



Episode 382 – Professeur James Southwood | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everybody! Welcome this is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 382. Today my guest is Professeur James Southwood. My name is Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host on this show. I'm the founder of whistlekick where we've got whistlekick.com and a bunch of stuff that we make, uniforms and protective gear and fun shirts and sweatshirts. Just a whole bunch of stuff for you to tell the world. Hey I'm a martial artist. I love training and this is my life. So, check it out over there you can find a lot of our stuff also at Amazon and we'd love for you to check out the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. You can sign up for the newsletter there and find out everything that we've got going on with this show that we bring you twice a week all for free. Today's guest, if I had to put one word to describe him is a philosopher. And for anyone whose spent time in philosophy classes or considering the philosophical aspects of the world or of martial arts you know there's a tremendous amount of insightful thought that happens and of course that description is pretty accurate as far as I'm concerned for Professeur Southwood. We talked about a lot of the surface elements of martial arts. Maybe surface is the wrong word. The external elements there we go but we also talk a lot about internal things, thoughts and philosophy beliefs and it really all came together into what I truly enjoyed as our conversation so I hope you also enjoy this. Professeur Southwood welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

James Southwood:



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Hi there! Thank you for having me, thank you for inviting me on.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course, of course thank you for coming on you and we'll get in this a little bit later I'm sure but you hold a distinction of being the first Professeur that we've had on the show and the first true representative of your principle style. Anyway, and I was like to dangle that (02:23) in front the listeners we don't have to talk quite a bit about that yet but what I want to tell the audience is that we just spent like a great ten minutes talking about things completely unrelated to martial arts and I've got a feeling that were going to have a great chat today.

James Southwood:

Me too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah so, we kinda start in what some people think is kind of a boring way to start but it's, I see a lot of parallels between what we do to start and what we do in martial arts to start which is very fundamental basic things so the most basic question I can ask you of course is how did you find martial arts?

James Southwood:

I've founded this several times when I was I'm coming up to my twenty-year anniversary now and in a way I can't tell you it's strange, it was the universe to see my second year and I went to along to, I responded to a fly that was handed out or keep boxing that wasn't going to hurt because that was the thing for me and I went along and it turned out to be (03:29) which is what I've been in ever since and I can't really tell you what the penny drop moment was when I knew I was going to stick with it. I just went along to one class, I wanted to get back to the second when to the second one then you'd go to the third and here I am twenty years later. So, it's not too much a story or some dramatic moment that started me off but I got started.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But I imagine at some point as a child you were aware of martial arts? At least I mean we established prior to show that were the same age. So I can't imagine having grown up and not knowing what martial arts was. So you starting as an adult, as a young adult. There's probably a story in there.

James Southwood:



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I think it was more about learning a physical skill. I've always been attracted to learning skills like I learn to juggle when I was a kid and it feels to me it's to be also have mostly of my body in that way and if I hadn't gone into martial arts (04:35) or to gymnastics something like that and I went to a school that wasn't big on promoting physical activity kids they didn't like the competitive aspect is that, it was big on music which I'm no good at and drama which I was okay but it wasn't 'till I got to university that I was able to say I wanted to a physical sport and learn to get good at something. And in a sense it didn't matter what I chose and I'm very pleased I chose martial arts because I think I kind of got bored doing something it was not as difficult as this. Doing boxing which is what I call it more than I call it martial arts I call it boxing. It's always difficult it doesn't matter twenty years and I still find it difficult. I'm still learning how to deploy my body properly, how to make certain movements happen, how to teach those movements to other people. So, the journey has been one of learning physical skills and finding there's no end to that. That's what I've been involved in I think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now when you say you refer to what you do more is boxing than as martial arts, tell me what you mean?

James Southwood:

Okay so, literally martial arts produced something that was more like Mars being the god of war and something like survived is boxing it's always been a sport or as to start it off a method of dueling so it was never martial law it was never war like. And the French called it French boxing. And it's very important to me not to follow them into that too much and give them all of credits for it so we used to name they gave it which is savate and savate is a form of boxing which is the shoe. Savate is their word for an old shoe and I see it as that I didn't see it as martial arts where you learn to live and die in that sense. I see it as a sport in which you learn to do things within a certain parameter that's why I called it boxing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now when we think about martial arts today obviously it has does roots you know that, that martial that war like tradition that kind of comes forward for all of us but I don't know anyone personally that is engage in practicing karate or taekwondo or kung Fu because they're expecting to go to war at any moment. So, I think you'd probably join me in saying we can shift the definition of martial arts a little bit you know kind of modernizing it and I'm curious if we do that, do you still separate savage from that definition?

James Southwood:



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I would definitely join you in a project that saying that it doesn't need to be martial in a literal sense but because a lot of what I do is introducing people to the sport. I want to give them the right expectation and I feel the right expectation is to call it a boxing art rather than on martial art. In that we fill a studio or a boxing gym where there are heavy pads and guys is knocking to hell out of our bag and sweat and gloves and pads all of them in a dojo with bare feet and that sort of atmosphere. it's much more than boxing atmosphere than a traditional martial arts atmosphere because while continuing the distinction even though I except this a modernized term.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting stuff. So you went and then you went back and you just continue to go back in here you are twenty years later. But I'm sure in some point even if you don't remember in the early days why you kept going back? There must have been some point in time maybe a year in or five years in or even ten years in, were you looked up and you said this is a thing, a pursuit that I've put a lot of time into but I want to continue to put that time and was that ever a conscious internal discussion?

James Southwood:

I think it can about early at them perhaps I told you the last time. It came about when I went back to the second-class kind of for the reason that I've box with this French man on the first class and I wanted to get the better of him the next time which I think tells you a bit about how competitive I can be and why I do so much competition still so it was a pursuit of trying to get good at this better than the next guy that caught me hooked. I can recall as a moment when I did one outbox somebody and after I finish university I quit for about a year and a half or either moved somewhere I couldn't train and I did come back to it so at that point it was just a conscious decision, this is my sport I put up for years into this, I want to continue it so yeah there are two moments at least when I can say "I know why I did that".

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now if we were go back in and observe you as a child you mention your desire, your penchant for tackling physical skills you mentioned juggling and you're want to master them, what else other than juggling? You know you said music wasn't quit you're thing, drama wasn't so much you were your passion. Was there anything else? As a child that might give us some foreshadowing towards your pursuit of savate as an adult?

James Southwood:

Partly on savate I would think it's more my philosophical bend because I didn't have an outlet until university where I could choose my sport. I was very good at swimming which is I'm a natural athlete, I was able to swim while all my family did that but when I go to choose may sport, it took until I was nineteen twenty years old before I could do that. As a child I was very philosophical so I've managed to



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find the school that (10:42) a philosophy with the way I moved in which is why it's still engages me to the level it does. And we're going to go back to your martial arts boxing distinction because martial arts somewhat a tradition they associated with the philosophy boxing tends not to or could be consider secular if that's the way of describing it. But definitely my philosophical way of thinking, way I conceiving at the world play into why I do the sport at this level.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How far in to your training where you when you discover that there was that philosophical element?

James Southwood:

Well I'm studying philosophy at university at that time and I was drifting a long way from western philosophy. I picked up Shunryu Suzuki's Zen mind which I'm not sure how many of your listeners were ready I can partly recommend that they do so. So for the first three years I was using a lot of Zen and eastern thought to conquer my physical training which came un-packaged by anything like that so very early on I was marrying a philosophical side with the training side and at point you want me to continue going on to other philosophy's as if you'd want to ask me another question.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let it ride if you want to continue. I suspect that I was talking about philosophy is going to be a big part of our conversation today so take that however far you wanted.

James Southwood:

I'll live that answer with what you ask me which is how early on and I think I gave that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay sure. Were already getting some hints around philosophy and I guess we can call him far more than hints you know you attending university for philosophy and you've described your physical pursuit your sport your savate training now as having a philosophical element. For a lot of martial artists that I speak with, the philosophy tends to be an afterthought in their early training but it tends to become much more forefront as they advanced. Do we say the same of you?

James Southwood:

I think so. I think that's fair to say that the more you practice something the more you ask questions as to how it's happening and why it's happening so it tends to be action first philosophy later and then later on the reverse. If you were to ask me well that's a good thing or not, I don't know whether you should



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introduce people to the philosophy earlier or let that training find it as they get better or I say seek their own way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well I suspect based on the size of the philosophy house at the university I attended that if we were to move the philosophical elements of martial arts a bit more forefront and early on we might see even lower participation.

James Southwood:

I guess so, most people phone me up because they want to learn how to defend them self from the street not because they want to learn how to resolve some sort of tension in themselves.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now we've talk about savate as if everyone listening knows what it is I've fortunate enough to have trained a little bit with a savate instructor. Had some seminars and gotten to know who he is. I'm aware that not everyone listening may know what savate is French boxing you know what is this? So maybe you could offer a bit of a summary for everyone?

James Southwood:

Sure. Savate is French boxing the French call boxing with the hands box on gloves, English boxing where is the French use their feet as well. If you think about how agile a boxer is they moved their fists very quickly and a stand a lines attacking and defending on. French boxers do that with their feet also and whenever I say that to people they'll say "Oh that's like kick boxing" and I'd say actually kick boxing is a 1970's pretty much invention and French boxing is been going on since about 1830, before that probably. It was fortified in about 1830. Then they say "Oh it's that like Thai boxing". And the distinction between savate and Thai boxing is mainly the use of the shins. Thai boxers hits with the shin, French boxers hits with their shoes so we got to picture French boxing as a very agile, and because the rules only permit you to use the shoe, you must be very aware of your distance, very aware of your timing, and those constraints make quite a lovely sport. It is a sport. It's a boxing sport it happens in the ring it happens with the referee with rules that sort of thing and the other disciplines beside it. Boxing is the most popular one, but you can also do savate form which is savate set to music where you don't hit anyone if you that's you're thing. You can do (15:48) which is the same movements as savate boxing but you use a stick in step. Grand batton, bigger stick or savate defense which is the self defense side so depending where you go savate can be a complete martial arts as it were with weapons, self defense and sport. I tend to focus on the boxing that's been my interests my passion that's what I'm good at and that's what I teach.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting. I did not know the history. I didn't know it had been established so long ago I'd assume it was kind of parallel with you know with kick boxing.

James Southwood:

Yeah. The history has got more intrigue than that because there is I don't know if everyone in the world listening will appreciate it, but England of France being such cross neighbors, and the English fight use their fists, they understood (16:47) and the French fighters use their feet and of course each one thought the other was crazy. The English think the French that they used their feet that's been on the floor, it's very dirty and the French would think the English (17:01) is an artistic and too simple to use your hands and always with this things it takes one bright spot to put the 2 together. The story goes that in about 1830, a French man travel to London and was beaten by an English boxer and it is perhaps only a story but that's the founding story and from that the first the first training salon of savate boxing was created.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now I'm curious if the quantification of savate was kind of steep in these cultural roots and perhaps the resistance to anything English, does that find its way into the rules or any of the stylistic elements? You know the favoritism of say feet over hands?

James Southwood:

That last part is true but I'm not sure if it's for the reason's you supposed. The kicks are more highly valued than punches when you're judging at about or when you're examining someone. But the rule is find that the (18:14) by taking essentially the (18:16) for boxing, with the French who is for kicking so you get occasion on mismatches in which it is illegal to punch to the back, but it is legal to kick to the back. The solution, stitching point of the rules that isn't quite resolved but people don't tend to see in this (18:37) terms when you're practicing. You're just doing boxing with your hands and your feet.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Have you had much opportunity to, I guess cross trainer to train with folks and other disciplines.

James Southwood:

Yup. I do a lot of what I'm going to call English boxing by which I mean boxing with the hands only. So I've train with all sorts of approaches over the years and different places you know underground boxing gyms, amateur boxing that sort of stuff and that always helps. I like the way those coaches, if you find a



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good boxing coach. I like the way that discipline is instilled and I like the movements that come about so I've train a lot of boxing. I did five years of Thai boxing in a good gym in London which, it teaches you how to defend yourself a little bit. Teaches you different ways through sparring, different ways to use your range. So I think that's my cross training, boxing, bit of Thai boxing and training and competing with people all over the world in savate. The various first countries come to you with different ways of doing the sport and twenty years I've seen it change and evolve. It's not quite the same sport as it was when I first saw it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well let's talk about that competition in some of the ways that things have changed. You mentioned early on in our conversation that you were competitive person and that kind of being the reason that you went back to your second class. Are you still competing now?

James Southwood:

I do still compete now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, now we haven't had too many people on the show who have spent twenty years competing, in their martial arts or martial pursuit or whatever you want to call it. So what is it that keeps you coming back to competition?

James Southwood:

Sure. Well I think my over goal in martial arts is to be like some of the people I see. They were better in tournaments in savate in which people of aged 60's or 70's still compete. And they still compete effectively because the movements are pretty sensible. There's no undue stress on the knees or if you train (20:51) there's no reason why you can't do it quite well when your sixty or seventy. So I still intend to be competing in another twenty years' time. This is the nice fit about savate. One of the ways in which I think it differs some kick boxing is that it's playful. You are introduced to sparring very early on and you are encouraged or given the tools to make you a playful pursuit rather than only an aggressive one. You can learn aggression like you on some people of course a more aggressive than others. It's fundamentally play. So you can play and you can keep playing for the twenty years and don't have a problem with that. I think I enjoy competition because it does give you that knife edge of those this work or doesn't it. Specially in the political world in a last couple of years is come to the forefront cause a lot of mistrust in public information. There's a lot of ways in which we're beginning to ask questions about facts and about science and so forth. What I like about boxing is that if something doesn't work, you can say it doesn't work. If someone tells you to do something that they can't demonstrate in



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working it doesn't work. So competition is that knife edge that cuts away anything that isn't useful. I didn't mean to paraphrase firstly there but you can see where outcomes have come from.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Tell us a bit about the way competition has changed.

James Southwood:

I wanna be on to that and kind a two ways but the reason I'm cautious is that of course I've changed a lot in the last twenty years so I don't know how reliable my observation is...

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think that's true of all of us when we compare things.

James Southwood:

True.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Isn't lot of root of how we look back favorably on everything? Everything was better in the past.

James Southwood:

Oh yeah. But I do think there was some fundamental changes that have occurred as well. For example, when I started it was such a French dominated sport. Their methods and their technique, we dominated of everything and since then there's been a lot of competition directed at them from eastern Europe, from my country, from other places that have changed why it's effective when you fight. So it was a lot more technical, a lot more kick based from we started and a solution more boxing based and I'd know slightly less fluid I'm going to say so in as fluent style that dominates now although I supposed like everyone is been doing it twenty years while considers oneself old school and I like to think that I can still do the fluent techniques that used to win prizes. For me I'm not, I don't think I'm naturally a fighter. Now you probably didn't invite me on to tell you that your martial arts and to you to say I'm not a fighter but I think that's pretty true of me I didn't enjoy boxing or competing very much and I wasn't very good at defending myself or hitting other people when I started. So I had to learn all of those basic competition piece by piece. I had to learn how to defend, learn how to move my head a bit. And it took me ages to learn I could actually be any good at that.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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What was your mind set during that time because I sense you know just connecting some dots about you, I get to sense that you might be fairly hard on yourself if you're not getting something at the rate that you think you should. So during that early time when, no maybe you don't feel as naturally inclined towards some of the aspects of this sport that you've chosen. Is that difficult?

James Southwood:

I guess, I don't think it was and I think it's because I love myself to define myself so as a technician rather than a fighter as someone who could compete the movements and understood them but wasn't naturally that effective in the ring but like I say to most of my students as they start because most of them need to (25:13), you always start off good at something and you have to learn the rest. Some people on their first day are have amazing balance and you can't rock them and they just going to get, they can re-balance from day one. Other people come with the natural information to box, to move their head and they're good at that. Other people just get their timing right from day one. You always start with something and the rest you have to learn. In my case I was good at doing the kicks, I was good at doing the movements, I was a natural athlete but it took me years to learn how to put that together in a boxing sense, in a way of making it work as a fight strategy. And so I don't think I was that harsh on myself I just allowed myself, to self-define as a technician rather than a fighter and I learned that goes second.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you think it would have been better in anyway or easier or.. let me ask you a different way. What do you think your experience would have been like if the opposite had been true? What if you would been more inclined towards the combat? What if you'd had more of that instinct, but less technical skill early on?

James Southwood:

That's a hard one to answer in (26:27) case. Other people I've seen do come in with that skill set tend to get sick in their habit. They tend to have some success with the skills they do have and get obsessed with fighting better. More combat, more relying on instinct more and more and you can see in old boxers who haven't got hit anymore but still rely in their battle, they are the warrior instincts. And they say the same fight would've befall on me if I was very good at moving and then not learning, they are more actual ways to getting the technique right? You end up sure cussing here because you're quite good at getting out of trouble. So I daresay this was the better way round to learn at least at my case.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm going to throw you potentially a curve ball, when I apologize for doing so because I ain't know that I was going to have a martial philosopher or whatever I might referred you as in our conversation today.



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When you consider the intersection for you of your training and philosophy, what is the greatest philosophical dilemma that you see in front of you?

James Southwood:

That I've seen in front of me now or that I've seen in a past?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Either. Whichever one's going to lead us to a better conversation.

James Southwood:

I think the greatest dilemma philosophy facing me and facing other students at the school is the difference. the gap between what people are capable of doing in (28:10) more they end up doing. There are whole hosts of philosophical and psychological reasons why people do not do what they capable of doing. And the methods by which they hold themselves back is both a great philosophy on what is to be a human being and to deal with your own barriers and obstacles and is a method of psychology for how to help somebody do that. So everyone I teach you know from their first beginner to somebody's about to be a champion, they are dealing with the fact that is it a gap between both that probably capable of getting accomplished in this next fight and what they will end up doing. Two reasons of either that maybe they don't think they're up to it, maybe they are buckle a little of the last moment maybe they're too tense on fight day. All of these reasons contribute to that gap, and in a sense I see myself, my role as a coach as reducing that gap and that's also I want to spend the time in my own career. How can I reduce the gap between what I can do and what I end up doing and that's what most my philosophy is directed at.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can you talk to us about some of the strategies that you used with the athlete as a coach to reduce that gap?

James Southwood:

I'm going to by talking about something of use to myself and then I'll consider if I manage to effectively help with no one else with it. I was I think in the position prior to 2014, most of the right teammates and I, we had a really good time at tournaments and we always had a laugh and some of us win medals but we didn't really see ourselves as people who going to win this tournament and I was part of the group setup that was what we did and it's a bit of a British underdog mentality and that was the gap. The gap was that it was outside of our expectations to win a tournament and become a champion, but it was within our expectation as to go win a medal and do very well and get prize and congratulations



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afterwards. So the method I used on myself, which identified that and separate myself off from my teammates for one tournament and do it my way and not come in with the settled with this expectation the way that you come and win a bronze or silver if we're lucky, but actually go home with a gold. And by ignoring the social pressure to come second or third, I came first. And maybe it's the only point in my life for one day of my life I did perform at the absolute maximum of my ability. I reduce the gap to just about zero and it stings like that that I think I try, it'd be different for every student but every student has got some reason that's holding them back and for me, it was just participation in this group thing. It said we are good for bronze and silver but we're not good for gold. And I think I felt at least one night I manage to get of it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've spent enough time myself competing whether it's in martial arts or another thing that I... What you're talking about here with this gap between one's potential and one's actual performance, gap is so real. And it's such an amazing thing to be able to reduce that gap and have that experience because once you've done it once, not only are you at least to my experience better able to get back there again but it can almost be addictive, right? Because we're so used to existing and performing at that one level, that reduced level that becomes our awareness, our self-thought, that's who we are in our place in the world.

James Southwood:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And then we reached that other stage and it gives a whole new perspective on who we really are as an individual.

James Southwood:

I often say to people you've heard of Cus D'Amato who was Mike Tyson's trainer. He said something interesting. Said boxing is all about fear. You could teach anyone to hit a bag. People can learn how to be (32:28) and go for runs but if they can't control their fear, they are not going to be good at boxing and this is where the intersection between philosophy and martial arts of boxing comes in to it because so much of that is how do you live your life free from fear. Free from worry that the next thing that happens to you, or any kind of fear like this, that's the ultimate liberation in a way. I did it twice and I realize because I did a couple of years after winning that title, put myself in that same mindset and accomplish what you just described which is the sense that actually you're a changed person and you have access to this place where you're not set by this limits and in a sense, the addiction for me is been



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in trying to show other people that in as a coach. Putting someone else in that position and showing them what it can really be like. That's the hook for me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why? What is it about that feeling or that situation that is predictive in a sense?

James Southwood:

There's a freedom from tension which is usually what guides us to do what we do in the world. And that freedom from tension, you're asking me in a what's a meaning of life in a way which is question I don't qualify to answer but if you can reach these moments of freedom, these numerous moments of release from your normal expectations, it's just a glimpse of something different and you can't coach yourself and coach other people to being able to behave that way. As an open an unanswered question for me rather that's possible all the time, or whether you experience that only in moments or whether you can train yourself to do it more frequently I don't know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Quite often when we have guest on the show, we'll take about you know the high points, the good stuff, how they start, you know things like that. But I'm always interested about kind of the other end of the spectrum cause to me martial arts is always been a tool set that I can use not just for fun and for positive reasons, but it can be useful to avoid negative things. I'd love to hear about sometime in your life when martial arts were able to do that for you.

James Southwood:

To avoid something negative.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and people answer that no other different way sometimes it's we have stories about physical confrontation or things that are less.

James Southwood:

I spend a lot of time these days on stoic philosophy and is as saying (35:19) that misfortune is (35:22) opportunity. That for everything that goes wrong as a chance to show what you have to do or what you can do about it what you've been to that. And I truly believed that the reason I paused was because some point in 2014, I was in a training gym in Paris and I almost quit the sport but I've been doing it for over fifteen years at the time, and I was so frustrated that I couldn't do what I wanted to do in this club



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and they didn't let me spar with the good people at the back and I was kind a been I felt like I was kind of being lost that by someone. And that sort of negative feeling is gold dust because you can go into it what could exactly was bothering it and if you can work on what's bothering you can get around it or do something better. And that's what I did. In the few months later, I was world champion. So I never stressed too much about these negative moments or if something negative happens to me I think and still happens. You have a day when you think I'm awful on this sport, I can't do this, so then why I even started. You feel that for a moment or a longer and it shows you what to do next so I'm always open to these experiences now because it does give you the next clue.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you find that the frequency of those moments ever reduces? Or does the self-talk just changed?

James Southwood:

I think the self-talk changes but I think it's a mistake to rely too heavily on past accomplishments because I think that way you start to get the wrong impression of yourself and you can start to believe your own high for your own story. It's boxers are harsh on themselves is it the boxing match says you are only good as your last fight. They're kind of right, it's kind of wrong as well. And I kind of think it never ever goes away. You always have self-doubt and you're always part of what it is to be a human being or a martial artists to have that self-doubt and I think as you get older or as you get more experienced, you just learned to operate with it in a different way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For me the self-doubt continues, right? And I think as much as I've tried to shed it, it becomes tide into my motivation. If I was constantly satisfied with where I was at, I would know why I was moving forward. You know it almost seem pointless. And sometimes that voice gets really loud and you know will kind a takeover and tell me that "Yeah, why did I even bother starting this. I'm terrible at this" you know whatever it is unfortunately it's about more than just martial arts. It can be literally anything that I'm dealing with. But then I've got enough experience I guess listening to that voice, hearing what it's saying and kind a flipping it using it as fuel to prove to myself that I am good. Is it similar for you at all?

James Southwood:

I can relate to exactly the way you've said that, yes. And that's kind of what I meant by you operate on a differently the older you get because you get a sudden rush of self-doubt. Or something goes wrong and you think hang on I really should have been able to handle that or you know so called world champion, how come you didn't manage to touch that guy whatever it is. It comes to you but I've learned to have a dialogue myself in a much more rational way. So I can take that incoming information and ask myself well is that true first of all and it was not then maybe it's just a feeling that will go. Then you can ask



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yourself what really is true, why is it true? Why is it true that I couldn't lay a glove on this guy. And I start to work out maybe I'm standing in slightly the wrong place for that type of fighter. Maybe I haven't got my eyes on the right place so my gloves suck. Those was the things. There's no end to that certain learning and it that part expect to what I'd said a while ago and it said never becomes easy to box. You're always two people moving around trying to do something pretty gymnastic whilst the other guy or a girl is trying to punch you in the face. That's never an easy equation so I now know is to let myself off the hook if I can't get it just right. And I know how to use that information to make myself a better boxer, understand a little bit more the next time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now we've talked a little bit earlier about you know you mentioned book that some of the listeners might be familiar with but you didn't sound too fond of it. Let's think of it the other way are there books that our listeners might be interested in whether they're martial arts book or not that you think you know could rolled into the audience.

James Southwood:

Sure, first I want to make my thoughts clear on Shinryu Suzuki and his Zen mind, beginner's mind. That is an excellent book that I keep returning to and so I recommend the second time to your listeners. And it's hard to make book recommendations I think in general because you don't know who your audience is, as to each ailment, a specific medicine. And for me that has been first Zen and the form of Shinryu Suzuki and some others. Later existentialism, and I made a lot of (41:34) who writes on anxiety and you know, ask anyone with a serious understanding, a serious experience of martial arts, anxiety is one of the key things to understand and (41:50) nineteen century philosophy and I've read most of him on there. If you can pick up a (41:56) then I think you're on your way to understanding anxiety a little bit better. More recently I've have been involved in and thinking about stoic philosophy and we'd (42:12) his handbook or his just clauses. I think all of these have a connecting aspect which is how to act. How do you convert what you want to do into what you're doing which is the same question I post before about a gap between what you're capable of and what you end up doing. All of these books address I think that central question and it's a question that says what's the difference between in and the afterlife of the human being. So I'd recommend Suzuki, (42:49). To the reader for whom that is the medicine they need.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I rather decent amount of (42:57) in school.

James Southwood:

Yup.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

And yeah there's not everyone enjoys reading existentialism but I think everyone should. Not they certainly like it but they should do it.

James Southwood:

That's what should be in the opening that the subtitle of first chapter shouldn't it? Not everyone enjoys it, but everyone should. I think it's the idea that you have to live your experience which is the starting point of existentialism is the same starting point you have in martial arts. We've open into either boxing gym's or dojos where you kind a get a suspicion that the person teaching it doesn't practice what they preach. Doesn't live through in this experience and anyone it doesn't invite you to do that yourself is probably I don't want to say I'm critical of it, but I think the invitation to experience is part of coaching.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now we spend a lot of time today talking about you and your past and we've talk about a lot philosophically but we haven't talked about future.

James Southwood:

Sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You did mention your hope to continue training and competing to an advanced stage but beyond that let's talk about the why I guess. What is it about you know looking out twenty years and wanting to continue competing that's important to you?

James Southwood:

Because when you scratched a surface of something you do get a little bit of understanding of its step and I can see that is still more to come. There's still more or less to peel off, If that's not confusing a metaphor. I do make that my primary goal now because it informs how I do my daily practice. If I box today dangerously and in a week's time I'm injured, the more often that happens, the shorter my career is going to be. I'm going aboard this weekend maybe you don't want to say that on something it's going to be edited later.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No that's okay.



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James Southwood:

I frequently go aboard and in each competition I'm making contacts for the next one or understanding who's there and what's happening. I'm always thinking about you know the next season and in seasons to come. Who I might going to be out to box with? Where can I send my students? Who's good to train with? and I don't want to end that anytime soon so all of my training is kind of directed into preserving that and give myself the longest career possible. I think for the best understanding possible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

People want to find you online websites, social media you know. What you got for that that we can stick on the show notes?

James Southwood:

Search first in London savate, almost anywhere on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram. londonsavate.com.uk is our website where if you want to come and train with me at London welcome anytime. I think that's about it for online.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. Yeah that's great and of course anyone that might been new, we put the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. This has been a lot of fun I always enjoy having philosophical discussions with people and I suspect that we could spent a quiet a bit of time chatting.

James Southwood:

I hope I'm not giving you too much ramble that you going to have to end it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, no I love the ramble and you know let's get one more bit of you for everyone. You know we kind of do the parting words, the words of wisdom, whatever you wanna call it. So how would you wanna sign this episode off? what do you wanna leave to listeners with?

James Southwood:

This kind of relates to what you're asking about looking forward to the future it's something I say I'm obliged to say to students the whole time because they'll all ask me on their first week "How long do I



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have to do this for until I'm good?" and this relates to what we've been saying about self-doubt and about getting better and a how you changed your internal conflicts as you go. But my answer is always the same. If you train for one week, you got one week good. If you train for one year, you get one year good. If you train for five years, you get five years good. It's as simple as that. There's no other goal setting (47:28). So at the moment I'm twenty years good and you know I hate to be at some point forty or fifty years good at this floor. But for me it's contained in that - the main motivation to train which is to keep training.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If you've been listening to the show for a while you know that one of my favorite things is to come away from an episode with things to think about. It doesn't happen all the time, but it definitely happened today. It's been a little while since we finished a recording and I needed to take some time to contemplate really how I felt about this episode. Now obviously I enjoyed it. It was a good conversation, but I feel like there's a lot of unfinished thoughts in my head and as we already established from the episode, the deeper you get in the martial arts, the more important these philosophical aspects are. So thank you Professeur for coming on the show sharing your stories, your time and giving me a lot to think about. We've got show notes with photos and links over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Remember this is episode 382 and you can try all our products we make at whistlekick.com. Don't forget that discount code `podcast15`, get your 15% off and if you can help us out by making a purchase, or sharing an episode, leaving us a review somewhere, we would appreciate any or all of that. Personally, I would very much appreciate your help. Find us on social media we are @whistlekick, Instagram, YouTube, twitter and Facebook, and you can get to me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com. I love hearing feedback. Thank you for your time today and until next time Train hard, smile and have a great day.