



Episode 79 – Everyone Needs Something | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody we're back for another episode of whistlekick martial arts radio. This time it's episode 79 and this is the only place to hear the best conversations about the martial arts like today show, about what the martial arts can really mean for someone who doesn't have much else. Yup, it's going to get personal. I'm the founder here at whistlekick, but I'm better known as your host, Jeremy Lesniak. whistlekick, if you didn't know, makes the world's best sparring gear and excellent apparel and accessories for practitioners and fans of traditional martial arts. I'd like to welcome our new listeners, and thank all of you that are listening again. If you're not familiar with our products, you can learn more or buy over at whistlekick.com. All of our past podcast episodes, show notes and a lot more are on a different website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. From either site, you can set up for newsletter and you should because we offer exclusive content to subscribers and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guest for the show.

Today shows can be a little bit different, over the past few episodes, honestly, over the past few months, I felt like there was a show topic kinda bubbling up and I really couldn't quantify it, qualify it whatever the word would be there and it wasn't until I had the chance to actually be on someone else's show that some of what I wanted to talk about catalyzed. For those of you that listen episode 76 with Sensei Jared Wilson, you know that he host a show called Martial Thoughts and Sensei Wilson was kind enough to have me on his show and asked me some questions mostly different questions than what we ask on martial arts radio of our guests, but it was a lot of fun and when I went back and I listened to it, it was released a couple days ago and there will be a link in the show notes, it got me thinking a lot about what I say and what I don't say on the show. See as the show is grown, we actually get more and more requests from people that know me personally and strange to me, people that don't know me that want to know more about who I am. And I think I can understand that because I listen to a lot of podcasts and you know when you spend hours of your life with someone in your ear, listening to what they have to say, you get a sense of knowing who they are but I actually hold that quite a bit about my martial arts journey especially on the interview shows because I don't want it to be about me. I want it to be about the guest and I feel really strongly about that and that's not gonna change but, as I listened to the great job that Sensei Wilson did with I guess I can call it my episode of Martial Thoughts, I realized that there was a lot in between the lines that I wasn't saying. And it didn't seem like it was the appropriate place to say those things, there on his show because I was trying to keep things light and positive and happy but this feels like the appropriate place to talk to all of you. And the irony is none of you were in front of me, I'm talking to a microphone right now. It's dark, it's 9 o'clock at night and here I am, getting ready to share some pretty personal things and that's a little intimidating to me to be honest, I'm a pretty open person as anyone that knows me in real life, if we can say that, knows I'm a bit of an open book with most things but I'm used to having someone a face, or faces to talk to, I have no problem speaking in public. Honestly, what I'm going to talk about here today would probably be easier if I stood up in front of 500 people to say because I get some feedback from people's facial expressions and that's important for me when I'm speaking to to read the reactions and you know make slight adjustments to what I'm



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talking about and how I'm saying it. But, I don't have that here and rather than print out faces and tape them to the wall and pretend that that's an audience, I'm just gonna kinda run with this. I'm also expecting there to be a little less editing that normally we would be in a show, I don't edit a lot as it is, you have all probably noticed that but my attempt here is to just kind of run with it.

So, that's enough procrastination of what I want to talk about and I'm just gonna jump into it. So, when I was on Martial thoughts, it felt good it felt good to talk about some of the things in my past as they relate to martial arts or really as they are martial arts because when I look back on my childhood, most of what was there was martial arts. Honestly if it was an academic or the little bit of soccer that I played it was martial arts. I didn't have a lot of friends, I was a pretty nerdy kid, you know that that traditional nerd, big glasses, lot of book smart and teachers pet you know all those things and that doesn't really translate well to being a popular kid and I certainly wasn't a popular kid. We didn't have a lot of money, clothing was not something that was ever important to my mother and thus I didn't have anything approaching fashionable clothes. You know we had we had enough, we did okay as a lot of people might of their childhood but I wasn't one of the cool kids and that left me feeling really insecure. And this is despite starting martial arts at age 4, so I told the story on Martial thoughts that and I was introduced to my original martial arts instructor while swimming at the public beach, I was four years old and have very very little recollection of that or even of my early time training in karate. But I know I was there, I have enough memory to know I was there but even though I was doing it, even though something identified with, I was too young to really get it. It wasn't something that was core to who I was and that took a lot of time for me to wrap my brain around. I was probably nine or 10 before I started feeling any sense of confidence in myself because of my time in the martial arts. And when we talk to people on the show, this is pretty common and they don't seem to unpack it the way I am now and that's okay and you know, I don't want to pretend that what others went through is exactly like what I went through as a child and I don't think that that's important. I think a lot of people like to compare my pain or my upbringing was more difficult or hard or whatever, and that's not what I'm trying to do absolutely. But, we continue to bump into this idea here on the show that the upbringing, the childhood of a lot of these longtime martial artists is really similar and as we've talked about that it's forced me to reflect a lot on my childhood and see where the similarities are. And honestly they're right there with just about everyone that has open themselves up in that way on the show.

Like I said, grew up nerdy, insecure kid and the one piece you if you go back and watch the original karate kid, I mean I was Daniel Iarusso without the move in of the interstate move I didn't get beat up because everyone knew I was a martial arts kid and they would pick on me tremendously for it but I think somewhere deep in there, there was enough confidence especially once I reached fifth, sixth, seventh grade, that they didn't want to test that. You know, there are a couple playground exchanges that could have become a lot worse and I'm glad that they didn't. You know, I certainly wouldn't say that I got into a a true fight as a child and I'm actually pretty proud of that, I was good at removing myself from situations or even better at preventing them something that I feel very proud of as an adult now, something that I don't let happen. When I think about that time and I think that the the pivotal time for



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me was probably 7th to 10th grade, 4 academic years there, and there were some horrible stuff in there and I mean most of us of been through junior high and we know how awful kids in that age group can be. And that was also when I started competing, a little bit broader than I had been. You know, prior to that I might have done one or two competitions a year and once I got into high school, I started doing more. I think my sophomore year was probably the peak. 1995, I was doing you know, I think I did 15-20 somewhere in there and I was seeing some success which created this real challenge for me personally here on the one hand, I've got something that I can finally point to that is an academic, that you know in a sense is an athletic achievement where you know, the kids on my soccer team when even pass me the ball to see how good I was because I was the nerdy kid on the team. I had something physical that I can look at and say hey I can do this, I can maneuver my body in a way that doesn't yield me falling on the floor. It was the first thing I can look at that wasn't a report card and feel some pride in. But yet the flipside of that was because it was different, because it was weird, because I was already a nerdy kid in school, I caught flak for that and it wrote a pretty fine line between kids testing me trying to get me to react and I don't know if any of that matters but when I look back even though it was something that I couldn't look at as exclusively positive, there was nothing in my life at that time that was exclusively positive. And I don't know what would've happened without martial arts not only as a community because it was a place that I felt like I belonged, an outlet for my physical body. You know as a teenager growing, needing to do something, needing to release some energy and you know continuing that thread that we have on the show, martial arts was the place that I felt I belonged. It was the place that I had confidence in who I was, it was the place that I knew people looked at me and at the very least saw me as a peer and some will look up to me regardless of age because I had some skill. And I didn't feel like I had that anywhere else in my life and that seems to be similarity that we had a lot of the guests say. And it's this piece right here that I felt was really important to put out there, it was the inspiration for this episode of the show because everybody needs that. Everyone needs something that they can look at, they can point to and say this is the thing that resonates for me. And it doesn't have to be the thing that your good at, but it just has to be something that makes you feel passionate. I was passionate about martial arts and to be even more specific I was passionate about forms. Anyone that's trained with me today knows that you know, yeah I enjoy sparring, I enjoy grappling, I enjoy a lot of aspects, I enjoy really all aspects of martial arts but the place where I switch on is when I'm doing forms. Kata, poomsae, tol, whatever you want to call them, that's my thing right and I love it. And I know what my life is looked like when I haven't devoted any time to that.

And you one of the questions that we ask guests on the show what would your life look like without martial arts? And the response is usually pretty predictable. I have no idea what my life would look like without martial arts maybe I'd be doing XYZ, but people have a hard time wrapping their brain around it and the reason that we asked that question, the reason I still like having that in the question list, is to show that for people that don't have something else to point to, because I think that that's the difference. When people don't have something else that they can look at and call their own, martial arts becomes core to who they are. And when I think back over the years the people that came in and left



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martial arts, the vast majority of them had something else in their life that filled that void. That was better for them where they chose over martial arts to fill that void. I did not have an arguably have never had anything else it has filled that void. And so I'm very lucky, very happy that I found that, now other than just kind of venting this out there, why am I even bringing this up. I feel so strongly about this, that my hope is that people will consider their lives and the lives of those that they influence be it children or other family members or friends, that they will help them find something that creates that same sense in their lives. Because I don't think that very many people can feel a sense of happiness and satisfaction without having something like that in their lives. I'm quite often up on my soapbox saying you know, oh everybody's gotta try martial arts and you know this could be a place that I preach that but that doesn't feel right. If you have a kid in your life and you have some influence over that kid and you see that kid struggling, I want you to help them find something that resonates for them that helps them find an outlet that create some passion for themselves, sense of satisfaction in their own life. Because when we look at a lot of the challenges the children have today the challenges that people have overall, I think this is the piece that's missing in a lot of people's lives. Without going into a lot of detail, when I think back on some of the things that happened through my teenage years, to just put out really simply and really bluntly, without martial arts I don't know that I would've made it and you're welcome to interpret that however you want.

Now I have no idea of what I've said here today. If these thoughts are coming across is complete nonsense. If it's rambling, I'm sure it's rambling, but I'm hoping it's making sense. This is not the direction that the show is going to take, I feel strongly about not using this as a platform for me personally and honestly that's why it's taken me months to even consider doing this episode. But now that I've said these things, I'm glad I did, I feel better. And I hope that in some way, my words have inspired you to help yourself or someone else. So that's really about it. This is a point where I normally ask for feedback and I'm happy to take it. For anyone that wants to offer feedback, but not in a public forum you know, typically we say hey give us your feedback over on the website whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, you can leave a comment on the show page, this is episode 79 and you can still do that. Or social media Facebook twitter Pinterest Instagram similar broken up, username's whistlekick. But I'm also to give you my email address and that's jeremy@whistlekick.com. If you haven't noticed, terribly uncreative with any of his contact information and I'm not saying that I want to or need to hear from you, but I know that sometimes when I hear something like this, I have thoughts that I need to get out and if the appropriate action feels like reaching out to me to share your thoughts or your feedback, by all means please do. Now, if you want to be a guest on the show, if you know somebody else who would be a great guest on the show, go to the website whistlekickmartialartsradio.com fill out the guest form. If you just want to shoot a message with a different contact for, there is one of those over there too and that's really it for today. So, until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.