



Episode 376 – Sensei Victor DeSimone | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello, everybody! Thanks for coming by. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 376 and today, I'm joined by Sensei Victor De Simone. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host for this show. I'm the founder of whistlekick. We make sparring gear and uniforms and fun apparel and a bunch of stuff all because I love martial arts and I know I'm not the only one so if you want to help us out, if you want to thank us in a small way for all the work we're doing with this podcast, you can check out what we make at whistlekick.com. Use the code `podcast15` to save 15% or if it's easier, better for you, share this, follow us on social media. We're @whistlekick all over the place or just help us find another guest. There's so many ways you can help us out and I just really appreciate that support. If you want to find the show notes with transcripts or other episodes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com is the place to go. Now, today's guest, Sensei De Simone, this was a great episode. This was an episode that I expected to go in one direction and it didn't and I think you'll hear what I'm talking about as we start to get into it. Most of our guests are pretty open. Some of them are really open but few are as open as today's guest. I got the sense that I could have asked him anything and, in fact, in our pre-show chat, he told me, ask me anything, I'm an open book and I asked him questions and he didn't hesitate and that, as far as I'm concerned, always leads to a great conversation and that's exactly what we had, a great conversation. So I just want to welcome into the show and I hope you enjoy it. Here we go. Sensei De Simone, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Victor DeSimone:



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How are you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm doing great. How are you?

Victor DeSimone:

Great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So here we have another martial artist who isn't that far from me. We seem to be in this hotbed in the north east. There're a lot of us doing martial arts and I don't know why.

Victor DeSimone:

The cold weather.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Maybe that's it. Instead of getting frustrated and punching the walls or throwing things around, we go out, we train and we punch our friends. We always start out martial arts radio in a pretty straightforward way but I think it's an important way because it gives us context for everything else we're going to talk about. How did you find martial arts?

Victor DeSimone:

It starts years ago. My uncle taught in the military. He was in Italy, stationed in Germany and then I used to visit Italy every summer as a child so I was on kind of different in Italy when I did it. When I went there, it was done in a soccer field. He taught judo to the military camps and the local people and it was stationed up on a kind of a YMCA but outdoors so he used to bring me there when I used to visit there in the summer. I was about four but I can remember, I think I went before that, when I was four, yeah, it was four when I started. He brought me to the training camps he used to do in the summer and I started there and I officially started when I came back here to the States from my vacation in late '77, '78 with him. So it started because he taught it in the military and I started going with him during the day when my parents were out visiting so I was bored and I would go with him and that's how it would start.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what was it that he was teaching?

Victor DeSimone:

Judo.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, that's...when I tend to think of what's being taught in the military, judo, as practical as it is, as wonderful martial art as it is, I have to admit, it's not the first thing that comes to mind. We've had a number of folks on who have taught or are teaching to the military some sort of combatives, whether it's Krav Maga or Filipino martial arts for knifework or something like that but Judo seems to make a lot of sense especially if you're in that real close quarters kind of jammed up with people. I can see a lot of value there for sure.

Victor DeSimone:

Yes, it's primarily slow but basically take them off their feet and [00:04:19] them so there's no time to waste. Close quarters like you said.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So here you are, you're pretty young, you're learning judo, where does martial arts take you from there? Is Judo still your primary art or did you branch out into other things?

Victor DeSimone:

Oh, I branched out in other things. Mainly, I always stayed with judo. For my teen years, I boxed. From my teenage years, because I was growing up in the 80s, obviously. So I boxed from mid-80s to 90s and I took a break from Judo but I came back in the mid-90s but I wrestled. I also did Sambo and grappling. Other arts like, obviously, Brazilian Jiu-jitsu was connected to it. I did some Muay Thai also in high school. I taught at a mixed martial arts club and I still do but mainly it's a Jiu-jitsu club now so it's all grappling arts but I branched out but I always stayed with judo. The only break I took was in my teen years, probably about twenty or so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So the common thread in the styles that you mentioned, for the most part, that grappling aspect. That very close, beyond hand to hand sort of philosophy so I'm curious, because grapplers seem to have a different way of looking at combat than kickers than punchers than someone who is accustomed to using a knife or a firearm, right? There's different ranges in there. What was it about grappling that really clicked for you?

Victor DeSimone:

Well, I had no choice due to my uncle but funny story is I always wanted to strike as a kid. I want to hit things and my uncle kept reciting to me, when you get into a real fight, the range is changed and the distance is changed because he was in combat. He knows pretty much life and death situation type thing as did my grandparents because they both served in each world war but they always focused on the realness of combat so when it came to striking, everybody always grabbed not to get hit so my uncle



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always instilled in me that punches are great, kicks are great but if you can throw somebody and choke them, they're not going to fight you anymore or pin them and control them. You don't have to hurt them to stop them from hurting you. Like he said, the distance is changed when real close quarters comes and people, we've all been in a situation, I'm sure, where we've been in an altercation where the first thing they want to do is grab you because nobody really wants to get hit, I don't think, would you agree?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would. I've been punched in the face. It hurts!

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, no, I did. I boxed for quite a while and like I said, did some other stuff and getting hit, like I said, you get used to it, I don't think you...at one point, I think I did enjoy it in my twenties but as things change, the damage you want to take is minimal so if you can avoid getting hit, that's why I chose a grappling base to stick with and it's a little more controlled and I like the live action of it where you're actually using it. I don't mean that in a bad way. Like I said, I've done some Karate and I've done Muay Thai and you do a lot of bag kicking but you take a lot more damage getting hit so I did a lot of sparring for boxing and it took a lot of damage so I think it's a little safer if you want to have your children or your loved ones practice grappling and they're actually using it constantly because you're either doing Randori or if you're doing a wrestling class, you're using that wrestling and the reaction is real where some strikers, I noticed and not all of them, some strikers as they get older or as they start or are premised more on hitting the bag and then somebody hits them back, some people freeze up. It's all person-dependent in your philosophy or your action-reaction but I believe when it comes to grappling, that action-reaction is always crisp and there. So, that's why I prefer it over getting struck in the face or the body.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. Absolutely makes sense and I think there's something can be said for grappling in that you can go at a bit of a higher intensity. You can go harder with less risk of injury. You and I can only punch each other in the face so hard before we're going to work the next day bruised up and bloody but we can grapple a bit harder than that, I think. Would you agree?

Victor DeSimone:

I do agree and you do take elbows and knees grappling. We've all done it. We've all taken hits. People get emotional. You're not paying attention but it's a lot more...you're not actually striking with the end of your fists, your arm, your elbow so we've all seen bare knuckle stuff. When it comes to boxing and bare knuckle, bare knuckles do a lot more damage. You have a padded glove and you still take damage so, yeah, I agree with you where you can go really hard. Your body gets really conditioned. It's body to



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body contact and you're rolling around, you're getting slammed in the floor then you're trying to defend a choke so it's a situation where we're using technique along with strength and your body has to adapt to that situation so your lactic acid is going, you got to fight off exhaustion. You have to fight your own mind if you're always fighting yourself. That's the first fight so you got to calm inside and that's the way I like about it. You can slow things down and take the controlled aspect when you're grappling and you can do that in striking but it takes, I believe, it took me a lot longer to slow things down when I was doing boxing and some muay thai to get used to that action-reaction of getting hit and being able to see things before they come so I think if you have a lot more control and a lot more time to develop that control and put grappling with a safer aspect of not taking damage.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I could see that. Absolutely. When we're talking about these arts that you've practiced and when we add in Muay Thai and you mentioned some mixed martial arts in there, it makes me wonder, was competition something you ended up doing or you were on track for?

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, I competed in Judo quite a bit. I did...I have a funny boxing story. I boxed a bunch of amateur fights and I didn't realize all it took to become pro was all you had to do was pay after, I think it was ten fights so I boxed and I boxed for a year before any trainers came up to me and said anything. The day I was ready to leave, no one trained me, I went in, I hit the bag, I did all my own drills that I found in a book. The day that I was ready to leave, they asked me to step into the ring and spar with them and that was about a little over a year. Then they started training me but yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you think that was coincidence?

Victor DeSimone:

I don't know. Like I said, going back to, I won't mention the club's name even though its well-respected and it's a great club and I believe it is, still today. It was at a YMCA locally and again, you're going back to, I think, it was '87, '88 was when I joined or '86, I started loosely but I remember it was '88 or '89, I was ready to walk out and one of the trainers came up once and, hey, what's your name? So I told them my name. He goes, mind taking a few rounds with this guy, we're trying to get him ready for a fight and nobody even had taught me how to hit the speed bag and I learned on my own and I guess back then the philosophy was different and I was raised in a way my father, we were immigrants, so my father was very one worded. He changed when he got older but I never, I was always taught work hard and when the time comes they'll tell you when you're ready so I never went up to any of the trainers and asked them how to do anything. I watched, I learned and I guess, after at that time, the timing was right, I have no idea what this gentleman's mentality was but he just knew I was ready to leave and he picked me at



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the right time and I stayed a few extra years because of him but again, I, like I said, no one even talked to me. None of the people that trained there. I just went in and basically, I did my own workout which I found odd.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Where did you find that discipline to train on your own? That's not something that most people can handle.

Victor DeSimone:

Like I said, as a kid growing up, I worked with my dad. We had a repair shop way outside of Boston and I was going to work and I remember, I don't know if you remember the blizzard we had here in 1978. What's that? Did you?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't. I don't. I was born in '79.

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah so, we had a big blizzard here in '78, I was very young, around six years old or so and I remember, we couldn't see the front doors. My father, we had like a month off school, it was a very bad blizzard and he took me to work with him. Back then, as a kid, I'm changing snow tires. We had dogs to take care off because we had no alarm. So I had to walk the dogs in the snow. We had a military jeep that we made it through everywhere. We couldn't see the gas pumps and from that day on, my father, and my mother for that fact, always said, work hard, you're going to get results. Don't ask questions, watch and learn so I would go to the shop every day after school on the weekends, clean up, stuff like that and he just instilled work ethic in us so ever since that day I always never spoke and always listened so my dad was really responsible for my philosophy on how to learn and how to excel in something. So that's where I got that from.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what did your father have to say about your martial arts and these different systems that you were training in?

Victor DeSimone:

Again, funny you ask, a lot of my friends can relate to this. Like I said, we were raised in the north end area where it was primarily Italian in Boston. So, back in the day everybody spoke Italian and English was a second language but when we came here, my dad just said, if you want to learn Judo, you go with your uncle. If you want to learn how to fix something, we come to the shop so we just instilled these systems of, all right, I'm going to, he grew up in an era where his father and his mother where it was very rough,



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like I said. He didn't have much of a communication with them and my communication was a little better with him but again, it was one of the things where he just wanted to make sure we were doing the right thing. He really didn't have much to say until I was in my twenties and I got an injury but he always, he never really asked, he always said how are you doing with it? I'm glad you're doing it but he was very, it was more of body language type thing with my dad where we never showed fear or pain to him because that's the type of man he was. You never knew he was hurt, you never knew he was good, he was just like a stone so it's one of those things where I just did it because I thought it was the right thing, the right path to take. I didn't like violence as a kid so this is one of those things where I could train and have an outlet and if I wanted to get that anger out as a child or as a teen or as an early adult, I trained so that's pretty much the path it took with my dad.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, when you say there you didn't like violence as a kid, that's not something that, I think, most people are going to say that those words make me wonder, was violence something that you were exposed to? Maybe a little more than we might think an average child would be.

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, not in my family directly but again, growing up in the North end, it was kind of a rough area and we saw a lot of things. I used to go there every weekend with my family. We went to church. It was a church called St. Leonard's which I hated as a child. I had to sit through masses and when you go back in the '70s in the north end which was there was organized crime, let's say, back in that day so there was a lot of gangster type people in that area, that lived in that area and my uncle had a tailor shop with my other uncle who taught the martial arts and we used to walk down the street called Salem Street and I used to see a lot of things as a child that I shouldn't have and my uncle was a well-respected man and he used to diffuse a lot of problems so I saw a lot of things and one comes to mind with one of my cousins who now resides in England because he's not allowed to stay in the US anymore. I remember one event that I knew I didn't like violence and that event was, if you want to hear it, I'll explain it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Please.

Victor DeSimone:

I think I was, probably, again this was late '70s so I was probably like seven. I remember my uncle and I just finished training, it was a Saturday class so it was coming dusk, it was probably 5 or 6 and it was summer time and we were talking through town so my Aunt Maria yelled down from, because she lived in a building above, she yelled down from where she was and said something about my cousin, he's in trouble, he was in jail, dadada, all these sort of stuff so my uncle grasped me and said, and on the walk to the police station, he said to me, he goes, whatever you see here you don't say. Okay, no problem.



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I'm just looking. I'm staying quiet as a kid so we go on the police station and he knows all the police officers. We get my cousin out and it was very quiet on the walk back and we go to his tailor shop and he brings him downstairs into the basement and he gave my cousin the beating that I've never seen in my life and something happened where his buddies tried to, knew he was in there and they ended up breaking the door and coming downstairs and my uncle had an altercation with three or four guys. I'm sitting there as a kid watching this and my uncle ended up taking them all out and I just remember just freezing in this situation and I remember him telling me, drag the guy over here in the corner because he was laying there and he was trying to put all these guys in the corner because it was a very closed quarter area. Probably, I couldn't even tell you how big it was but it was the size a little bigger than your average bedroom where the guys broke the door and it was just a mess. I froze and I didn't know what to do as a child and I saw the realness of how the things can accelerate. We ended up leaving and he called their, he knew their dads and stuff and, let's say, they collected the bodies later so they were pretty beat up and I saw a lot of things that I shouldn't have seen as a child. Dislocated arms, choked unconscious, hit with things. So that day forward, I always said I never want to be in a situation like that so that stuck in my mind so that's the reason why I didn't like violence. It was uncontrolled, it was unexpected, it was crazy but again, my uncle always wanted to instill the right values. he wasn't a bad man but he was always a big thing on protection, self-protection and trying to make people do the right thing especially my cousin. he was very troubled. He was probably 19 or 20, maybe 21 at the time and he was always in trouble and he was just trying to keep him on the right track so that's probably the reason why I don't like real violence like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's heavy. That's a pretty intense experience for anyone of any age, let alone someone that age and certainly, I would think even a bit more impactful being that its family. Its people that you loved that, I assume, at least in some way, that you trust and that's got to be a bit of a contradiction.

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, exactly. I was very confused because this was my cousin and uncle who I've seen at parties and laughed together so this is like the first time that I've seen something of that nature so yeah, it was very confusing. I understood what was going on to a level of what the violence was and what transpired but as far as the outcomes of what happened, I wasn't ready for it but it matured me and it made me understand that relaxed course of action shouldn't be violent in anything you do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Quite often, when someone experiences that degree of violence at a young age, they tend to go to one extreme or another. Violence either becomes a part of their life or they avoid it so greatly that sometimes there can be a detriment there but I'm not getting the sense that either one of the, either



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end of the spectrum is you. It sounds like maybe through martial arts or other means, you've rejected violence as you kind of said before but maybe had a healthier understanding of it?

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, but the talk my uncle had to me after. It was probably about a week later, pulled me aside and he said, one thing, I know what you've seen, you shouldn't have seen, he explained everything in depth. But one thing I took from it, he says when it comes to a situation like that, it's fight or flight, you're in or you're out. You either run or you engage and that's what I took away from it so he made me understand that you don't have to use violence to solve a matter. He always said, try to talk things out but there's going to come a point where that's not going to work so you either engage or you disengage and I understood that at a young age. He made me do, in club tournaments that were pretty a lot rougher than they were today, because I fought a lot of older men as a young child. I was in my teens fighting guys in their thirties so I understood that when you engage, you have to commit. If you don't have to, you're either in or you're out, meaning you're either in contact, you're not in contact. I didn't have a good handle on that, surprisingly so, at a young age and it wasn't a fear, it was more of a caution. So yeah, it was control.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Makes sense. Now, you talked a bit about anger and using martial arts as an outlet for your anger and you've talked about various points in your life as a child, as a teenager, as a young adult but you left, that was where the list ended. So I'm wondering is anger something that you've come to get a better handle on or...?

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, I've had a lot of altercations with my brother. We have a shop together. It was a family business so nobody could piss me off more than he could as a teen and he is six years older than me so there's a little bit of a bridged gap where he was kind of a father figure at one point. We did sports and he would help quite a bit and he was always very good to me but when I'm 13, 14, 15 and I'm boxing, doing Judo and all these stuff, I always had a fear of my brother beating me up and I always wanted to beat him up so it was one of those things where it became competitive so I would stick my chest out to him when he was in his twenties and I am in my teens and a man's strength is a little different from a teenager but I remember, like you said it, he's the only person that can really make me angry. Anybody else, I can control but him? Growing up, he was the guy. But yeah, the anger only was not a problem but like I said, between sibling rivalry, yes, it was an issue at one point with him.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you're certainly not the first person to experience sibling rivalry and experience it in an intense way, sometimes a physical way.



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Victor DeSimone:

Oh yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We certainly see that with a lot of people. We see that in nature. That's something that's pretty deeply instilled in us, that competition among family members.

Victor DeSimone:

Oh yeah. He always tried to treat me like a child and I always wanted to be the adult so it was that and my father, like I said, we both were mechanics at the time and we're always, my brother wanted, was running this shop because he was in his early twenties and my father was trying to take it easy and he wanted to pass on which he ended up doing but there was a lot of fighting and problematic things that went on between him and I just due to testosterone levels of a young man and a young teen during a different time in their lives so it taught me a lot about life. I was a pretty quiet kid and reserved until, I will say, my twenties, my early twenties where I started to become a little more used to communicating by asking for things. A lot of times I wouldn't ask for things, I would just find a way to do it. I wouldn't ask for help or whatever it may be and that had to do with my upbringing with my brother and my parents and whatnot.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Most of that, that we just talked about, really all of that, is our first question. That's our foundation and this is one of the things that I love about this show is that we get an opportunity to wander around and hear your story the way that you tell your story. I absolutely love that but let's take a turn now. Let's look at something that we haven't talked about yet which is your influences. The folks that trained you. You mentioned your uncle being that early influence, exposing you to martial arts. It's pretty clear that he set you on a path, whether he knew it or not, I suspect at that time you didn't know but maybe he knew that this is something that would be a major part of your life if I can say that.

Victor DeSimone:

It is because my uncle is one of ten. So that means we have a lot of cousins. My mother is the last of ten. I am the only person that took martial arts and lasted with it with him so of all the people that can pass this on and all he is but he introduced me to the Pedros. Jimmy junior and Jimmy senior. I don't know if you've heard of them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Names are familiar but I can't place why.

Victor DeSimone:



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Jimmy is a bronze medalist, '96 and then 2004 and Jim senior was a '76 Olympic alternate he trained and they have probably the highest and right now, they still do recognition for judo champions in the Olympics and U.S. is very weak in Judo because it's not practiced like it is across the world and they have a very great track record. They had quite a few people come through there and names which I could mention if you would like hear them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah, I mean.

Victor DeSimone:

You had Rhonda Rousey in there when I was training. She was a child and Kayla Harrison who now is in the MMA and she's a two-time first gold medalist for U.S. and she's a woman and she's been through some things if you look her up. They really know how to mold people so my uncle introduced me to them and I was training with Jimmy in the mid-90s when he was getting ready for the Olympics and I was on the team with them where we would train and I had a bunch of friends and we travelled so he put me in a path that he wanted that he probably couldn't take at that time so he wanted me to pursue it so again, he hooked up in those. He always said, Jim Senior is an incredible instructor. Whether it be judo or any type of martial arts, he has very great philosophy and he was very old-fashioned like my uncle and maybe I shouldn't say this but he's very old-fashioned so you know where I'm going with that and I liked that. He reminded me a lot of my dad and my uncle and I gravitated towards that because he was very one-worded and he would give you recognition only when you needed it. He knew people's minds very well. He knew the people that had to be patted on the back. He knew the people how they were. I didn't need to be patted in the back. I wanted to see results but he was very good at the psychological warfare of what goes on an athlete and in and outside of the mat and I liked that about him because he would pull you aside and talk to you like a human being and tell you if you're a jerk or an idiot or if you're doing well at one point. I really liked that about him and I respected my uncle for knowing that I could handle him because a lot of people couldn't so he made sure I trained there with the best in the world so they're my major influences. My uncle and the Pedros as far as Judo goes absolutely in the martial arts and they practiced a lot on Newaza, so the groundwork and the grounding style and jimmy could have won either for wrestling and judo and the son does also so a very good wrestler so I wrestled a lot with them and I took a lot of my training that I teach today to my class comes from all of them. They just have the best style and as far as, like I said, their influence on life itself is incredible so they're my major influences.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm going to ask a pretty direct question. Do you have children?

Victor DeSimone:



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I do. I have two. I have a daughter, Skyla, she is just about 16 and my son, Vittorio, we call him Vito. He is going to be 12 soon and they both do Judo on and off.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, you knew where I was going with that.

Victor DeSimone:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When someone has a family influence in martial arts, it really seems like passing on what they've learned becomes, I don't have children of my own and I wasn't taught by my family so I can only observe it but there just seems to be a different element to the way martial arts is imparted when there's a family element there and that seems to make sense to me because when we look back, that's how martial arts was passed down in so many areas. It was a familial obligation to make sure that the next generation could defend themselves.

Victor DeSimone:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So I'm curious how did your upbringing in martial arts, starting at such a young age, how did that have an influence on the way you shared with and saw your responsibility in teaching your children?

Victor DeSimone:

My daughter is an incredible person and I'm not saying that because she's my daughter. My son is a character, but we'll get back to him, but my daughter is very athletic. Her mother, my wife, who is genetically gifted, my daughter took the best of both of us, she has a, even at a young age, I remember her at three, she just can think on her own and she can make great decisions without thought and that's something that a lot of people can't do so I saw this in her young and we have dogs, American Pitbull terriers and I remember my daughter, we had a dog named Luna and she was trying to train her at three years old and this is a dog that was probably 12 at the time, on death's door, let's say, and it was, like I said, we showed this dog, we did a lot, she saw a lot of what we did at a young age and we've ran her on the treadmill. I remember my daughter put her on the treadmill at 12 years old and we had other dogs that were younger, she tried hooking her up and was telling her to run the treadmill so I watched her do this at three, maybe almost four, and she had a will about her that made me think, well, let me start putting her in martial arts. Usually I would say about five or six for a child so I put her in very early. I remember bringing her right after I saw that, I brought her and she took to it pretty well and as I learned



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from my own mistakes, I said I'll let her do it for a couple months, take her away from it and let her have a childhood cause I see a lot of parents put them in and the kids hate it and they're forced to do that so I always seen that so I gave her the choice and she chose to come. So every time she kept asking to come and then she wants to compete at a very young age and she started competing and then, she's in high school now, but through her elementary school years, she was in and out but mainly staying into it because we let her do other sports and that she excels at. She's very good at basketball, at softball and her basketball career is taking off. A lot of it has to do with the athleticism that we've trained into her and her own will but she's competed and she's, the path she's taking and her mindset. She preps her own meals and like I said, she saw my wife and I doing it and she just took control and that's the kind of person she is so. as far as, the influence of martial arts in her life is very heavy but she's also, I want her to be a teen also. I missed out a lot of things that I don't want her to do and trying to get that balance is very hard and she's very talented. She's almost brown belt now. She should've been a brown belt now but she's right there but she took some time off basketball and she comes back and forth and she trains with Pedros and myself so she knows competition well and she's very regimented and my son's taken a lighter form whereas he likes it, he wants to learn it. He's still young but we all know boys mature a lot slower than females when it comes to decision-making and he's naturally-gifted and my daughter's a hard worker and athletic so she's a work horse and my son is more, if I show him something, he learns quick but if something gives him adversity, you have to make him do it. So again, they're two individuals, they're both talented but my daughter's a little older and again mature, but really mature for her age. The influence of martial arts has taken her to a lot of places. She's an incredible artist and she's very inspiring as a child. Incredible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now when you look at where your children are in terms of martial arts, hopefully, I would assume that everyone, we're all trying to do our best, we're all doing what seems to be right, how do you think your martial arts upbringing would have gone if you have been raising you?

Victor DeSimone:

That's a good question. If I was raising myself, I would force myself to do everything. I wanted to give myself a choice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why?

Victor DeSimone:

Knowing who I am, I'm a type of person that I've learned through the years that I have a lot of interests and I made this mistake training myself where I was doing too much at once. I was training dogs for dog shows, I was the lead athlete in Judo and I had some car restoration stuff where I was doing and I drag race so I was trying to do all these three things at once. I just got married, I just had a child so I didn't



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focus on one thing and youth is wasted on the young, I'm sure you've heard that. I was working really hard, I wake up 4 every morning and I was regimented and I tried to fit too much into one day but if I had just the discipline to focus on one thing, I would've picked, our athletic bodies only last so long. So it's like fruit, we expire. So if you don't catch it when it's ripe, you could lose that chance that a lot of people lose so if it was me training me, I would force and said to myself, this is what you're doing, this is how you have to do it, forget about these other stuff, it's going to be there later. If that was me training me but as far as my daughter goes, I take a different approach.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, sure and everyone's different and of course, that's such an important thing to understand and that's one of the challenges of being an instructor in a mixed group, in a bigger class. You get people that are there for different reasons, different motivations, who learn differently and they all need something a little bit different and a good instructor, in my opinion, I'm curious if you agree, will find that individuality, that individual motivation and teach to that person as much as they can and repeat across everyone in the class rather than just kind of picking average and teaching that way.

Victor DeSimone:

You know I have a good story for that?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, please.

Victor DeSimone:

How I learned this and its between two people. My uncle had a student that is one of my assistant instructors and his name is [00:42:54] Ken and he's my assistant instructor and I teach at a Carlson Gracie school, Broadway Jiu-jitsu named, Broadway Jiu-jitsu and John Clark. We've been teaching there about 6 years together but John is a very intelligent individual and so was [00:43:15], we call him Master Ken, no pun intended because his last name's Ken. He picked up on something. I'm very one, I'm like a horse with the blinders sometimes and I only had one way to train people and that is the way that I was taught and I understood that the psychology of a human being changes as years pass or as they get older or stay younger but I had one way of training people. The strong survive and the weak die and that's a bad way to train people because martial arts is for everybody. Competition may not be for everybody but martial arts is for everybody and these two individuals showed me that and the way they showed me that was Professor John Clark, who has done many martial arts and if you look him up, he's very well-renowned. He's one of the best grapplers I've seen and his teaching style is incredible and so is Master Ken, I'll call him, also [00:44:16]. They both have the same outlook on martial arts and John has this class called the Beginner's Class and it's for grappling and it was kind of in the same time zone as mine and [00:44:36] picked up on this and what it is, it's a place where people can go to learn the basics



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of grappling and defense and we all had Beginner's Classes in Karate, Judo, Jiu-jitsu, whatever it is from the beginning, it's very boring. Correct? Have you experienced that? Where you're learning more. Everybody wants to hit and punch. Everybody wants to throw and choke and arm lock but that doesn't happen right away, does it? No?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Not usually.

Victor DeSimone:

So I remember learning a lot of defensive skill and striking arts and head movement and lower body movement which is very boring. That's the core of what you use every day when you become really proficient at it and in Judo, you learn how to fall which is the most boring thing in the world, slapping the mat and its very important because if you take a fall the wrong way, you can break your neck and die. So that being understood, when I grew up, it was very boring. What John had developed was a Beginner's Class where people are learning and you can stay in that class forever and this has been going on five years, six years, I've seen him organize this class and these people still take it. If they were under my clock, they would've quit and I firmly believe that on my old thought process. They would have come in and say wow, this is tough, I can't handle this, my body's taking a beating or they survive and they make it through and [00:46:05] who is my assistant instructor said, watch this class that John has, he goes, it's incredible so we'd stay and we'd watch it. What he developed was he developed a system where they're learning their drills and like I said, I could sit here and talk hours on it but I'll keep it brief, and he shows things and this is how I teach now where entry, execution and finish so when you come in, he shows you how to enter the technique, he shows you how to execute the technique and he shows you the finish and we've all been instructing when no, you're doing this wrong, no you're doing that wrong and some people can't take very well to that and the way he speaks to people, he makes you just feel comfortable and he makes you understand where your problem points are and he makes you understand where you're doing correct and so the way he teaches is incredible and I adopted this style through watching him and [00:47:05], my assistant instructor's always done that indirectly but he picked up on it where we can improve and it's amazing that he keeps these students that I wouldn't. Like I said, I have a competitive mind and I would say this guy is a competitor or this girl isn't a competitor or whoever this woman, child, whoever and now I've changed my philosophy due to how they instruct. So he's kept a great client base and as an instructor of giving these people a place where they can learn martial arts. You don't have to be a competitor but you know something? I watched some of this people who I never thought could excel in martial arts end up becoming competitors and it's all a different mindset so I got to say that's pretty impressive is something that I've learned from him and them.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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It really sounds like you've been blessed with some amazing instructors and I think all too often when people make lists of who they've trained with, we tend to want to look for the folks who have name recognition, who have these important lineages, the fewest step between you and somebody who started a style or someone important. We like to think that that's what makes a great instructor but it's not and I think the stories you're telling here today so perfectly illustrate that that the best instructors are the people who are best able to reach the students and get the best out of them.

Victor DeSimone:

Absolutely. The psychological connection between training and keeping somebody interested are immense and if you don't connect with each individual personally and get to know them a bit, I'm not saying you have to hang out with them or whatever because we can't do that physically as instructors, but as an instructor you have to have a personal level of communication, I call it Touch Time. If I go to a class and the instructor is instructing the class as a general, that's great but you got to go around and have Touch Time with each student individually and you're going to pick up on where their good points are and they need instruction on what their bad points are. So what I've noticed, like you said, you got to have that connection with each person. Not generalized, like you've said, we've all been to generalized camps or whatever where they're showing techniques but my body type is different than your body type and what these instructors and my instructors and other instructors gravitate towards do well is make it work for you and that's what we need to do with martial arts instructors is understand that not every technique is for every student and everybody has fight style and you got to bring that out of that person and we got to analyze what it is their body type is, how to get into their minds see what their fears are, if any, or see what they're, why are you there, what brought you to martial arts. I think if you don't have that connection, your students won't respect you and if you have that connection, they're going to find that it's better to have a human being teach you than a robot.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Couldn't agree more. We've spent the day, our time today, talking about the past, talking about everything that's brought you up to where you are now. So let's turn our eyes to the future. What are you inspired about when it comes to martial arts? What's keeping you motivated? Do you have goals that you're still working towards? Tell us what the next however many years, however you want to define it, have in store for you as a martial artist?

Victor DeSimone:

It's a good question. I try to live in the moment now where a lot of people plan on the future and think in the past but I try to live in the moment but thinking of the future, I know I'm going to be in instructing till the day I die, I would hope, and it seems that way. So what's in the future is I'd like to reach out to more people and keep people interested with what I had to share with them. Again, there's a miscommunication between student and teacher at times and I'd like to lessen that and I would like to



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make the community a lot better and a lot larger by keeping people interested in what I have to teach along with my instructors so if I have a future, I would like to gain more students and have them pass on what I know because as an instructor, you can be a great competitor but that doesn't mean you're a great instructor and we've all seen that. So as far as teaching goes, what good is my knowledge or anybody else's if I die with it? I want to pass on that knowledge to each and every one that I have and I hope that they could branch off like trees and teach what I've known through my experiences so if I'm one, I want to touch a million people to pass on what I would have taught so that's my goal if I had to pick one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's great. I can see a lot of my goals, a lot of my attitudes in what you're talking about so yeah, without a doubt. Now what if people want to get a hold of you, is there anywhere online they can find you?

Victor DeSimone:

Yeah, I don't use social media much. I'm not a big fan of it. The only one I use is really LinkedIn, the business site. I don't post many personal things. I post some martial arts stuff and some of my automotive stuff but I'm there on LinkedIn under my name Victor DeSimone. I'm still trying to figure Twitter out but I'm on that under my name, Victor DeSimone and but again, I don't understand that site that well. I know what it's for but I'm really not on it but I am there and I'm at Broadway Jiu-jitsu and South Boston, Carlson Gracie school so that's where I am.

Jeremy Lesniak:

All right. You know folks, we'll definitely link to the LinkedIn page. If you're new to the show, you may not know we do show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com that's where we drop photos and all kinds of stuff like that you can check out. This has been great! This has been a lot of fun. You definitely have a different background than a lot of us. I mean, your stories definitely gave me some stuff to chew on and I appreciate that so thank you for that but I'd love to ask for one more favor if I could and that's what parting advice would you give to the folks listening today?

Victor DeSimone:

Best advice I could give is you need to focus on what's good for you. Whether it be martial arts, whether it be work, whether it be family, whether it be a struggle. You got to understand that you're stronger than you believe and a lot of people sell themselves short. If you had a dream, you can follow it or you can let it die so all the decision you make are ultimately your own. So even if you fail at them, you got to go through with what's in your mind and what you think you can accomplish because you can do a lot more than you can believe. So I'm going to tell everybody out there that if you can dream it, you can do



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it and that's a big thing people don't do so fail at it, succeed at it. If you don't try, you're not going to succeed so that's all I can tell you out there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We've had plenty of people on the show who have taught family or learned from family but I don't know that we've had too many people who have had both. They've taught family, they've learned from family and been so aware of how both aspects, both transfers of information so deeply affected them. I think the part that struck me the most was when Sensei DeSimone was talking about his children and the differences between them and how clearly, he loved both of them and supported them in their growth, in their differences and while maybe that's a little bit easier when it's your child, that is absolutely what I think all of us who are passing on martial arts in, even a small way, should be aspiring to. Thank you, sir. thank you for your time on the show today. If you want to check out the show notes, we've got some photos, we've got a transcript, we got a lot of stuff, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and if you want to support us, check out everything we've got going at whistlekick.com. All of our products, you can save 15% using the code `podcast15`. We've also got a wholesale program and if you're a school owner, you haven't signed up yet, do it. It's free! Discounts! Good stuff! if you want to follow us on social media, you should do so. We're @whistlekick. Find us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram and my email address? Jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!