



Episode 51 – Donovan Barrett | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey there everybody it's episode 51 of [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) the only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists like today's guest Mr. Donovan Barrett. I'm the founder here whistlekick but on the show I'm your host Jeremy Lesniak. Whistlekick in case you didn't know makes the world's best sparring gear as well as great apparel and accessories all for traditional martial artists. I'd like to welcome our new listeners and thank all of you returning fans. If you're not familiar with our products you should check out everything we offer like our sparring gear. We use better quality materials and more reinforcement than what you may be used to. It all makes for a more comfortable and yet durable product, check it out at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). If you want to check out our other podcast episodes those are over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) and while you're on our website go ahead and sign up for the newsletter we offer great content to subscribers and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guest for the show. Now let's move on the episode. On episode 51 we get some time with Mr. Donovan Barrett a WTF tae kwon do practitioner from the Gulf Coast of Florida. Mr. Barrett is an exceptional kicker with amazing flexibility and a great passion for the martial arts. We first met him on social media and after a lot of conversation we selected him as one of our brand ambassadors. While we do what we can to help our partners were not talking to Mr. Barrett or Mr. Donovan as he's called in his dojang because of our relationship with him rather we think he's an exceptional martial artist with great stories and a passion for sharing his passion. It doesn't take long in the episode for you to understand just how much this young man loves what he does. Mr. Donovan welcome to [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com).

**Donavan Barrett:**

Hello thank you for having me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Thank you for being here I'm excited to have you on. You and I have spent a good deal of time emailing of course you know one thing we'll we'll put out there right away so people can see weren't trying to hide anything you are one of whistlekick's brand ambassadors.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yes I am very excited to be.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah and were excited to have you and so we're not to spend the whole time talking about whistlekick of course this is all about you and we want to hear about you and I'm excited cause I'm gonna learn a lot more about you during this process just as everybody listening.



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**Donovan Barrett:**

I'm excited.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So why don't you start the way we ask everyone start how did you get started in the martial arts?

**Donovan Barrett:**

It's actually interesting I actually got martial arts lessons as a seven years old and it was a Christmas present and basically I when I was younger I thought that being a ninja was a viable career so that's what I wanted to be and so my aunt bought me tae kwon do lessons and called them my ninja lessons or whatever so that's how I got started. I'm doing tae kwon do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you remember what it was like being 7 and having your expectations of what ninja lessons would be in getting out to of the dojang?

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah I definitely do and to be honest like it was everything I [00:03:17.09] I was like oh my god.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh really.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah it was like.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah I mean obviously over time on that it was different but when you have no idea what martial arts is as soon as you throw any kind of kick it's like oh my god I'm a ninja you know.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay so started at seven and you know we don't have to talk about how old you are now but there's been a chunk of time in between there, what's kept you involved?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Well it's kind of funny because I've been doing it you know for 12 years now and essentially I went through a long phase where I actually did not like martial arts I like I was going to that teenage phase within like anything you know

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah.

**Donavan Barrett:**

It was kind of interesting because at school I didn't have very many friends and like when I went tae kwon do like even I wasn't into it like that was like my safe place like that was like everybody like me there like I had a lot of friends there and so even when I wasn't necessarily into the martial arts aspect I always love being in the dojang and then what happened one summer I think I just like my my instructor just lost it because he would always like bark at me and say that you have all this talent and over the last couple years you have just like not even like been using it like what's going on and I don't know like my mind I was just like so spaced out into this whole different world and then what happened one day when I was 16 I just a light bulb went off in my head and I went to my instructor I was like I think I want to like be the best so and I think he just like a lost his mind he's like are you serious? And so every summer every day during the summer we got there we trained for two or three hours and got me and that kind of started my fundamentals of where I am today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay, so what did that mean to you then wanting to be the best, how how is that different how is your perspective different you mentioned a lightbulb what was your thought process?

**Donavan Barrett:**

I mean my thought process was that you know I have no direction my life had no idea like what I wanted to do I had wasn't passionate about anything and I don't I can only describe it was just like a random thing it's like you know why this is like always been a place this is something that I could easily be great at on this is something that I teach it has shaped me into the person I am today take this as a foresight out of it take the physical side out of it like my personality derives from the dojang and I was just like



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you know what like I kinda question why I didn't like martial arts I didn't really have a good reason other than I'm [00:05:53.14] and I don't want to do anything so I was like we're gonna give it a shot I just it was really just a spur of the moment thing and then it just became into this like burning passion of mine.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure now what you're describing with being a teenager and feeling some mixed directions in your life and in feeling pulled potentially away from the martial arts that's something that I think a lot of people experience I know personally I experienced that I struggled with staying dedicated to the martial arts especially my early teenage years, was it just your friends in the building that kept you there or was there parental pressure?

**Donavan Barrett:**

No my parents were actually very cool they are the kind of people where it's like you know what if you're not passionate about this you don't have to do it but you're going to do something you know we don't want you just having free time but they were but they were kinda like disappointed that I wanted to quit because I literally was probably a weeks out from quitting martial arts I had my am I had a red belt like I was so close to black belt and I was just like fed up with it and I made it to black out because I was like I'm so close with and I still like I think I'm going to quit and then all of a sudden like literally weeks out the light bulb went off so.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's pretty fortunate yeah yeah not maybe you don't but do you have any thoughts that you would share I mean usually we get to the thoughts and the advice it towards the end of the episode but I think there's a good opportunity here do you have any recommendations for people that might be in that space or parents or instructors of people that are in that space thinking like they may want to quit.

**Donavan Barrett:**

If I was a parent and I had a kid in martial arts who wanted to quit I would do this I would say you're going to make it to your first degree blackbelt that's just gonna happen and then I would I would kind of like go on the Internet and show them some different aspects of martial arts because sometimes what for me when you're in that dojang and you don't have any broader aspect of what martial arts is it's very easy to not appreciate it so give them like show them some like awesome martial artist that are like I doing cool things and stuff like that are different than what he may be doing in the dojang cause that really really helped me like oh this isn't just in this dojang there's like his whole life world of people out there doing this stuff so make sure you don't just trap them in the four walls that they're dojang make sure you know going in and then look up some stuff and that would be my biggest advice for and if you're in that spot I would just say you know like I did evaluate what it is that you don't like about



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martial arts and if you can't really come up with a viable answer then you know I think it time to assess like what maybe you're doing wrong.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure sure know if I could kinda take what you said maybe put a little spin on it see if you agree one of the things that I found in martial arts is that there are so many let's call them segments or sections and for example flexibility is one of your big passions and the kicking that you can do with your flexibility I would say that there's probably some segment of martial arts that's going to appeal to just about everybody.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Right

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So yeah by all means find your niche within the martial arts hopefully there is one.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And keep plugging along.

**Donavan Barrett:**

And there's many different options in martial arts like you know like you said there is something there for everybody.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Without a doubt. So let's get to story time now I'm sure you've got a bunch of good stories I know for a fact that you know some pretty prominent martial artist we've talked a little bit about that so I don't know what you're gonna tell me we haven't talked about it but tell us your best martial arts story.

**Donavan Barrett:**



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Hoooooh there are so many I have a lot of good teaching stories I probably my I think I'm gonna say that my favorite memory might my favorite thing that I've done in martial arts is the teaching story and we have in our judging there is a kid who he had he was born with the complete right side of his brain like not functional at all.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow.

**Donavan Barrett:**

So he you know when he came he couldn't really walk that well. He definitely couldn't jump or whatever he's like when he started he was like four years old so he was in this little peewee class we had and you know basically in that class you just do a bunch of jumping and [00:10:33.15] and he had such a hard time he could not balance on one leg and my instructor actually had him at first and kind of gave him some coordination but I had him and I had him one day and it was just him and his twin brother and he was just you know he really struggled with the forms department remembering you know all the small details I mean as you can imagine a whole side of your brain does not you know like functioning that well.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right.

**Donavan Barrett:**

So I remember just like you know most most of the time we can only spend so much time on each kid because there's other people to get to like you know what I have time with him I'm gonna spend a lot of time with him so I literally just I pulled my instructor and I was like Master Dan I would like to take this kid and I would just like to have him the whole class there's only three people here would you mind taking these 2 while I just take him in the back and the kid you know we probably did the form like 30 times but the kid finally got it and then he passed his test with one of the highest scores in the whole room so that's probably like my proudest moment when it comes to martial art.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh wow so what was it about this kid or this situation that really spoke to you that made you want to give so much time to him.

**Donavan Barrett:**



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Well his mother actually would come into my instructor's office and I would be in there and she would literally like almost be in tears she would just be like you know his brother is function's fine you know he's a little clumsy but he functions fine and I'm so worried that he's gonna fall behind and you know nobody you know take the time and you know he has so much struggle and I'm worried he's not to be or do anything anything anything and his mom would come in the office and have that conversation and honestly like she wasn't in denial about her son's condition but I think she almost should've been in at least not a denial but should have been you know a little bit more trusting that he would get it done because he I mean he's really smart you know he just has you know complications with certain things or just certain things that don't resonate with him and he and so I was like my big motivation was like you know I'm gonna prove everybody wrong I'm even gonna prove his mother wrong and he's gonna come out here and he's gonna have great technique and he's gonna do everything just like everybody else with not with no problem and that's what I set out to do and that's what happened.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So I'm going to guess you have a little bit of a soft spot for the underdog.

**Donavan Barrett:**

I definitely do all the time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay does that reflect back on on you do you see yourself as the underdog or maybe you did it some point?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I mean I've always like I said going to school I never had many friends I also like I said wasn't I felt like I didn't really have a support system for a while so I was always kind of the alone kid so I was just like you know I'm going to prove everybody wrong I'm gonna be this I'm gonna be that and then you know p when I'm successful people are gonna wish that they had been a part of my life before so yeah I've always felt like the underdog and I mean it's a blessing and a curse because when you feel like you're the underdog you always are like training super hard like you're always just like at it at it at it but it does get kind of lonely sometimes but I mean I like that quality about myself to be honest.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Which which quality?

**Donavan Barrett:**





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I like the quality I that I have when it comes to being an underdog I just have this mindset like okay everybody expects me to lose so I'm gonna win.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You like to prove people wrong.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I love proving people wrong.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I can relate to that use that's your fuel when you get out and you're training and say you know what you said I couldn't do this I'm not only gonna to do it with you twice as good as anybody else.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Right.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome well I think that's a great story. So let's take a step into in alternate universe we talked a little bit about who you were in high school when that light bulb went on what do you think your life would be now if you had quit the martial arts at that point?

**Donavan Barrett:**

You know I really couldn't even imagine I have actually I'm in college and I shifted through many different careers I was like oh maybe I'll be a psychologist because even when I was in the martial arts there was a point in time where it was like okay is this even gonna be able to be a career for me you know it's not that there's not much of a track record for ourselves like okay well I got to play it safe so I looked into psychology and I looked in to this I look into like so many different things and like I could not stick with any of it. I did not feel passionate about any of it so without martial arts in my life I feel like I would have no direction I have no kind of line of thinking. I would have no passion for anything I wouldn't have any organizational skills because being a martial art taught me all those things that taught me how to like care about something and care about like something bigger than myself and so without that I would not even be in the same category of the person that I am today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Okay your description of what you might look like sounds like quite a few people that I know in their 20s no direction and things like that.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I bet you know people like that so it kinda goes back to my one-man crusade if you will that everyone knew martial arts at some point cause I think everybody benefits from it.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah I mean I think there my philosophy is you know if you have a child they need to be involved in something you know like just and I mean I think martial to me obviously martial arts is the best choice cause it's gonna develop you as a human being as well as an athlete but I mean just like if your kid is not involved in like something outside of school then they're not going to be they're not gonna have an understanding of like oh well I can do something that I like I like this I can do that and it makes me a better person so I think it's very important that your child like I recommend martial arts but you know at least something you know.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah I agree we are not to a point in time were schools going to provide everything.

**Donovan Barrett:**

No not at all.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

To people so for sure. Alright. Well life is full of highs and lows I'm sure yours is been no different I'd like you to think about one of the low points and how your martial arts experience or training helped you move through it.

**Donovan Barrett:**

For me I mean my my whole school career was a low point to be honest.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Really.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah like I mean like I said I'll it again no friends I also my grades in high school were just awful they did not meet at my what I was capable of doing. I really struggled with finding my voice I struggled with you know kind of being comfortable in my own skin like I hated every aspect of myself from my personality to how I look to my sexuality everything. I hated everything about myself and with martial arts it just kind of in it still is developing that confidence like a few years ago I never would've I never would've started an Instagram account because I didn't think anything that I was doing was good enough I didn't think I would never have like reached out to anybody or I would never reached out to you I would've never reached out to anything that is no something that I would've even been remotely comfortable doing a couple years ago and now I'm at a point where it's like I mean I am so confident in myself that I write is very thin line where I'm not quite cocky but I'm like the step before cocky.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Confident absolutely and I think that that's where most of us as martial artists hope to be you know and absolutely it's a fine line and sometimes you're gonna put a toe over it some of us take a big running jump over at life for somebody else it's better it's gonna push us back and that's always good.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So what talk more about that transition because I think that's something that a lot of people listening may may benefit from.

**Donovan Barrett:**

To be, I mean, I guess I want to be completely open about it. I was not open about my sexuality at all until my senior high school I was like you know first of all I was a martial artist so I was into martial arts before I came out and I was like one of the martial artists there's no way that I can be gay that's just not a thing that happens like you cannot allow that to happen because you know you're supposed to be macho or whatever whatever whatever and then I just realize you know I got to a point where I would just keep training and then I felt like you know what I'm so good at martial arts that anybody who has a problem with me as a person you know they can't say anything because I mean to tell they can do what I can do then you know their opinion doesn't really matter to me so it just got to a point in that transition where I got so good at martial arts that it was like okay I have a talent I have something I'm really good



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at and it's not something that a lot of people can do so it made me feel more comfortable in my skin. I was like I have I found my voice and also just me I hated how I looked I used to have like the worst Acne and I actually I made it worse because I had to take these pills that like gave you suicidal thoughts it gave you you're it is blood tested for liver failure you had to do all of this it made your lips like completely like messed up so it was that bad so I just like I hated looking at myself in the mirror. I hated going to school because I knew I wasn't gonna have any friends and I hated I mean I just like hated every aspect of my life except for going to tae kwon do because I knew I had real friends there and I knew that I had people who cared about me there and wanted me to be successful including my instructor.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay and I don't want to dig too deep into it because it's you know it's a really personal thing but do you think that you coming out was kind of the start of that transition starting on or who you were?

**Donavan Barrett:**

It definitely was like honestly I'm completely open about anything so dig as deep as you want but essentially yes that was the first step and the first person I did it to was my best friend Kendra and she obviously was completely accepting and and honestly didn't I didn't think it help me that much at first I was like okay now what but like once I started doing it to more and more people and then I realized oh my God this demon that I had built up for 17 years isn't there anymore like I can it's it's like taking a 40 pound weight and just like it's finally released it and now it's like I feel like I would not be able to express my strong personality if I hadn't come out because when you feel like you have to restrict 1/3 part and part of yourself and it's like you're always conscious of what you're saying you're always conscious of how your presenting yourself and there's always this double consciousness when you walk around like okay these people are here so I had to talk this certain way and then these people over here acts this certain way there's always that double consciousness in the room and I mean that it's like it's awful I mean it's a terrible experience.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I think a lot of us go through that at some point whether it's your sexuality or something different I think a lot of us as we come through being teenagers and then sometimes far after people don't honor who they are so I think it's great that you are willing to take that step that scary step.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I mean that all the other thing that kept me from doing it was I was also like I also and I still don't I don't want to be known as oh well he's the gay martial artist or whatever like you know like I don't want to fit into that small box so I but I figured out you know how to kind of mold that it's like if you don't make it all about your sexuality then it won't be all about your sexuality you just if you just take the



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steps and you just do your martial arts the best you can and you know don't hide who you are but you don't like go around like exploding at every chance you get then you know it does become about the martial arts you just stick to what you're good at you stick to your talent and you know be yourself and that happened so no one refers to me as that everyone just knows me as being a great martial artist.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're not the gay martial artist you're a martial artist who happens to be gay.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Exactly yeah and that's what I really wanted that to be clear.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well it's pretty darn clear now you just said it. Awesome so I'm sure you had a ton of people that have influenced you hopefully mostly positively through your martial arts career but if you could name well the one or two people who had the strongest influence who would those be?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Oh that's easy definitely number one is Chloe Bruce and number two is Ronda Rousey. Chloe Bruce is number one because she is actually the reason that she is one of the biggest reasons that I didn't quit martial art because like I said I was trapped in that dojang so I thought I was like okay this is tae kwon do this is what it is you got a sidekick he got hook kick you got a round kick great but then I saw her one day and I was just like oh my God like this is what martial arts can be like this is what I can do with these fundamentals that I've gained all these years in tae kwon do so obviously no one in my dojang had ever seen that before they didn't have any knowledge of how to get it's stuff kind of on my own which I enjoy like and I got myself I started stretching I started doing a lot so much research.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let me just jump in for a second for people that are listening that may not know who Chloe Bruce is could you just tell us a little bit.

**Donavan Barrett:**

She is well obviously a martial artist and she excels in flexibility and in my opinion when it comes to basic kicks she is one of the best if not the best. She's also a Sun Devils she was in Guardians of the Galaxy as the stunt double for Gamora and she was actually in the recent Star Wars movie as the stunt double for



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Ray as well as in many other things. She performs she models she yeah so she's kinda paved the way for martial artist that wasn't really necessarily available before so that's yeah that's why.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sorry to jump in [00:24:59.26]

**Donavan Barrett:**

No no no but she once I saw that I was just like okay well if this is what I can do then I then I love this and so I just got to work like I said I was doing so much research on flexibility like read like every I went to the depths of the Internet to find any small bit of information and in reality flexibility is a subject that worst is still where nobody's really all that knowledgeable about it yet like yes we've come a long ways but there's still so much not known about it and so it was like there is very little information out there for me to work with so I just kinda had to like figure things out for myself and I just kept working on it every day and then once I got to that I was like this this is what I want to do like this is the thing like this is what martial arts is to me so I would she she I give her so much credit for the development of my passion for martial arts.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Have you told her?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I actually had a private lesson with her.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh well cool that must have been a dream come true.

**Donavan Barrett:**

It was definitely a dream come true it was one of the best experiences of my life.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome and the other when you mentioned was Ronda Rousey?

**Donavan Barrett:**



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Ronda Rousey yes and you know there's so much press on going on about her right now because she got beat but honestly I what inspired me about her you know I liked her I like that she was actually a real martial artist she didn't start in MMA she was a bronze medalist in the Olympics for judo so I was like she has like a real-life martial arts background so I really like that about her. I really liked that she was confident even if sometimes she stepped over that line we talked about previously to the cocky line but I read what really inspired about her with I read her autobiography and it is my favorite book that I've ever read in it she I mean she's been through it all like I feel like before you judge Ronda Rousey you have to read that book because I mean she has really just fought every second to get where she was now and the reason that she inspires me is cause she gave me this perspective in her book and it was like she described it as this because she after the Olympics she had to live in her car she was homeless because people think the Olympics pays your bills for the rest your life but it doesn't and she was like she had these perspectives she was like you know at one day I['m gonna write a book and this is the part of the book where I struggle and then it's gonna all turn out big in the end and it's gonna make my success story better. So ever since I read that I was like oh my God that's like brilliance so I've been thinking of my training and my life and that way as well and things are hard and like okay this is the part where I go through this struggle and it's all going to be good in the end.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Very well said cool, two wonderful role models and of course we'll have links to Ronda's autobiography and a little bit more information on Chloe Bruce in the show notes over at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) so if anybody wants to check it out there. So start about competition is that an element in your martial arts training?

**Donavan Barrett:**

It's actually interesting because I have recently starting this year I will most likely not be doing any more tournament.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay why not?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Because I I found you know I appreciate them because it's kinda what got me started and you know gave me a direction at first that I was in martial arts to kind I like have something to work toward and I love the traveling but I just didn't really like this theme you know once I kind of fall like all these [00:28:40.20] and like Chloe Bruce and like all these people who are just doing martial arts for the sake of the art I was really really into that not saying that if you do tournaments I cannot remember the art but I really like I didn't enjoy the sports aspect as much as I did the art aspect and what kinda happen was that my



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trainings started to be completely split it's like okay I have to go practice forms over here for this and then I have to do this stuff which is what I want to base my career off of you know the kicking and the flexibility then it just got you know and then I also had college and this and that and it just got to be overwhelming and like everything was starting to suffer so I was like you know what I need to make this decision and so I actually I'm not saying that I won't ever do them again but at this point in my life I am not going to be doing any tournaments for a while.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay tell us a little bit about what you, did you enjoy the them when you you were doing them?

**Donavan Barrett:**

I loved I did love them I really did.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay what was that you enjoyed about them at that time?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Well what I loved about them at the time I guess that it gave me a sense of direction because I didn't have that broad aspect of martial arts before so it just kind of like okay will there's a tournament that's something to work towards that's something that I can be training on until I figure everything out.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It was kinda your niche before you found your flexibility and kicks.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah before I found like my what I was really passionate about and I really you know I met some awesome people through tournaments I mean if you if you're a martial artist I highly recommend at least going to a few tournaments cause you really like get of get to meet some of the best athletes in the country and in the world and I made a lot of friends doing tournament and you know you have a great time because they all share this passion of martial arts like you do when you go out there you compete against each other and you know you're like complete sworn enemies when you're in the ring and then as soon as you walk out your like cool again you're friends so I love that I love the traveling so I mean I did love that about tournaments and yeah so those are my favorite things.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Okay if you could train with any martial artist living or even dead who would that be and why?

**Donovan Barrett:**

I've already trained with Chloe Bruce so that was definitely number one on my bucket list. You know I would love to actually I love the train with the Superfoot Bill Wallace to be honest because he actually you know he does quite a bit of flexibility and you know fast kicking as well but he does it in more of a sparring aspect you know so I would kinda like to like to see some of his movements be kinda like you know what he's doing and for drills and stuff like that so I think I would choose him.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well we might be able to make that happen and for listeners Mr. Donovan is actually about as close to where Mr. Wallace lives as anybody really could be you're a matter of miles away so maybe we can make that introduction and help you out because he is a great guy.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah he seems like an awesome guy I would love to do that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Great so of course you produce a lot of videos for YouTube and I'm gonna guess that you're a movie guy am I right?

**Donovan Barrett:**

It really depends.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Well when I find a movie that I really I watch that movie like 45 times like in a day however it's very hard for me to sit down and watch a two hour movie if it's like new to me you know like I have my franchises that like I love to watch but movie that I can always watch are like action movies like if there's like you know and usually what I'm paying attention to is like oh I wonder who the stunt double for that guy is or how's the technique of his kicks and how's the technique and all that stuff so I can generally watch action movies really easily.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you have any favorite martial arts movies?

**Donavan Barrett:**

You know I don't really have any favorite martial arts movies per se they're are mostly home my movies have great martial arts in them like I like I don't know if you have seen via Netflix especially TV show the daredevil series on Netflix.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah yeah yeah

**Donavan Barrett:**

Like I don't who the stunt double is for daredevil or whatever but that guy is amazing I want to figure that and look him up, because he's whoever he is he is very talented and I also like Guardians of the galaxy Chloe's fight scenes against the other character I thought that was really really well done so yes those are probably my top two picks for that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Those are great and if you like daredevil I don't know if you're restricted to Netflix or if you get broadcast TV but the AMC show Into the Bad Lands

**Donavan Barrett:**

Oh really.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Just catapulted to the top of my list absolutely it's if you if you like good choreography especially with more of a Chinese influence that's the show, it's fantastic.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I that I really love good fight I look for good fight choreography in videogames I look for it in movies I also it's not really martial arts but the one of my favorite choreographed fights is actually the chronologically the third Star Wars movie episode three.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Really?

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah I mean a lot of people I know a lot of people hate the prequels but you have to understand when I saw the prequels I was a young kid so I just thought everything was cool so it's all its very nostalgic for me so even when I watch them today I see pass all the flaws that people pointed out and it's like oh my God they know that the last scene where Anakin was fighting Obi-Wan I was like wow I thought that was really well done with.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm taking a note make sure see if I can find that link too in the show notes yup go ahead.

**Donavan Barrett:**

But yeah that's another because it was like you know I I pay close attention I was the hugest Star Wars nerd growing up like I knew all the names of the ship and all the names of the droids I knew like I knew everything I read the novels and you know you saw a lot of good you know light saber duels in Star Wars but to me it's like the amount of preparation that those actors had to go through that first scene must've been ginormous because it was so fast-paced there were so many like things going on in their environment or whatever so I just like I really applaud them from pulling that together so nicely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure and of course you saw episode seven and I saw your reaction on your YouTube channel to episode seven I know you enjoyed it but did you see the announcement about Daniel Wu in episode eight?

**Donavan Barrett:**

I saw my story about that but I did not hear exactly I didn't read it I don't know exactly was going on with that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

They've said very little and I think we shared that out over social media within the last week or something but Daniel Wu who was the star of Into the Badlands and one of the producers has been signed on for episode eight and he is a tremendous martial artist.



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**Donovan Barrett:**

Oh that's awesome.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes

**Donovan Barrett:**

I think Chloe Bruce has said that she has also signed a stunt double for the next movie as well.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh cool

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah but the only that was my only big disappointment and episode seven and I mean I understand it because you know Ray was like a new Jedi whatever so obviously she's not gonna be like you know destroying the field but am you know they they hired Chloe Bruce I'm like where's my [00:36:05.02] but hopefully they see that in the next movie. I believe that she signed up for the next movie but I can't remember.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well here's to hoping

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah I'm hoping.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So if we push Chloe Bruce over into the realm of non-actor because I'm gonna guess you choose her do you have a favorite martial arts actor?

**Donovan Barrett:**

Favorite martial arts actor you know that's strange I don't you know I like I mean there is none that I dislike you know and I love Jackie Chan because he's hilarious. I love Jackie Chan I feel like that's a very



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broad answer I feel like everybody loves Jackie Chan but you know you can't help but he's hilarious and he's so talented at martial arts I remember I saw him dress up as Chun Li from street fighter that was hilarious.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah I remember seeing that as well. I remember the first time that I saw Rumble in the Bronx it was in theaters with with a couple of my friends opening night and what was that 96 I think I don't know somewhere back there and it just it completely change my perspective on martial arts because here was amazing choreography with maybe not the best plot maybe not the best acting but a sense of humor that I had never seen a martial arts film before.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah exactly that's what I like about it was very modern very well like his movies are generally very modern and I really like that about it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's here here's here's a little bit of trivia for you and of course the episode that we recorded that has this information just came out today it's it's it's a Thursday and we do our third shorter Thursday episodes here's trivia the top four grossing martial arts movies of all time three of them are from the same franchise and your clue is Jackie Chan any guesses?

**Donavan Barrett:**

From the same franchise I feel like it's so obvious.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is it's Rush hour.

**Donavan Barrett:**

Rush Hour really.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

okay the rush-hour movies are are three of the top four grossing martial arts films of all time. Yeah I was surprised that Hollywood puts them in there but you know I guess if you think about there actually is quite a bit of martial arts in there.



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**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah yeah it kinda surprises me okay.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So books we talked a little bit about your love for Ronda Rousey's autobiography earlier are there any other books that have really spoken to you?

**Donovan Barrett:**

When it comes to my reading I mean that's my favorite book when it comes to my reading I don't specifically read martial arts books I like reading biographies about successful people who are doing whatever they're doing so you give me a like you know I am a YouTuber so I have a lot of biographies on YouTube as well so I love those but I don't really my my my taste in books is kinda like my taste in movies I have a really hard time finding books that I like but once I find one I read it like 800 times though.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Really how many times have you read Rhonda's autobiography?

**Donovan Barrett:**

Six.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay wow that's.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Well honesty the way it's organized every chapter is like a quote or like a piece of advice and then you I mean it's like the chapters are a really short so you can just read that and what I like so like I actually keep the book I actually lent it to my friend right now so I don't have it but I usually keep it in my gym bag and whenever it's like you know things get really tough or I'm really lacking motivation I just pick it up turn to a chapter read the quote read a small chapter and then I'm ready to go so it's something I keep with me all the time.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Well six times have you found yourself quoting it to people?

**Donovan Barrett:**

Oh yeah I quote it all.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's type that's like I would do to. So you've had quite the transformation you know from from maybe dropping out of martial arts to becoming inspired and I would say probably even more inspired I mean just in the short time I've known you seemed more impassioned about martial arts and I think that's great but what what are your goals what are you hoping to accomplish within martial arts?

**Donovan Barrett:**

For me well as far as the physical aspect I just am I'm always focused on improving myself always you know getting that kick a little bit stronger a little bit higher I also want to I also would like to expand into learning a little bit different martial arts I like to kinda learn a little bit of judo and I like to tackle a little bit of boxing as well it's about my hands because it's a challenge for me but mentally you know it just to be a better person than I was every day. Every workout I always say that that every workout needs to be better than the one I had before and then career wise my big thing is my YouTube channel right now I would really really like to develop that and eventually I would like to like travel and teach people and perform and I'd like to one they like to start my own clothing line to be honest.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay.

**Donovan Barrett:**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice now you mention your YouTube channel what's the address on that how do people find you out in cyberspace?

**Donovan Barrett:**

My username is Donovan TKD just like my Instagram and you can find it just [YouTube.com/DonovanTKN](http://YouTube.com/DonovanTKN) I spell my name slightly differently instead of D O N O V A N I spell it D O N A V A N so.





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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So should be pretty easy just to find if someone typed your name incorrectly

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah super easy to find and you'll find tons of flexibility tutorial kicking tutorials some blogs and some of my workouts on there and I'm really excited because I'll be posting every Wednesday and I've kind of figured out the direction of what my channel is going to be so I'm really excited for the new year to make that happen.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh great that's awesome of course you're still training and active and are you still instructing at your dojang?

**Donavan Barrett:**

I actually have recently started instructing again what happened is my dojang actually had to close for a month.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh

**Donavan Barrett:**

Yeah because our whole class got bought and so the whole thing got bulldozed down and so they had to close for a month they just reopened and I'm not permanently back there trust me I cannot wait to be permanently back there. I have a meeting with my instructor today actually I just started I taught on Monday and you know it's such you know when you go from teaching martial arts to like stocking shelves you know it just like what am I doing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What's your favorite thing about teaching?

**Donavan Barrett:**

The stories that come out of it like I love one a kid that everybody you know thinks he's such a challenge and then I turn him into something I really like I like it to me every child is like a canvas and it's like I'm



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creating the best masterpiece that I can with each one of those children and a lot of those kids that turned out to be like younger siblings of mine like I know a lot of the kids were so upset because I had to work yesterday and the day before is I wasn't teaching and I got so many texts and phone calls like where are you where are you?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh that's gonna make you feel good.

**Donavan Barrett:**

It makes me feel good I like literally my martial arts like the parents the kids they they are all my family and I love them a lot.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh that's great and you know something I can relate to it me to guess most the people listening [00:43:55.04] train feel the same Yeah. So let's wrap it up you've got any good advice for the people that are listening parting words of wisdom?

**Donavan Barrett:**

My best advice and this is what I this is my advice I've falling recently that if you want to develop a career in martial arts or really anything even if it has never been done before if you believe you can do it then it will happen and I know that sounds cheesy but well I'll explain into a little bit more if you have this mind like I don't know if this is gonna work it's never been done before you're really hurting yourself but if you're just like if you make it to the whether is no doubt in your mind that you will be successful at this then things just start happening I just decided that I work too hard to fail at what I'm doing so it's just going to happen and that's my best advice.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Thanks for listening to episode 51 of [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) and thank you to Mr. Donovan for spending some time with us. Head on over to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) for the show notes with links to everything we talked about today including information on Chloe Bruce his idol that picture of Jackie Chan dressed Chun Li and a video clip from the Star Wars fight scene we discussed. If you liked the show please subscribe or download one of the apps so you never miss out in the future and if we could trouble you to leave us a review wherever you get your podcast we'd really appreciate it. Remember if we read your review on the air just contact us and we'll get you a free pack of whistlekick stuff. If you want to be a guest on the show or you know someone that would be a great interview please fill out the form of the website and don't forget subscribe to our newsletter so you can stay up on



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