majority of the time when I meet someone even in a martial arts environment it's you know hi I'm Jeremy and I saw someone recently and I did that and I introduced myself and I watched the wheels turn in their head because they were so unused to the group of people we were in. Everyone introduces themselves by title you know I was like I'm GM so and so and it's fine but this person like I can I watched the wheels turning and they didn't know what to do so they introduced themselves as Master and then last name and then I was like cool nice to meet you. It's a weird world we live in, isn't it?

La Royce Batchelor:

No, I understand that I have a lot of the, I have a lot of students who aren't quite sure how to address me so I have a core that I have had in university classes and I've also had in karate classes and I've also had in speech and they call me Dr. Sensei Coach.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's fantastic, I love it. Takes a little bit to say but...

La Royce Batchelor:

It's endearing

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah well great well, how are you?

La Royce Batchelor:

I'm excellent, I'm sorry to hear you had technical difficulties.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I know it was kind of the worst and listeners you know most of them will likely know what happened because I did an episode just a very quick couple minutes to say here's what happened because for the first time in 3 years we didn't have an episode and there were 5 lined up and Skype updated something that it messed the whole thing up and it look like it recorded and it recorded you know what have we talked for a little over an hour recorded an hour of silence.

La Royce Batchelor:

Although that would have been an excellent meditative practice.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

It could sure, I don't know if that's really our jam but you know we could do meditative episodes where we just drop them out in the middle and you have to learn to accept that this is what's happened and breathe but of course we discovered that 36 hours before I went on my first vacation in 4 and a half years.

La Royce Batchelor:

Great

Jeremy Lesniak:

Which kind of reinforced me the need for a vacation because I start, my first thought was well maybe I shouldn't go.

La Royce Batchelor:

Oh no

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and then there were a couple people that said you're insane, you need to go and everyone was you know we got some feedback people were very understanding and no one yelled at me so it was fine.

La Royce Batchelor:

Yes, I heard that I heard the episode and I thought you know that's actually a really interesting perspective 06:39 that I know too many people who will not admit that something happened something that they could not foresee has happened or that it has affected their productivity 06:50 and they won't admit it though they'll make all manner 06:55 but won't admit they didn't see that coming

Jeremy Lesniak:

And that was my gut reaction initially was to just kinda pretend nothing happened and then I realized they wait a second, we're being dumb don't be dumb, bad things happen it's okay you're human, embrace it. But I thank you for your willingness to come back and talk to me again and you know it on a personal level you know I enjoyed our first conversation but now you know who knows maybe this will go even better because we've talked before.



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La Royce Batchelor:

Indeed.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you know quite often we'll just kinda we'll have kinda some pre-chat and then launch into the show but it almost feels like we're in a good place so I kinda wanna just move forward from here and not edit any of this if you're okay with it.

La Royce Batchelor:

I'm 07:50 okay with that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool right well you mentioned and this might be a good way to give the listeners some context, you mentioned that some of your students call you Dr. Sensei Coach? You wanna unpack each of those for us and let us know what's going on on these 3 parts of your life?

La Royce Batchelor:

I don't know how it happened I love my students, I love all of my students and I become very interested in their success and as a probably more of a reciprocal kind of a relationship they want to be more engaged in the things that I do so I have had people who were students in my classes at the university level and find out that I also teach Shotokan karate so then they want to take those classes as well and very often I refer to my experiences in karate as one of the sources of strength and tenacity in pursuing a doctoral degree so then they become very interested in that linkage. The other part is that I also coach speech and debate and but I never get to a place of impassioned debate it's always very critical it's always very calm and very analytical and I can argue pretty much any side and looking at that the students also became very interested in well how do you do that how do you not making me passionate how do you see someone else's perspective so easily and I say well it's because it's speech and debate so then they become involved in forensics or speech and debate and there was a crew probably of about 5 or 6 in my 30 years of teaching who have come on board with all of the things that I do and those individuals have taken to calling me Dr. Sensei Coach.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love it, I know that's fantastic. I did a little bit of speech and debate in high school and had a great time with it and you know one of the things I remember going into tell the debate



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coach my mother's not really fond of this because now some of these silly things that she wants me to do just because I'm able to articulate why I shouldn't do them and she's not happy about that and he said in his you know 20-30 years of coaching debate that was the number one reason students left that parents didn't like it made the students better at arguing.

La Royce Batchelor:

Indeed yes, or better at articulating.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah

La Royce Batchelor:

The fallacies of the argument being presented.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Exactly, yeah where's the connection between the 3? Is there a connection between the 3 if you're that interested I mean I can see a connection between any of the 2 but do you draw a thread through all 3 of those?

La Royce Batchelor:

Yeah absolutely I think the thread of all three is mindfulness and compassion or empathy so I have to in my teaching I have to be mindful of the students who are in front of me. I actually on my email and it's on my resume, teach the student not the course and I think far too many people are very proud of their power point and they parade out their expertise but forget about the people in front of them that is also the key to effective argumentation and debate is to be able to put yourself in the other person's position to understand the information to which they have access. The position and values that they place on a particular issue and then that's also the case in karate we move as our opponent moves as the nijukun would say so you have to be mindful and present and compassionate toward your opponent at any given time and that aids your practice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, of these 3-academia speech and debate, martial arts which one came first for you?

La Royce Batchelor:



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Well I've been I would say speech and debate, I've been doing speech and debate since junior high. We did grammar and argumentation and analysis of current events around the dinner table for fun, my and sport my father was an English teacher 47 years actually he's 85 and he still teaches he is 12:17

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, it's cool

La Royce Batchelor:

But it doesn't matter if you agree or disagree with him as long as you can articulate and you have appropriate supporting materials he will entertain any position and I think that's where speech and debate started but also my love of research and academia and then I became an academic. In 1992, I started teaching at the University 12:48 1992 but I was a late comer to martial arts only joining after my son my oldest son became very frustrated with team sports and a student again someone who called me Dr. Sensei Coach but Sensei came later for him he gave us free membership for my son and as I was sitting there and my son was taking classes anyway I thought I can do this I can do this so we started training together and I have to admit it elevated both of our training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hmm did you ever I mean were you training in the same classes as your son?

La Royce Batchelor:

Initially no, initially I would train with him in the kid's classes or he would train in the kid's classes and I would train in the all levels but very quickly our Sensei 13:40 saw that my son approached it not as a child in an athletic activity or a recess activity but he saw it very much as a martial art and he invited my son at the time to join the all levels class so then from that point on we trained together in all classes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What was that like? Training with family members I mean some and I guess let me tell you why I'm asking that question? I did not have the best of experiences working out side by side with my mother and I've known plenty of other families where it didn't always go well that the ability to separate roles could be challenging but yeah, I know other families that they say it's been one of the best thing for them it's brought them closer together and some schools even designed some of the format of their classes around bringing in families, what was your experience?



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La Royce Batchelor:

Well we learned very quickly that we would train harder with each other than we would with other people because we knew where the other person's I knew where my son's physical edge was and he knew where my physical edge was so we were able to push each other in a way that we wouldn't push other people so it came from a place of I think a deep mutual respect and we still have that today he will still push me and I will still push him and we do train together. It aided him tremendously he became a United States marine and that training aided him tremendously he was able to not only learn 15:26 the marine for martial arts program very very quickly and very well but he was also able to achieve a mental state where the constant delusion from drill instructors did not debilitate him mentally or emotionally. He was able to keep 15:45 to him during that so even today we're still very much partners in training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what was it like after the class you know the drive home or around the dinner table on another evening, were you talking about martial arts or avoiding that keeping it within the dojo, were there rules I guess?

La Royce Batchelor:

I wouldn't say there were rules we were mindful that other people did not train so when we were with people who did not train that was not something that we decided to speak about exclusively because it would exclude others from the conversation but on the ride home or the ride to or when it was just the 2 of us or in other group situations we very often would talk about okay what did you get out of that class, here's what I got out of that class here's my questions, can we work on this together, when do you think you know where do you see this and this kata, where do you see this you know so we did 16:52 concepts and ideas and evaluations of each other quite frequently.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you think that brought you closer together? Sharing that with your son?

La Royce Batchelor:

Absolutely and I think with my debate background we were able to look at training in a very different way one of this is useful if a Sensei says do it because we've always done it that way that was insufficient and we would talk about that and we would talk about alright so what is an appropriate answer and that actually guided our choices with whom we trained and I think for him that also guided him of many of his choices.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

As we talk about these 3 elements of your life that are connected and overlap I'm kind of envisioning this venn diagram how has your martial arts helped you in your non-martial arts instruction I mean we'll lump speech debate and you know academic under that heading instruction and how has your non-martial arts influenced your martial arts?

La Royce Batchelor:

Well I think I'll start with the non-martial arts first and how it has influenced my martial arts. My academic background and my passion for research has fueled a voracious appetite for all things martial arts I have a huge library and I'm always when a Sensei says are there any questions I always have questions and I always have I've been told I have very difficult questions because I've spent a lot of time thinking, I've spent a lot of time practicing, I've spent a lot of time sort of analyzing it so from an academic perspective as a student I bring that mindset into the class when I train. When I teach I take that same approach as a professor where I break down what it is that I want the students to learn and I break into its smallest components so that I can bring them along step by step and I can see at what point by watching the students in my karate classes I can see at what point they finally put it all together and what's that critical mass oh I get it now I get it I have to so I would say I use my academic training quite it's quite invasive into my martial arts. The other way around on my martial arts training into my academic life there was a huge shift that occurred in me right after I acquired my first Dan and in that same year I call it my fear factor year cause in that year I ran a marathon I rappelled 19 stories I ate live crickets for charity and I started the PhD program so I call it my fear factor year but it was acquiring my Dan and knowing they I can do this that sort of fueled a lot of other huge leaps and advancements in my academic and personal life and in my career in pursuing a PhD and rigorous research, the idea that you know this idea we chatted last time this idea we want more when a lot of my classmates in my doctoral program were saying no I'm done, I'm done I always had it me well I can do one more, I can do one more. So, I can do one more article I can do one more class, I can do one more year and that's how I made it through my doctoral program.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I have to say of the 4 things that you rattled off rappelling 19 stories running a marathon starting your PhD and eating crickets, the eating crickets one I'm thinking oh easy over and done with that's the one that I think I would do over and over again before any of the others, truth. How often do you refer back to that first Dan test to that transition? It's something I hear a lot of people talk about with regard to martial arts that that step that reflection it sounds like it's something that you bring into your day to day?

La Royce Batchelor:



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I do bring it to pretty much every time that I teach every time that I'm in a project, the reason I do that is a lot of I see it in a lot of instructors that they create a lot of mysticism and a lot of fear around that Dan exam. My instructor did just the opposite he 21:52 to fight it all he said I'm gonna tell you all of the answers to the test and what's more is I'm gonna show you all the answers to the test the problem is me showing you the answer is just nothing. You still have to go out and be able to do it, you still have to be able to incorporate everything that I'm telling you into a test that is gonna be an hour and 15 mins long with extreme 22:12 emotional and physical activities so you still have to be able to do that. So, I think I look at that in that particular day I can remember pretty much everything of that test and in any given moment of that test there is something that is more generalizable that I can use in a daily basis. So, when I had to fight I had to fight a man who dramatically outranked me and was a national sparring champion so that whole idea of stepping into the ring against someone who is younger stronger faster outranks you I could have been easily been daunted and discouraged but I walked into that and said okay this is it is what it is this is my opponent move as my opponent moves and watch for my opportunities so that's daily life, that's driving in traffic. So, the demands of the test also of being able to remain mentally calm when you're sort of doing his laundry list of things that you know that you've done wrong there's oh I did that wrong in that sequence of I did that wrong in kata that was I can do better. So keeping this sort of laundry list of what went wrong I suddenly realized in that test was unhelpful so I refer to that almost on a daily basis, mistakes are in the past and they're unhelpful so I would say I used all of the elements not only that Dan exam but all the subsequent Dan exams I use them daily and my last Dan exam my sensei Yutaka Yuguchi he's 84 he survived Hiroshima he's was one of the original 6 sent out from JKA in Japan by Funakoshi to spread Shotokan karate to the western world. He was conducting my test and afterward he came up to me and he extended his hand and he congratulated me and then he pulled me close with the hand that he was shaking and to put up his other finger and said remember you are not bull because I don't retreat I'll take the punch I'll take the kick and I will advance but that's not he's trying to remind me that I have more in me than just a determination to go forward, there's a strategy that is the next level of my training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Have you always been that way that bull moving forward this has been a difficult transition to wrap your brain around doing it differently?

La Royce Batchelor:

Yes, I have always been you know full speed ahead down the torpedoes. I conquer anything that way that with in my belief with sufficient force determination and perseverance any brick wall becomes rubble. That is not necessarily the best approach you know a better approach might be team work and we scale over that wall the best approach might be take a step back and see what other tools might be available there might be a door somewhere



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else on that wall that I'm just not seeing. So yes, that was a little piece of enlightenment that I am still chewing on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As you look back over your time in your training what's the story that you would tell us your favorite story from your time?

La Royce Batchelor:

Oh, so many.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There always are and martial arts leaves us with no shortage of stories and that's why I love asking this question because it so often people have to you know chew threw and when we've had people on multiple times the stories are completely different stories or I'll meet someone and they'll tell me a follow up and you know here's the real version that I couldn't quite tell you on the air because of you know these details that weren't appropriate it's just amazing the stories that come out of martial arts.

La Royce Batchelor:

Absolutely and I think you and I had discussed this before but there is this perceived division between sport or a tournament karate and what some people would call traditional karate that division I think I saw it during one Dan exam 2 years ago there was a national actually world champion in Shotokan karate and he was testing for I forget what Dan maybe 4th Dan or 5th I don't recall a young very athletic and he had the classic bounce and evade sort of an approach to sport karate sparring and Yuguchi Sensei 27:38 wise man so we're in this tiny room in South Dakota and there had to be probably 50 to 60 people sitting around on the floor and 27:52 watching his Dan exam and I was there with one of my students who was getting ready to test for his new Dan cause he was very interested in watching the Dan exams and as the kumite portion of the exam comes up Sensei Yuguchi calls out another sport competitor to spar against this Dan candidate and you know they bounce and they go in and they have their reverse punch tags and you know evade quite effectively and they spar for quite a while both of them sweating profusely and Yuguchi Sensei ends the sparring, this sport competitor he steps back and Yuguchi Sensei calls up another one another individual that does a lot of tournament and again they start sparring and there's a lot of this you know sort of jab reverse punching and the balancing and they staying just out of range and it's a lot of time evading each other and again it goes on for quite a while now they're both red faced and breathing quite heavily and this is I'm watching this and say this is very interesting we have to fight multiple opponents when we get our



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dans and I'm wondering where this person's athletic edge is and I'm watching it for other things such as as an instructor what is it that the Yuguchi is seeing what is that the other instructors are seeing and I'm you know sort of watching all of that different levels. Yuguchi separates them and he brings up a third individual not quite so sport karate but still you know very much that sort of jab reverse punch or you know front snap kick kind of an approach to martial arts in and out and couple of tags and yuguchi separates them and you know so far the person testing for Dan every opponent they've had has been similar in age and similar in rank and similar in training and similar in fighting style and the next moment Sensei calls up a very senior ranking sensei in our region John Harter who's fantastic by the way he's absolutely fantastic individual, amazing Sensei but he's very very old school so he well walks up into the ring and he bows and Yuguchi sensei says John John glasses oh yeah he forgot to take off his glasses. So he takes off his glasses and he 30:37 and he walks up to me into the ring and stands there in 30:43 the ready position and then he say you know 30:46 begin and the other the Dan candidates starts you know bouncing around and getting distance and then backing up and John is just standing there very still in 31:02 position blocks when he needs to but he hasn't moved his feet 31:06 he's just very very still and everyone in the room is just sort of like what what what what's going on? and John takes 2 very small steps forward and very slow very deliberate waits waits and the next thing that we know there is this loud thwack and this Dan candidate is laying on the floor looking up counting ceiling tiles and everyone in the room is oooooooh there is this audible gasping and you know and yuguchi sensei says continue continue so the Dan candidate stands up and sort of shakes it off and he's like oh okay he starts back at it bouncing around and you know try to jab reverse punching John just fairly easily and you know adeptly you know evades it no big deal he doesn't actually move very much and he waits and again he takes one slow step forward and another slow step forward and then thwack this Dan candidate he swept this Dan candidate he's looking up the ceiling tiles again well now this Dan candidate is a little confused Yuguchi sensei is just smiling ear to ear and he says continue continue so the Dan candidate gets up again and he's like I he clearly does not know how to spar with this karate approach he just can't figure out how to engage so he goes back again to the sort of bounce bounce bounce jab reverse punch but John again one slow step forward and the other slow step forward sweeps him again thwack and yuguchi sensei now is sort of giggling a little bit he says he's enough he's enough and he separates the two of them and he is speaking to the Dan candidate and he says your sport karate training is effective indeed but is incomplete. So he was trying to make the point that while sport karate training does wonders for you athletically there is a level of understanding that that individual should have at that Dan level that he has not acquired and it perhaps learning from someone like John Harter is the next step in his training and afterward everybody was just talking about oh my gosh did you see that test and they were talking about how calm John was and how he just swept him you know he didn't even punch him he just took him to the floor 33:35 full point right so that became a sort of conversation for the next few months about how a sport karate and self defense or



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self-preservation karate are not necessarily are polar opposites they require each other but the pursuit of one to the exclusion of the other is a disservice to the martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And how have you taken that in to your future?

La Royce Batchelor:

I approach it probably as Funakoshi Nakayama approached it I do tournaments I participate in tournaments I spar I do katas we have nationals in Canada in May it'll be in Quebec city and then we have nationals in the United States in Sioux falls in November I will attend both tournaments I will compete in one everything I can do at those tournaments I do and I do it expressly with the idea that I would never ask my students to do something that I am not willing to do myself and I think there comes a point for a lot of people when they start to avoid competition whether they think they're going to get 35:01 or they think you know they're above that or their talents are best used in another way and I think bringing all that you are to a tournament is also part of your training. I have been accused of not doing sport karate so when I spar I am very seated I am very still I am very patient but that has afforded me tremendous success to date so it's something I do tournaments and I do what other people would consider to be sport karate but I reconcile it with a more traditional and mindful approach of service.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As long as we're playing by the same rules it gives you the flexibility to do what works for you, if everyone is sparring the exact same way it's hard to say it's probably going to be pretty boring and it's going to be really hard to find what's best for you to find your own niche I guess within that space and I think that's an important part of development, don't you? to find where you fit?

La Royce Batchelor:

No, I agree and everyone has a different body type and everyone has a different your brain is wired differently so you see different things when you're in martial arts and I think if we only teach it one way we do disservice to the other students who come to us for a variety of reasons. So and I do train broadly I've trained with the great many absolutely fantastic Sanseis from so many different organizations and there are sometimes that I'd disagreed with what they taught but when you're in the class you suspend your own judgement and you say I'm just going to absorb what they're teaching and the later in your own training you play with those concepts and you see what works for you and what doesn't and the that becomes part of your martial art it becomes part of your approach to how you train but I



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think to say oh I'm not that's not the correct way that's not the way it should be done well why well just caused it's not well that's doing many many practitioners a disservice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've never been a big fan of the right way there can be a better way but I think it depends on what's important to you the way I trained for a competition versus personal development versus strength versus honoring the tradition of a particular instructor those are all different and I'm okay with those being different. When you look over the people who you've trained with and under and perhaps even the folks that you've taught who would you say has been the most influential on your martial arts?

La Royce Batchelor:

Oh, tough question in terms of the people I've taught I'll start there the first individual that I trained to black belt that I trained to Dan his name is Paul Reagan. He was and he's an amazing martial artist and he aided me when I was testing for my dans even though I outranked him and he needed to learn to not go easy on me because I was substantially older than him or easy on me because I was his sensei so he learned to go as hard against me or harder against me than he would against other individuals and I think that reminded me that I am no different than anyone else with whom he trains and that I think was an absolute fantastic lesson for both of us and he and I still talk about the past. Training with I would have to say my son he and I still have conversations about basic basic techniques and approaches we have conversations about the application of different techniques was whom I've trained under the most influential of course would be my Sensei Yutaka Yuguchi, an amazing individual absolutely phenomenal. He in all the time I've trained with him he's never stirred me wrong he has often said things that were difficult but said in such a way that you understood that he truly cared not just about how you were doing as a student but how you are as a human and he to this day he's my touch stone I often will seek out his influence and his advice. Another individual would be Phil Herras, Sensei Phil Herras now he's a different organization WTKO but he was one of my Senseis and to me he's the epitome of what a Sensei should be. He is calm in his approach but he incites a certain level of desire to accomplish, desire to master in his students that I have seen other senseis attempt but they try to do it through fear intimidation and you truly want to learn what Sensei Phil is trying to relate so he brings to his students a certain crispness a speed and a snap and an accuracy that I have not experience in training with other individuals. I've trained broadly so my Sensei from the dojo who trained me directly Ron Porath he was always very encouraging and his responses was there are so many different ways to run a dojo, don't think that there is a single recipe, find what works for you and your students and your location and then that's your recipe you don't think your dojo has to look like so and so's dojo or so and so it needs to look like those people 41:45 those people so I still use that today as my dojo grows and changes I remember that it's their dojo.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

How has that recipe changed in your dojo?

La Royce Batchelor:

Well

Jeremy Lesniak:

What different now versus you know early days?

La Royce Batchelor:

Well when we first started out it was a very small group of 6 or 7 individuals and it was more communal training. We trained together and I would take them through and prepare them for their test and but now we're a decade later and we've had I can't tell you how many students and many many many you know national medals and all of that so now I rely very heavily on my senior ranks and my senior ranks are amazing individuals they bring all that they are to class and now it's an inclusive community it is a community where we hold each other to a higher standard. Our primary administrator is Karen Katronack who is preparing for her first Dan exam. She keeps everyone right on task, she keeps everyone to a schedule and right on time and she keeps everyone mindful of where they are and what needs to be done. Dusty Larson who's also a first queue he keeps everyone mindful of the spirit of karate, this idea of one more and all that one wasn't perfect so we'd really have to do it again and it's okay that we have to do it again, that's the whole point. So, he keeps everyone very mindful of the spirit of karate and then Mohammad Mahmud is also a first queue and he keeps and he's our cheer leader he keeps everyone excited to come back to class again and again and again and he's the one just gotten us in front of media and he is our champion in terms of PR and marketing. I used to do all of that myself and I have to admit it is a much much better recipe when you have senior rank that can bring who they are to those rules and all it creates an environment of inclusion that is very difficult to do if you're doing it all by yourself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Pretty much everything is easier when you have the right people around you isn't it?

La Royce Batchelor:

Yes, it is, it is.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

The wrong people of course 44:40 they do stuff on their own but when everyone's on track when they're unified when the goal seems clear yeah it sounds like you have a wonderful team there with you it's fantastic. Now if you if we could bring someone into that dojo with you someone to train just for a little while someone from anywhere in time that you haven't trained with who would you train with?

La Royce Batchelor:

It's a really hard question because I if someone is living and I wanna train with him I go train with him, so Ian Abernathy or Gary Swane or James Fields I'd find a way and like I go train with them and so I think the one that remains would be Nakayama and Nakayama fro he died before it became international Shotokan karate federation it was still JKA at the time, Japanese Karate Association, Funakoshi's first and most prolific student because he saw that the kata is the encyclopedia and all the answers are there but all it is is a reference you still have to pull out all of the components you still have to practice all of the components and put them into 46:01 you still have to practice those opponents or those components with an opponent and that becomes kumite. I recently was a you'll forgive me listening to another podcast.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's quite okay.

La Royce Batchelor:

And this individual is talking about the 3 Ks Kata Kihon and Kumite and how all of these are separate in most martial arts and one of them contribute to each other and I found myself vehemently disagreeing because they are intimately linked and it isn't a shame that individual have not experienced to be the marriage of those three things in his own training, what a tragedy and so I I would say Nakayama because he saw the interconnectedness of everything that is involved in martial arts and I think because of time because we no longer train 8 hours a day everyday people no longer, very few people anyway don't they don't make this their path, they you do have to sort of choose you have to choose you know what is going to be the 47:19 hole that you've climbed down if it's going to be kumite or if it's going to be kata or if it's going and I think that the interconnectedness of all of them and including the spirit of Shotokan karate all of those incorporated in a single lifelong path I think that is probably the most important thing I still have to learn from him.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Valuable lesson, now we talked about competition, we talked about it as something that you still do, something that I don't know if you necessarily expect your students to do compete but I think I heard you say that, so I wanna talk about the why, because competition is something that is a bit polarizing on this show and I've got a feeling I know where you're gonna go I'm not gonna tell you where I think you're gonna go but talk to us about where competition fits in for you as both a martial artist and a martial arts instructor.

La Royce Batchelor:

Well the first thing that I tell my students when they come to a tournament and this is before they've competed I tell them you beat everyone else who decided that couch was more comfortable than coming to a tournament and I think that's part a part that we forget that that motivation to sign up that motivation to get up, that motivation to train means that you have already separate yourself from a field of individuals who decided that they'd rather binge watch friends or whatever. So that's the first distinction and the second is that by stepping into that ring whether it's for kata or kumite of whatever it is there is a certain level of adrenaline that must be mastered in order to keep a calm head in order to bring yourself fully into that ring at that moment that closely mimics what would be required in a true altercation or what would be required for the next huge leap of personal growth or what would be required for any stretch of human development and then whatever the judges decide knowing that that judgement is beyond your control and being able to accept it with equanimity whether you win or you lose, realizing the impermanence of that moment, realizing that that judges decision is out of your control is temporary and you will recover so those are the lessons that I tell my students these are the most valuable things about going to a tournament don't and in the nijukun the 20 precepts of life talks about you do not have to win just don't lose and I think that that's an important distinction that a lot of people don't understand you know they sort of slap on this platitude of sometimes I win sometimes I learn okay that is one way of looking at that particular precept but the other part is that I don't have to win I just have to not lose so what is losing and look like and I think it's the clinging to this idea of win or lose this that creates much of the angst around tournaments. As a competitor, it's again stepping into that ring knowing that all of my students are watching, knowing that the people from my region the other senseis in my region are watching and saying no this is about my practice this is about my art this is not about who's watching, it's not about impressing anyone it's about pushing myself to bring the best that I have of my art this moment.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think you said it all right there. I don't even have a follow up I got nothing. Martial arts movies you watching are you a fan yeah, we're changing gears completely here.

La Royce Batchelor:



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Well I oh boy personally I think it should be noted I don't enjoy television I don't enjoy time spent stationary mesmerized before a flickering image so I've never understood being captivated by that sort of 2-dimensional experience so no I don't watch TV, I don't watch movies, that being said every now and again my children do sort of say mom you need to sit down and we're gonna watch this movie together so that does happen. I have seen all the karate kid movies and my visceral response is oh my gosh that's awful. There is you can acquire an appreciation of the choreography particularly there is a sequence in Ip man that was done in one take where he's fighting on a spiral stair case you can admire the ability and the choreography of that moment but I don't you know I don't have a favorite movie I yes I have watched all of the Bruce Lee movies but I you know those are because somebody said you should and I'm like okay yeah okay I'll watch them, do they contribute to my training no, do I admire any of them profoundly as martial artists and people with whom I would like to train no, it is purely entertainment and because I don't find value in that particular kind of entertainment I'm afraid I don't have a favorite.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's okay and right there we learn a lot about you in that question you know you're clearly you are a doer and I'm going to guess that there are probably those around you that have said from time to time would you just slowdown is that a fair assessment?

La Royce Batchelor:

53:45

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alright okay well got your pigeon hole a little bit that and I get that and you know I have times in my life when that is me as well absolutely when you know I roll out of bed and it's coffee in hand and I go go go go go and realize it's 10 o'clock at night I haven't watched TV I haven't stopped I barely eaten because there were things that were more important and that's okay but then you know I'll freely admit there are days I spent on the couch 54:19 How about books then you know you said that you were constantly asking questions so I'm gonna suspect books hold a different place.

La Royce Batchelor:

Absolutely as I said I have a huge martial arts library I trolled used bookstores for out of print martial arts books and then I have several news book dealers who keep an eye out on things for me amazon and audiobooks. My I do have a few favorites, the first one being and I think all martial artists should read it because all martial arts are cousins there's not one that's better or more important than another all martial arts walk the same path and we're all



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cousins and that is illuminated by the book called the bubishi I prefer the McCarthy translation but there are others out there and the bubishi demonstrates but nobody's really sure how old it is but it demonstrates 72 habitual acts of violence and if you look at the 72 habitual acts of violence it spans all martial arts anybody can look at that and say oh yeah that yamazuki mountain puncher oh yeah so you can look at it and see their own martial art so I would say the bubishi is a constant source of information and inspiration for me. The second of course Gichin Funakoshi's Karate Do My way of Life, I probably read that at least once a year along with Yutaka Yuguchi's mind body like bullet. His book mind body like bullet I there are segments in it that are written by other sansas and what I've done is every time I travel I will take that book with me and when I train with anyone of those sansas I ask them to please sign their section of the book and then I reread that section and make sure that I know who it is with whom I'm training and I mention certain parts so I was training with Sensei Jim Fiels who's out in Sta. Monica and I mentioned to him I asked him a similar question you asked me I said how is your life in karate similar to your career in the NFL because he was a national renowned football player and he said you shamelessly flatter me but he signed the book and then we had a long conversation about the difference between athleticism and martial arts so it was fantastic. Probably one of the last favorites one and I make a point of reading these books every year is Teruyuki Okazaki wrote perfection of character and perfection of character is a book looking at the dojokun most martial arts have some sort of oath or recitation that they say at the end of class ours in Shotokan karate is seek perfection of character be faithful endeavor to excel respect others and refrain from impulsive behavior and in his book perfection of character he hasn't looked at each of those and outlined how they apply to daily life not just martial arts but in everything that you do. So, each of those books are I read at least once a year if not more often.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've read some of them and sum up some of them, great books I for the same reason you have trouble with movies I have trouble with TVs so I wanna go TV will shut my brain down, books I've started doing a lot with audio books and fortunately a lot of the great martial arts books are not out there as audiobooks although it I just got a Facebook message from my brother recently that he found Zen in the martial arts on audible, so he's digging into that. Yeah, let's talk about the future, you are very clearly passionate about martial arts passionate about training and teaching and it doesn't sound like that's changing. It sounds like if anything that passion has grown, my question is why what is it about your training and what you see as you look out into the future for you as a martial artist that has you excited?

La Royce Batchelor:

I think it has to do with when you get your black belt it's the beginning, it's not the end goal it's the beginning it's like getting your high school diploma. Now you get to go out and truly explore what it is that you love and it doesn't matter how much I train or with whom I train or



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how many questions I ask, there's always more, so when I got my doctorate it was okay you're now a doctor off you go and while the research continues there's nothing after that, there's not another doctor unless I completely do a different discipline unless I do a whole other academic pursuit but in martial arts there's always always another Dan, there's always another specific style or something about a kata that can be unlocked there's always someone that illuminates something in your training so it is a constant source of fascination every time so I do my katas, I do every kata I know twice a day every day and just today I was doing a kata called wankan which is king's hat and then during this kata and I suddenly realized oh my goodness there's something so incredibly interesting in this turn so I did that turn about 30 40 times and then did the kata again as a whole and it changed the way not only I do that kata but all of a sudden I wanted to do all of the katas again and see if that same tweak that same understanding of that turn applied to other katas as well so it's just because it's never ending and because it's continually interesting and because it's such a source of piece people have said it's the fast path to Zen and I think every martial artist has experienced that when you're in class and the monkey mind stops because all you can think about is the next count all you can think about is one more, all you can think about is that moment and with that comes a tremendous source of peace so I think that is why I will always train.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And if people wanna get a hold of you, whether that be social media or maybe email or they're coming through North Dakota or something you know how would people you know get in touch with you?

La Royce Batchelor:

Hisshou karate that's H i s s h o u Hisshou is available on Facebook also Instagram and also on twitter, the easiest thig is put in UND karate University North Dakota Karate and we pop up all over the place so we pop up in news media we pop up on social medias so that's probably the easiest way, for myself again that's probably also the easiest way if people wanted to get a hold of me personally I have a very strange name La Royce Batchelor, I have yet to meet another one with that name so a very quick search and it's easy to find me on all social medias as well as with my institution will show you my professional profile as an academic.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And of course, folks if you're new to the show or maybe you've forgotten whistlekickmartialartsradio.com we'll have the show notes there for everything on this episode, links to sensei's social media website you know that whole the whole thing will be there. I appreciate you coming on thank you so much it's been absolutely wonderful to



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get to talk to you again and I I'm lucky that you were willing to come back and just share an equally wonderful and yet still different episode and listeners I'm lucky because you don't get to hear that other one and I'm sorry for that. But we'll send it out in the traditional way what parting words do you have for the folks listening.

La Royce Batchelor:

Well first of all thank you Jeremy I think that whistlekick is a fantastic podcast and it's one of the few podcasts that truly tries to unite all martial artists because we do all walk the same path and a lot of other podcasts try to separate and try to pull apart I think whistlekick truly does try to unify and I wanna tell you how much I appreciate that and if I had to give some parting words is that there will be times in your training when you think I got nothing else this is it, this is my last one but everybody has one more.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sensei Batchelor is articulate and 1:03:53 which having listening to her more than only asking questions. I admire her dedication to teaching both the academic world and the martial arts world she gives a lot of attention to her students in and out of the classroom and it's an approach that I just find to be common among the absolute best teachers of any discipline, martial arts otherwise so Sensei Batchelor thank you for being on the show today, I had a great time. If you wanna check out the show notes you probably know where those are whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, we've got links we've got photos, we've got 275 other episodes so much going on over there if you haven't been lately check it out and I wanna hear from you, you can get a hold of me jeremy@whistlekick.com of course you can give us a shout out on social media we are @whistlekick anywhere you can think of and we hope that you have signed up for the newsletter if not jump on over, do that hope all is well for you in your world and martial arts is making your life even better. Until next time train hard, smile and have a great day.