



Episode 174 – Sensei Jesse Enkamp | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



## Jeremy Lesniak

Welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 174, and thanks for being here. Today, we get to hear from Sensei Jesse Enkamp, the man behind Karate by Jesse.

At whistlekick, we make the world's best sparring gear, and here on Martial Arts Radio, we bring you the best podcast on the traditional martial arts twice each week. Welcome. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, and I'm your host as well as the founder here at whistlekick Sparring Gear and Apparel. Thank you to the returning listeners, and hello and welcome to those of you trying us on. You can find our show notes at [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com), and that's also the easiest place to sign up for our newsletter. As a thank you, we're going to send you our Top 10 Tips for Martial Artists. It's an exclusive podcast episode. You won't find that content anywhere else, and it's yours free, just for saying, "Hey, I want to know what's going on with you guys." We're not going to spam you. We're not going to sell your address. We're going to send you one, two, maybe three newsletters a month. What do we put in there? Well, we tell you what's going on at our company, we tell you about guests that are coming up on the show, we remind you about some of the episodes that we have, we throw in discounts for our products, and sometimes we put in some kind of original content, you know? We like to make sure that what you get out of our newsletters has value, so we're going to do everything we can to make sure that they're worth your time.



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Do you like your shins? Do you hate clashing shins when you're sparring? I know I do. Now, if you do, you should check out our shin guards. Let's be honest. Shin guards are going to be sweaty, and ours, they are too, but they're less sweaty than the others, and unlike a lot of them, ours stay in place. Not to mention, we put an extra layer of foam right over your tibia - that's your shin bone - so you're sure to survive those brutal shin clashes. At events, I'll demo our shin guards by putting them on and shin kicking door frames as hard as I can. Check them out, [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com).

If you spend any time on social media looking at martial arts content, you'll know today's guest. Sensei Jesse Enkamp is the mind behind all of those wonderful things coming out of the Karate by Jesse camp, and he's as passionate a martial artist as we've ever had on this show. The self-proclaimed Karate Nerd talks about his past, his goals in the martial arts, and why he cares so much about what he's doing. If you've ever wondered what makes this guy tick, you're about to find out. Let's welcome him to the show.

Sensei Enkamp, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Thank you very much.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Thank you for being here. I appreciate it. I think you hold the title so far of furthest guest. We're crossing quite a few time zones to get to you. It's midday here, and evening there, and I appreciate you giving up some of your personal time after work to talk to me.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Thank you very much. I'm actually used to this because I communicate with people from all over the world all the time, so crossing time zones, using the online digital medium is part of my daily routine these days.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Well, good. Then I don't feel quite as guilty for robbing your free time.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Not at all.

**Jeremy Lesniak**



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I'm sure a lot of our listeners out there will recognize your name. They may know you in a couple other ways, and we're going to get into all that as we go on. I like to start in the most basic, fundamental way possible. How did you get started as a martial artist

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Well, you could say it was a family thing for me, and for as long as I could remember, I've always been practicing martial arts, more specifically Karate and Kobudo, the weapons. Because I grew up in the dojo, my parents operated a martial arts center here in Sweden where I grew up, and from day one me and my younger brother would spend our days in the dojo, practicing, playing around with each other, wrestling, looking at the other people practicing different martial arts. It was not just a Karate dojo. We had Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Tae Boxing, all of these different martial arts that gave me a pretty wide base and perspective on martial arts as a whole. But then later on, since Karate was what I fell in love with, I decided to mainly keep up with the karate training and the related stuff instead of the more modern full-contact martial arts that my brother then decided to do instead.

### **Jeremy Lesnia**

Oh, interesting. Now, anybody that's seen your online content knows that you're really passionate about the traditional aspects of Karate. What is it about that that really resonates for you?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Oh, for me, it's not so much about the traditional aspect, but more the contrast, or the way that you can combine the traditional aspect with the modern world, with our ... today's society, because there are some ... You know, there are generations of ... Generations of masters have come before us, and to not use their collective knowledge to improve our current understanding and practice of Karate would be foolish, in my opinion, so that is why I am interested with the traditional side of Karate, because there's so much knowledge there that I think we still have not unpacked, because it has not been properly transmitted throughout the years, throughout the evolution of Karate.

So, the whole idea behind tradition is interesting in itself. What is tradition? A lot of people use tradition as an excuse to do stuff in an old-fashioned or outdated way, but that does not interest me. I'm all about progress, so I use tradition and the wisdom of the past to propel myself forward, and to go into the future with an even better understanding of what I'm doing, why I'm doing it, and how it should be done, in order to progress to higher levels and elevate my understanding and the collective knowledge of people around me as well, because a lot of people don't have the ability to research the old ways or the traditional ways. I have, because Karate is my life. It's not just a sport, or a hobby, or a business, but it is truly my way of life, which means that I have the privilege of, for example, going to Japan, or Okinawa, the



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birthplace of Karate, to do my own research and to be the Karate Nerd that I love to be. That is why I like the tradition, but I'm not stuck in it.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

There's nothing more I can tack onto that. You had my nodding along here. The idea that martial arts can continue to progress, but it's still within tradition because there is so much knowledge there.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes. Exactly, and this is expressed perfectly in the old saying from Japan which goes, "On Ko Chi Shin," meaning, "To learn from the old is to understand the new." If you don't understand history, then you're doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, right? So, there's this other metaphor that tradition is not about preserving the ashes, but about keeping the flame lit, and that really resonates with me.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

I like that. I like that, the way you put that. Here on Martial Arts Radio, all of our listeners know it's about stories. I love martial arts stories. I think martial artists have the best stories, because we get to do things and interact with our friends and our martial arts family in a way that other people don't, and that just breeds such interesting happenings. I'd like you to tell us your best martial arts story.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Wow. You know what? I do a lot of stuff these days, and I don't really stop to think about the stories that I go through, but if you ask me to reflect on a story, there are so many because I not only travel to do research and stuff, but I also compete, and I do seminars, and there are stories from all of these different areas of my Karate life. I would say something that I'm thinking about now that you mention it is in 2014, I organized my first international seminar, and I did it in Germany, because when I did some research, I saw that a lot of my website hits came from Central Europe, Western Europe, and Germany is pretty much in the center, so I decided to do a seminar in Germany.

I had never done a seminar outside of my own dojo before, so I just had this idea, I did some research to see what kind of topics I could cover, how I could fund this whole thing, and I decided to do crowdfunding. A lot of people from different countries around the world decided to help me make this seminar a reality, and in return they would get videos, because I had a professional guy record this whole seminar.



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So, the Karate Nerd Experience happened, and it was a success. I had participants from 25 different countries coming there, and I bet they didn't even know that it was the first time I ever did a seminar outside of my own dojo, and in English because English is not even my first language, so it was a big deal for me.

Anyway, so I'm there. We're doing a seminar. I had a guest instructor from Italy, another one from Israel. I made this whole thing, we had pink belts instead of black belts or whatever belt you had because you had to wear the same belt as everyone else. I had a lot of these different ideas for this seminar, and it was well received, but one point that etched itself in my memory was during one of the sessions we were doing some arm or hand conditioning drills, known as kote-kitae in Japanese. I had this guy from Brazil, who was like 20-something, and then this other participant from, I think it was from South Africa, and they had never met before. This was the first time they ever met. They didn't know anything about each other, but there they stood, with their pink belts on, banging each other's arms like crazy, laughing, crying, screaming, and then finally hugging. That moment told me that what I'm doing is bigger than myself, and it was such a cool memory for me, or moment, that throughout the whole experience from that seminar, that's the one thing that I remember most. That's my story, I guess.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

That's a great story. I felt like I was right there with you.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

I don't know if this resonates with the listeners, but for me, it was a pretty big moment.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

I've got a feeling it does, because I think the universal experience that you talked about with these two individuals who had never met, who had come together because of martial arts, and developed a friendship, but a very different kind of friendship than most people outside of martial arts are able to make, they're experiencing pain with education, with their development, and using each other's bodies to do so.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah, and these guys, they were from separate parts of the world, and the fact that I just stood there and I thought to myself, "Man, I did this. I made these people connect with each other on such a deep level." That bond ... They're still friends to this day, and that was in 2014. That told me that this whole thing about connecting other people, and bringing together like-minded practitioners is such a powerful thing.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**



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I would go so far to say those of us in the martial arts that have the opportunity to bring people together in that way have a responsibility.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes definitely.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

You're doing a lot of that co-mingling, bringing people together, through the work that you do online, and it's work that I enjoy, and we'll hear a bit more about it as we move on. Now, you're the Karate Nerd, as you've referred to yourself. You already said it, so I get to say it now. Hopefully that's okay.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

I love that title, and it's something that ... I myself am a martial arts nerd. I am not THE Karate Nerd, though. I know martial arts, I know Karate is such a huge part of your life, but I wonder if there's anything else that you're passionate about. Are there any other hobbies, or sports, or things that you're active in?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Well, the whole thing about being a Karate Nerd means that I don't do anything else. I'm not a nerd that does Karate. I am a nerd about Karate, and as you know, nerds don't do anything else other than the stuff they're nerdy about, right?

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Yeah.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

That's why I call myself a karate nerd. To some people, it might seem like I'm living a very limited life, like I don't enjoy other stuff. Of course I do, but I enjoy Karate even more. Now, sure, I can go to the movies, I can listen to music, I can do these things that regular people do on their spare time, but I would rather read a Karate book, or write a blog post, or do something else that helps me improve my understanding of this art that I've chosen to dedicate my time to. To me, it's now a natural part of my life, but to others it might seem strange, but the whole thing about



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being a karate nerd is that it never gets boring, because when you're a nerd, you're not just focused on one part of your obsession - which is Karate, right? - but the whole 360-degree perspective, so I'm all about the theory, and the practice, the culture, the language, the terminology, the history, the traditions, the sports science, and you know, practically speaking, kata, kihon, kumite, bunkai, kobudo, the weapons, self defense, all of these things that are in Karate that most people only scratch the surface of. That is why I'm a karate nerd, because it never gets boring.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

When did you first realize that you could be completely, not just satisfied, but enjoy your life if it was end-to-end Karate?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

It's hard for me to say, but I guess when ... Like most young men, when you finish high school, around that age, where people want you to decide what to do with your life, that's when I decided to go to Okinawa, the birthplace of Karate. I started studying Japanese. I studied Japanese at University here in Sweden, then I continued studying in Okinawa, but that whole thing was just an excuse just to get the visa so I could actually live in Okinawa and practice with these masters. That whole experience of living there on my own, trying to survive because nobody spoke English, it was like a test for me to see if this was really what I wanted to do, and the answer was yes.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Whoa. Martial arts gives us this wonderful gift, especially those of us that have achieved a black belt. We're able to reflect on that experience for the rest of our lives, especially when things become difficult. We can look back at it and say, "This is tough, but my black belt test ..." For a lot of us, that's one of the most difficult things we'll experience.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Right.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

In a lot of schools, it's designed to be that way, and I'm proud that I have that to reflect on. I'd like you to think of a time in your life that made you look on your black belt test, or in some other way you used your martial arts experience to get through that tough time.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**



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Well, why not talk about my black belt test, because to me, that was a real test of my spirit, because the whole thing about my black belt test was that there was this Russian MMA fighter invited to our dojo, and I don't know why, but I was so scared of him because he didn't say anything. He was, I guess, this typical Russian guy, just silent, and just walking around with a deadly, killer face. When it came down to the last part of the black belt test, we had something we call [jisin 18:34] kumite, which means that we're basically fighting without any rules. I know this sounds crazy, but you can basically ... If you want to, you could bite the other guy, and do these kinds of techniques, but of course nobody does it, but theoretically you could.

Then, I'm about to fight this Russian dude, and he's maybe ... He has a little bit of grey hairs in his beard, maybe he's like 50 or so, or something like that. I guess I was a young guy when I got black belt, so I was maybe 15, 16. I was one of those kids with a black belt that old dudes don't like because they think they get everything much easier than they have to do because they're so old. Anyway, I'm about to fight this Russian guy, and I had no idea what he could do. I only knew that he was an expert at Jiu-Jitsu, and not the Brazilian kind where you roll around on the ground, but the Japanese kind where you mostly stand up and do these nasty joint locks and things.

I'm standing there. I don't know what to expect or what to do, and I just throw a low roundhouse kick - a gedan mawashi geri in Japanese - and he doesn't even flinch. I just hit his leg and nothing happens. I'm like, "Oh my God. I'm not going to be able to do anything." He had what I would refer to as fudoshin, which is like an immovable mind, like nothing could disturb him, until he decided to do something, and that's when he ... From his super deep stance, he was standing in this, like a front stance - a zenkutsu dachi in Japanese - he throws a mae geri, a front kick, straight at my solar plexus, and my air just ... I had nothing in my body after that kick. It was like a vacuum. I imploded.

Then, immediately following that kick, he steps in, he headbutts me, so I start bleeding. I get a cut right above my eye. Then, with my blood, flowing from my eye, he throws me with a throw known as harai goshi in Judo. He throws me and he immediately catches me in a kesa gatame position, also from Judo. Before he could do anything else, I just tapped out, and I said, "Dude, I'm bleeding," because I didn't want to get blood on the mats, because of course, me and my parents, we own our own dojo, and I know how hard it is to get that blood out of the mats. I just ran out of the dojo, and then I came back later on with some ... When I cleaned up my eye, and continued fighting, but that was a true test for me, fighting someone who was much older and wiser than me, being a kid.

It feels like that's like a metaphor for all of my work, constantly ... not fighting, but having to prove myself to others who are more established, or have more credibility in this whole martial arts world, specifically Karate because, again, going back to tradition, the whole traditional thing is so strong, and people love to do things the way they've always done them, and I like to do things in a new way. So, for me, that's like a metaphor of standing up to the dinosaurs.

**Jeremy Lesniak**





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If you had it to do over again, how would you handle that match, that fight, with what you know now? Would you do it any differently?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah, because at that point, I didn't really understand the concept of softness. I was going ... I was fighting fire with fire. You know, as you get more advanced, as you progress, as you get more experienced, you start softening up, and you realize that you don't always have to go 110%. You can have moments where you relax, when you're more flowing, and then strike with 110%, but I was going all-in. It was all or nothing, and that's why, of course, the stronger man won, because I didn't have that physical capacity that was needed to go all-in against this particular opponent. I would say if I had to do my black belt over, I would try to relax a bit more, and pick my moments where I would go in and attack, and then I would basically chill out a bit more, so I could last longer and have better efficiency and economy of movement.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

You've had the opportunity to train with a lot of people, and a lot of people have been fortunate enough to train with you, of course. When you think of all of the people that you've trained with, and I want to take out whoever you consider to be your immediate instructors - I think that's your parents from the way you've talked about it - who has been the most influential person?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

That is a very good question, because at different stages of my journey in this whole Karate world, I've had different people influencing me. If we start from the beginning, one name that pops into my head is Sensei Hokama Tetsuhiro from Okinawa. I had the opportunity to travel to Okinawa when I was very young, because my parent went there for training, and I've been there now over a dozen times even though I'm still young. When we went there the first time, we stayed at this master's house, which is also his dojo, and he also has a Karate museum in this house.

That was so cool to me because, as you know, it is the birthplace of Karate, and being there and seeing a live master in the flesh, right in front of you, with these huge, badass knuckles, that was like the coolest thing ever to a ... I was like 8 or 7 year old fat kid from Sweden. That was like stepping into a different world. He really influenced me with the way they practiced, and his whole character and his spirit, because like I said, I had never met a real master before, unless you count my parents, but I guess they would never call themselves masters. But people call Hokama Sensei a master, of course, and he is a 10th dan, 10th degree black belt in Okinawa.

Since that day, I went back many times as I got older as well. I even went back to his dojo in Okinawa last year, and he's so proud of me because, I guess, a lot of people visit him but never come back, but seeing how I've grown and my journey, and knowing that he influenced me from



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the beginning, I think, is a big deal for him. It was a special thing when I visited him there last year again, but I have a lot of other mentors and people who have influenced me as well, but the first one, I guess, outside of my own dojo would be Sensei Hokama Tetsuhiro.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

If you had the opportunity to train with someone that you haven't, anybody from anywhere in the world, anywhere in time, who would you want to train with?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Wow. You know what? I'm going to have to go with a very nerdy answer, since I am the Karate Nerd. I would have to go with Itosu Anko. Itosu Anko, for those who don't know, was the man responsible for spearheading the campaign of introducing Karate into the school system back in Okinawa, which of course later on meant that Karate could become a national sport or martial art in mainland Japan, and later on the world as well. He's one of the most underrated guys in the history of Karate.

It would be really interesting to train with him, to meet him, to talk to him, in my best Japanese of course, to figure out what was his thought process when he modernized Karate? How did he change the kata, the forms that we do today, and why did he removed certain techniques in favor of other techniques, and what was his vision for making Karate what it is today, because he's not getting any credit for it. We only talk about the people who came to mainland Japan after him, and they were his students, like Funakoshi, or Mabuni, or their brothers from other styles, and this was before styles even existed. But it would be really interesting to hear what he would think about the way Karate evolved thanks to him, and I guess that he never even saw it coming.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Now, if you've selected him, I'm guessing you've read a fair amount about him, as much as is out there.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah. I've written some blog posts about him.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay, so you're a good person to ask. What do you think he would ... How do you think he would feel about the way Karate, and martial arts overall, is done today?

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**



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Well, you've got to understand that back in the days, the whole original purpose of Karate was self defense, and Itosu Anko was a pioneer, in the sense that he saw a different purpose for Karate. He saw that it could be used as physical education as well, to improve the motor intelligence, of kids especially, by introducing it to schools. I think that probably a lot of other Karate masters at that time in Okinawa would criticize him, because as we know, the original purpose of Karate was practical self defense. It was not about building strong kids in schools. Of course, if you send your kids to you school, do you want them to learn how to kick each other in the nuts and poke in the eyes? I don't think so, and that's why these things had to be removed. It was probably a hard decision for him to do that, but if you want to make an omelet, you have to crack a few eggs, right?

I think that he would think the way we practice Karate today is actually a good thing, because we have both things still intact. We have the practical side of people trying to study the way that you can apply the moves from forms, from kata, in practical self defense, and we've come a long way in that sense, but also people, especially in McDojos, I guess you would call them, practice Karate as a form of physical exercise, to stay in shape, to get fit, to have fun, to meet friends, and there's nothing wrong with that, if it makes their life better and if they get what they're paying for. I think he would be pretty satisfied, because the way Karate has exploded since that time, especially now that it's becoming an Olympic sport as well, is nothing short of outstanding.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I like that. Let's talk about competition.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

We were talking before we started recording a little bit about competition. You're entering the competition season in Europe right now.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

And you compete.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**



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I do.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Tell us about your thoughts on competition, why you compete, and maybe some of your history with competing.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Well, first of all, I want to say that in the Karate world, there seems to exist two camps. One side hates competition. The other side loves competition. Generally we call this traditional Karate and sport Karate, but to me, you should have both. They're just different phases of your development as a complete Karate practitioner, especially if you want to become an instructor as well, because you have to be able to teach both, so I consider them like brother and sister. They should go hand-in-hand. For that reason, I started to compete, even though the way I started to practice Karate from the beginning was strictly fighting. I wanted to be a good fighter. That's why I started Karate, and I liked the whole aspect of having weapons as well, because I love fighting with weapons, too.

I decided to compete because I like challenging myself. Why? Because when you challenge yourself, you get to understand yourself. You see yourself reacting to challenges. How you overcome obstacles tells you a lot about yourself, so it's a way to discover who you are. It's self-discovery and self-development, because you want to be able to face bigger challenges, to compete in the bigger leagues, which means that you have to train not just harder but smarter as well, which means that you start thinking about a lot of things. That motivated me.

After failing, I think, five years in a row, I was finally accepted to the national team, and I started competing internationally, and of course in my own country, but that gave me the opportunity to see the world, and that was before I was a Karate Nerd, you could say, because I didn't have ... I didn't write books like I do today, I didn't teach seminars, I strictly did it for myself, and I kept it silent, because for me, competing is not for others. It's not for trophies, or medals, or getting a pat on the back from someone else. It's about finding out how far I can go. I think Karate should be a highly personal journey, and you should do whatever you like, or whatever you want to do, and if that involves competing, good. If you don't like competing, I think that it would give you even more, because there's probably a reason you don't like it, and facing stuff we don't like usually turns out well, because that teaches you something about yourself.

To me, competing is just a vehicle, or a tool, something I use for a different purpose than just the trophy at the end, because a lot of times, the biggest lessons come from when you don't even get that trophy, when you fail or lose, and you have to look yourself in the mirror and think, "Hey, why didn't that go as planned?" That teaches you a lot.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**



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There certainly is a lot of wisdom in a loss.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

When you win, as one of my instructors used to tell me, when you win, you learn that you did things right. Okay. Maybe that reinforces some of the things that you've done, but when you lose, there is a whole bunch more that you can pull out of that.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

And humans, we're hard-wired to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes. Definitely.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

As the Karate Nerd, I expect that you've seen quite a few martial arts movies.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

A few A few.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Do you have a favorite, or a few favorites?

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Actually, I like the early Kung Fu movies that came out of Hong Kong, I think most of them at least. I'm not really into Karate movies. Of course, the Karate Kid movies, they're classics, but for example, I really enjoyed Drunken Master with Jackie Chan. I think that's pretty much a classic as well. Me and my friends, when I was younger, we used to play that we were in the



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Drunken Master. Then I think another favorite is Iron Monkey, with Donnie Yen. I think that's not as old as Drunken Master, but still really cool. Yeah, those are two of my favorites.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Now, you mentioned Jackie Chan and Donnie Yen. Are they your favorite martial arts actors, or is there somebody else that you haven't mentioned?

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Oh, no. That's Master Ken. Who else?

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Master Ken is pretty incredible, of course. You were fortunate enough to get to shoot with him, to do an episode, I guess we can call it? Yeah.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

I was fortunate enough to get a [\[board 36:17\]](#) smashed through my face.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I enjoyed watching that. I laughed out loud when he took you out. That was good stuff.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah, because like I told you earlier, I had this ... Like the first story I told you about the Karate Nerd Experience. Well, then I kept doing that year after year, and I think about a year ago or so, I actually invited Master Ken as the Secret Sensei, the secret guest of my seminar. I flew him out to Europe, and none of the participants knew that he was the Secret Sensei, and then he came in there and just told us all how this whole seminar was \*\*\*\*\* with the pink belts and everything, and then he started to teach us the truth of his gospel, right, the Ameri-Do-Te. Then, after we did that seminar, we shot this whole fun thing for his YouTube channel as well, which is the video you're referring to, where I'm supposed to teach the audience how to break a board, but he ends up breaking the board on my face instead.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

It was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it. Of course, we've had Master Ken on the show, and that took a while to make happen. For listeners that maybe are new to the show, or haven't checked that out, we'll put some links over on the show notes for this episode. [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com), if you're new. We'll link to the episode with Master Ken, and if



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you haven't listened, there's a surprise in there as, not too far in, Master Ken, Mister Matt Page, and I realized that we actually have a much stronger personal connection than either of us knew until we were in the middle of that episode, so that was fun.

Let's talk about books. You do a lot of writing. You certainly do a lot of reading.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Indeed.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

What martial art ... I don't even know how to phrase this question for you. For most people it's a little bit easier. I would say, "What martial arts book should people read," but I'm going to guess that dozens doesn't even begin to explain how many you've read. I mean, you've probably read dozens in the last few months.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

You know what? These days, I don't even read Karate books that much, because it feels like I read most of them, to be honest, so I try to expand my knowledge into other domains. I usually have this metaphor that Karate is like a mountain, but to see your own mountain better, you have to climb the mountains around it, right? That gives you a new perspective. I try to read a lot of stuff, not just Karate and not just martial arts. If I had to pick Karate or martial arts books, first of all, the Bubishi. The Bubishi, or Wubei Zhi in Chinese, is pretty important because it is the first documented connection between southern China, Fujian Province, and Okinawa, which means that we have evidence or proof that these techniques in this combat manual, this ancient manuscript, were transmitted from China to Okinawa, and lay the foundation or the roots of what would later become Karate. That's a pretty important book. My favorite version of The Bubishi is the translation by Sensei Patrick McCarthy, who is also a good friend and mentor of mine. That's one book, Karate-specific.

Then, if I had to say another more martial arts, more general, then perhaps why not the books that Bruce Lee wrote? Because he wrote a lot of stuff. People don't know this, but if there were blogs back when Bruce Lee was alive, he would be the greatest blogger alive, because he wrote down so many things related to philosophy, history, tradition, and all of these things that we're still talking about today. I think that the manuscripts, the notes that he put together, and that we later on made into books, should be read by more people, because most people only know Bruce Lee from his movies, and honestly, I don't even think his movies were that good, but maybe I'm too young. However, I think his books have a lot of good, interesting information and observations about everything from Zen Buddhism and how it relates to body building, and all of these different things he researched to make his understanding of martial arts even better.



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That journey he made really resonates with me, even though I blog instead, but I guess he would do the same if we had blogs back then.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

I think you're right, and it's true. If you do a little bit of research, you'll see that the number of pages he wrote in a relatively short period of time is just staggering.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

If someone is willing to take you up on that and they want to start exploring his books, is there a place you would suggest they start? Is there one book in particular?

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

There's not really one book, because there are so many different versions of his notes that people have put together into books, but the publishing company is called Tuttle, and that's where I suggest you get them.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Let's talk about goals.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak**

You've worked hard. I mean, you've traveled the world. People know who you are. For a lot of folks, they'd stop. They would say, "Hey, I've done what I came here to do." But you're still going strong, so I'm guessing there are other things you're hoping to accomplish. That you're - maybe hoping is a little bit too diminishing of a word - that you are going to accomplish. Tell us about your goals. Tell us about what's got you fired up right now, and what you're moving towards.

**Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

That is a very interesting question, because it's hard for me to give you the answer you are searching for, because honestly, I don't even know what my end goal is, other than enjoying the





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journey, and maximizing all of the opportunities that are presented as I go along on this or climb on this road up Mount Karate, like I said before. Usually, when I have projects or things that I want to do, it's not something I've been thinking about for a long time. When I have ideas, I usually execute as fast as I can on that idea.

For example, I recently did a web series in, I think, almost ten parts, where I visited Okinawa, and I went to different dojos, I met different masters, and I had a camera with me this time, because previously on all of my trips, I never filmed anything, but this time I tried to record these episodes online, and people loved it, because a lot of people don't have the money, the knowledge, or the ability to go to Okinawa. That idea, it turned out great, and people asked me how long I planned it. For a few weeks, so honestly, I don't really have these five-year plans that corporations have or anything like that, because the world is moving so fast. I know that this ... I know that a lot of people have difficulties with me because I don't have these plans. Sometimes I don't even know what I'm going to do tomorrow. I usually follow my instincts, and most of the time, my gut tells me what to do and it turns out great.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Awesome. This is what we call commercial time. You've got a lot going on, and I'm not even going to try to tell all the listeners about everything you've got going, so that's your opportunity to do that. Tell everyone where to find you, the things that you're doing, and just tell us all about the Karate Nerd.

### **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah, so the things that I'm doing right now, I am ... Like I said before, I love to do different kinds of projects around Karate, and one of the biggest ones that I've started and I'm still doing is called Seishin, which is Japanese for spirit. Seishin is the name of my Karate lifestyle gear company, which basically is a way for me to make awesome products related to Karate that other people can enjoy as well. The main product is of course a Karate gi, or a uniform - that's Japanese for uniform - called the Seishin Gi. I do a lot with Seishin these days, and there's a lot of exciting things going on with that, because I like to look good, because when you look good, you feel good, and when you feel good, you do good. Designing cool t-shirts, and hoodies, and bags, and all of these Karate lifestyle things that don't really exist is something that fires me up right now because I love to be creative, I love to have fun, and I love design. Seishin is something that I'm really working on right now and it has me fired up, and the website for that is [Seishin-International.com](http://Seishin-International.com), but if people have been following my work, I think most people already know that.

### **Jeremy Lesniak**

Okay. Alright, and what if people want to read your blog posts, and things of that nature?



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## **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Yeah, so my main website is [KaratebyJesse.com](http://KaratebyJesse.com), and the reason it's called Karate by Jesse is because it is based on my experience and filtered through my brain, so it's not "thetruthaboutkarate.com" or anything like that. It is very personal, and it's not research with footnotes or anything boring like that. I like to keep it simple, and fun, and informative, educational, but entertaining as well. So, [KaratebyJesse.com](http://KaratebyJesse.com) is where you'll find my blog, and many of my other projects and videos and stuff, and of course I'm on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter as well, and you could include those links in the show notes.

## **Jeremy Lesniak**

And we certainly will. [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com), in case you missed it the first time. Great. Well, this has been a lot of fun. I appreciate your time. I appreciate you sharing such wonderful and personal stories. We end in the same way, but it's always a little bit different with each guest. What advice do you have for the folks listening?

## **Sensei Jesse Enkamp**

Well, I think if I had to give a parting piece of advice it would have to be to ... Don't be a martial artist. Be a SMARTial artist. Don't just do things, but think about what you're doing, why you're doing it, how you're doing it, and when you should be doing it, because I know so many people who just go to their martial arts school. They go to the dojo, they go through their moves, they wipe the sweat off their forehead, and then they go home, and nothing happens. They don't improve for 10, 20, 30 years. Of course, eventually they quit because they don't see any progress, but if they just had used, or if they had just had the mindset of thinking a little bit more about what they were doing and not just following what their sensei said, but perhaps having a little bit of critical thinking, not that you should tell your sensei that he or she is wrong, but think about, "Is this right for me?" Because as an instructor myself, I know that everyone in the dojo, everyone in the class, will be different. Whenever I teach a technique, or an exercise, or a drill, I will see 50 different ways of doing it, and that is how it should be. Don't just try to copy everyone else and just go through the moves mindlessly, but put a little bit more effort into thinking about what you're doing as well, and that whole combination of theory and practice will get you much further. This is expressed in another Japanese saying known as Bun Bu Ryo Do, which means basically, "The pen and the sword together will guide you on the way."

## **Jeremy Lesniak**

After talking with Sensei Enkamp, I had two, overwhelming I guess, thoughts. First, I wanted to bow to him, shake his hand, thank him for caring so much about this crazy martial arts thing that so many of us do. He's done a lot to further the arts for sure, and I really appreciate what he's done. Secondly, I really want to train with him. I'm keeping an eye out for the opportunity, and I'd suggest you do the same, even if Karate is not your chosen art. Thank you, Sensei Enkamp, for coming on the show.



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Over at [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com), you can find the show notes with some photos, links to his appearance with Master Ken - if you haven't seen that, it's a riot and you've got to - his company Seishin and the great gi they produce, his social media, and more.

You can follow us on social media, too. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram, with the username [whistlekick](#). You should also check out our Facebook group, [whistlekick Martial Arts Radio Behind the Scenes](#). There's a few of you joining each and every week, and we appreciate that.

If you haven't shared an episode of the show with your martial arts friends, this would be a great one to share. We have some buttons on the website that make sharing easier, or you can just tell people, "Hey, listen. If you don't listen to the show, I'm going to kick you in the head." That's how I put it anyway.

Check out our shin guards, [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). Your shins will thank you, and I thank you, too. I appreciate you taking some time out of your day and spending it here with me. Until our next episode, train hard, smile, and have a great day.