



Episode 384 – Coach Joe Saunders | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there everybody thanks for stopping by this is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio. It's episode 384 and today I am joined by Coach Joe Saunders. My name is Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host on this show. I am the founder at whistlekick and martial arts is my life. You can find out all the projects that we're working on at whistlekick.com and if you choose to buy something while you're over there and I hope you do helps keep the lights on you can use the code "podcast15" to save 15%. If you want everything related to this show, there's a separate website that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and that's where you'll find show notes, transcripts, photos, videos, links, and all of it available for free. We do this show twice a week and we hope that you it enjoy so please help us out a little bit, share this show, leave some comments, make a purchase, just something to help us keep going. Today, I'm joined by fellow martial art podcaster Coach Joe Saunders. It was a great conversation. Had a lot of fun. we talked a lot about reality based martial arts and violence. it's a subject that's come up on the show a couple times before and we've even exchanged some guests. I hope you enjoy listening as much as I enjoy participating so here we go.

Coach Saunders welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Joe Saunders :

Thank you very much Jeremy appreciated the invitation and thanks for having me.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely I appreciate you being on. you know, you have the distinction of being one of a few guests who also have your own podcast so as I tell the audience as their expecting amazing great things out of both of us.

Joe Saunders :

well don't expect too much because it is 5:30 a.m. at the moment where I'm recording from so I'll try not to disappoint but we'll see how it go. I've only had one coffee which is (01:52) less than I need.

Jeremy Lesniak:

OH... well I appreciate you waking up early and yeah, I Imagine I was trying to put myself in the place of the listeners and I imagine and I hear Oh, the guests also has a podcast. these guys are going to be pros. they're going to knock it out of the park and it would probably be similar as you know you have two black belts who have never trained together. people with lots of experience and they get together to let's say present a seminar. that might not go very well because they don't know another. they don't know when to work together, when to leave each other alone. and that's kind of I mean that's pretty similar to what we're doing here today isn't it?

Joe Saunders:

yes, try but look I'm more than happy to be the okay you can be the (02:45) and you step and I'll follow.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If I do my job well, it's going to come across the opposite way so let's dig in to that and let's you know, you're already throwing around Japanese terms so that tells us something about your training time so how did you get going? how'd you find martial arts?

Joe Saunders:

Okay so I am from Australia if my accent isn't giving it away but I grew up with brothers that we're much older than me so yeah sort of a blended family with both my mother and father had previous marriages and kids from those previous marriages. I was the sole product of the second marriage each, and so I had uh two brothers, there were thirteen years and fifteen years older than me I grew up as the very much baby of the family. I had sisters as well but they're not consequential to the story. so sorry sisters if you're listening. But both my brothers we're national champions in taekwondo and from the age of basically from what I can remember, there's always a Bruce lee movie on or Jean-Claude Van Damme movie on tv. my brothers would be going tournaments trying coming back with medals and because I



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was the kid brother I would then come home and put the medal around my neck and I thought that was pretty cool so pretty much from the time I was old enough, I pressured mom into letting me go train. so I started taekwondo, I think I started 4 years of age which I think I was a year younger than they wanted to allow it but I guess because I was persistent, they end up giving in. I stand up with my brothers taekwondo club and I don't really have a great field of memories at that time I'm quite so young but over the next decade or so, my family moved around quite a bit. we moved cities on a regular basis every couple of years just for work whenever else. and every time we moved, I would try to find martial art for training and uh I wasn't really picky and didn't really know much what I was doing. I just knew I enjoy this thing where you wear pajamas and you do the kicking and the punching. so I got an early exposure to a variety of different martial arts. so yes in some areas that we moved to and we moved predominately larger rural areas so it wasn't always uh huge selection of what was available and I just ended up wherever was available and cheap probably. and main guiding factory I can have reflect on as a parent that my parents where we just chose a sample of two or three that were for the board said you can choose one of those ones. so we've got a little bit of exposure to I know a delivery in karate when I was younger. Some Goju Ryu. I did some boxing and kickboxing. there's Indo Kai which is an Australian freestyle karate/kickboxing. so the system and yes I as we moved around I just sort of played with different martial arts wherever we went and which actually reflecting on that now, build a really good base for what would come next because I didn't get married 21 style and I didn't develop rigid I guess concepts of how things should be done. I was quite open to the different approaches because every time I got to meet sensei or a new master, I would learn a new way of doing something that I've previously done. so I guess it forced me to be open-minded from a young age which is sometimes a battle I found when I'm training now, when I'm when I'm training for martial artists that have been doing something since. therefore, it's very hard to explain the market maybe there's a different way. So yeah that was pretty much my early years and I can sort of give me the synopsis of what happens next but I took a couple years off martial arts to play rugby in there growing up in Queensland in Australia, playing rugby league is sort of a rite of passage. and I end up versus sustaining quite a bad facial fracture, I caught a running elbow to the face and broke my orbital bone and my septum and the other squishy bits in my face. and I was told I couldn't play rugby league anymore and awaiting surgery one so. this is when I was 14 so I was told I had to have surgery when I was 18 but they wouldn't do the surgery (07:30) growing so I had to do something else. I couldn't sustain any more face impact. so that point I was just lifting weights at a local community center where we call (07:43) I started to lifting some weights and I happened to come out of it maybe a year into this. I came out of the gym and I saw these guys these guys throwing each other around on a gymnastics mat and I went over and ask them what they're doing because I was a big pro wrestling fan and I recognized that these guys were suplexing each other. looks pretty cool what are these guys up to it. I went over and asked them and as it turns out it was one of Australia's very very very few amateur wrestling clubs. A Greco and freestyle wrestling club and that like that the sport is so tiny in Australia that it was complete fluke that I found these guys. and as it turns out, the coach there was (08:28), Yuri was a former assistant coach in the USSR national team from the 80's and 90's. he was a tremendous coach. one of the other guys that was wrestling with him was a then young man named Dan Higgins who is one of Australia's top mixed martial arts fighters at that time and this is maybe 2001, the pre MMA boom. but he was fighting professionally in Japan. we also had a guy there a large guy name Aron Stapleton who was a multi-time national champion in Greco-



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Roman wrestling. I've stumbled across these guys from quite a high level and I was fifteen-year-old kid and they kind of took me in and let me train with them and that was my first exposure really to training hard because anyone who's ever wrestled will tell you that it's probably the most physically demanding combat endeavor there is. I'm not aware of any lazy wrestlers especially the Russian coach and it's got absolutely creamed for weeks on end before I actually learned anything. I think they'll just try to make sure I was going to keep coming back all that bothered investing in me. That's all that led to a lead to a development where I for the first time in my martial arts journey, I was actually good at something. I was a fairly big kid and almost fifteen I was already six foot one and these American terms probably about 240 pounds

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good job making that conversion on the fly by the way.

Joe Saunders :

yeah, I do it regularly. yeah so, I was always a big kid and wasn't overly flexible but obviously taekwondo doesn't translate well if you're being a little bit slow and not very flexible. but when I started wrestling, all of a sudden all my natural sort of abilities kind of came to the fore and I was actually fairly good at it. I won't go too far down the path cause I'm sure we'll get there but that actually led me to my first real love which was judo. I fell into judo because I was a I was training for a big wrestling competition that was coming up at national championships. And my coach went back to Russia for a holiday and there's no wrestling training for four weeks or something and at the youth club that I was training out there, there was a judo club. I went along and watched what they were doing and I recognized so many of the techniques but I thought hey I'll just hang out with these guys and do a little bit of training and coach will be really happy when I when he comes back that I've stayed active. I realized that judo was a much more popular sport in Australia than wrestling was which saying something judo is not pretty popular still. had a high profile in wrestling. these guys actually had the opportunity to compete. every two to four weeks there's a new competition that these guys compete at and being at that point 17 years old and having trained a lot, the idea of being able to compete and test myself was very very appealing I decided of my own and my own initiative to sign up and do a judo competition. I ended up tearing my ACL in my first sorry my second match. I lost my first match and then tore my ACL in my second match. that that led me to having to take 12 months off training to have a knee surgery and rehabbing and I had to tell my coach when he came back from Russia that there's a big competition that he's been grooming me for that I wasn't able to compete that I torn my knee doing judo and he said "why did you do judo?". I was trying to hit, trying to keep you happy. as it turns out I mean I will get into the story I won't go along. but in the 12 months that I was away from actual training, I just became obsessed with studying judo, history of Judo and the philosophies of Cano, and I got really enamored with the art. I think it was the exact right blend for me of something I was good at. being grappling and the traditional martial arts influence that I've grown up with. I think just blending those two together and then I also like the creativity that judo allowed especially at the time free a lot of cool changes. but in wrestling I always felt that there was about 5 high percentage techniques and once you



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kind of got those techniques down and became a better athlete. whereas with judo at the time, I felt there was there's twenty or thirty techniques that could all work and allow you a little bit more creativity with how you can apply those techniques and different styles they're made for more interesting matches and strategic battles. I fell in love with judo at that point and they kind of led to that to the next stage. well I'll stop in there because I was like it's me time about 18 years of age so that's my youth.

Jeremy Lesniak:

there's a lot there. there's a lot we can say. and of course we can say you know because rugby beat you up pretty bad, you ended up finding judo which beat you up pretty bad

Joe Saunders :

Oh yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We can start. we can say that.

Joe Saunders :

I'm 20 years older in my body than when I am in my age.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now I'm I guess I'm curious. as you move forward in time talking about the different arts that you've trained in. and I'm going to include wrestling in there whether or not and we want to call wrestling a classic or a traditional martial art. plenty of debate about that. we don't even have to have a debate about that because I don't know that it's relevant, but you talked about taekwondo when you were four. you know taekwondo you just kind of laid it out there. but as you talked about later arts you got a little more engaged. I could hear a little bit more emotion coming through your voice and even before you had talked about judo being this thing that you became passionate about I could tell there was something different in Judo for you. not that this is any kind of a video show, but it's no secret I keep notes as I'm talking to guests and when you first started talking you know I wrote down Taekwondo and I crossed it out and within about 10 seconds of you mentioning judo, I wrote down judo.

Joe Saunders:

yeah absolutely yeah.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

What is it about judo? I mean there are plenty of people who have started in judo or in jujitsu or wrestling and they kind of move around in between the three because of the similarities. But it just in the way you talked about wrestling versus judo it seems like night and day for you.

Joe Saunders:

that was a very astute observation. I think it was a combination in fact is it some have to do with the art and some have to do with just the stage of my life I was at and some other sort of intangibles about that club I guess the decision to train there. I think definitely coming from like what I started wrestling, that was a that was kind of the first time I had independently decided to study something on my own. when I was growing up, martial artists became part of my life where as we'd move, martial arts was a way of me finding new friends. I'd just go find the club or train. I didn't put much thought into it. I wasn't really a you know, I was just a kid that was something I did as a hobby. It wasn't really something I had great aspirations to do forever. I don't think I've really thought about whether I'm going to be a martial artist my whole life or whether I'm going to go to the Olympics or whatever. I never really had those thoughts. I just trained because it was fun and sometimes you have to have a have an ice-cream from McDonald's on the way home afterwards. whereas when I had that break for a couple of years playing rugby league and then came back, I had to actually make a choice to engage in this activity where I could have been one of the millions of people that we all meet that "oh yeah I do little bit of martial arts as a kid and I did I didn't yeah six months to talk to or I did six months of judo or whatever". We have all these other people in our lives that feel they need to tell us about how they did hear of something when they're growing up. that could have been me and but I but I made a choice to come back. wrestling started that because as a fairly athletic kid, that was the first thing that kind of made me realize that I did have some ability to do something. was just in a new skill set. then judo kind of really brought it home for me because I had as I said before had the existing skill set. plus, it had the traditional martial arts I guess philosophies and the culture and the etiquette and all that sort of stuff that there was familiar to me in that I loved from martial arts growing up. there's also some factors that they really have nothing to do with the art. that's just to do with the fact that I was 18. by the time I came back to judo after my knee reconstruction and yeah I was finishing high school. I was moving into university. Judo provided a social circle of friends that were my own age which wrestling can have in wrestling hustler. I was the youngest by 10 years so I was a child king beaten by grown adult so every time we trained. so be able to hook up with other with other young guys that were my age, that had a social circle attached to it and yeah those guys became my best friends and as well as my training partners in my late of my coaches. I think yeah I think there's elements of the style of Judo that in (18:46) be but also just elements for the social side of where I was at in my life and what the Judo club provided.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting stuff. you hinted a couple times as you talk about the chronology of your life growing up, finding different martial arts and you said that you're kind of drawing a line in the sand roughly it at 18.



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we know they use continue training judo as you got into university but you've kind of alluded to the fact that there's more and I suspect that the more isn't just more judo am I right?

Joe Saunders:

Yeah that's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

so we're did judo take you next?

Joe Saunders:

Right, so judo took me into competition. I love competing so I'm if you if you can explain the rules to me in less than an hour, I'll have a practice ready. I mean if you can't explain the rules and consequences of breaking them out that bad. I became very obsessed with competing in judo and anything that was related to her. I was very fortunate that I was part of a very strong competitive club. I progressed quite early. within six months of coming back from my knee surgery I am so at six months of returning to the mat after knee surgery so probably 18 months post-op. I won an international open within 12 months. I won a national title and then made Australian team and competed internationally. I won national university games so I was able to scratch that itch competitively with judo. unfortunately, as anyone in judo will tell you that it comes with tons of the cost of injuries and also no money. I got to a stage in my life where I had competing very hard for a number of years and my body was hurting and I had no money, and I decided to take some time off over there. here in Australia we have a summer break from university similar to the US. but a summer break is over Christmas and over that time I decided I'd take some time off and I would go make some money and a logical way to make money when you're six foot three and 250 pounds and on the national judo team is that you get a job as a bouncer in nightclubs. whoever that I sort of still remember that when I walked into the security company's office and said hey this is me and this is my background and this is what I do. I'm studying English Literature at university so I wasn't a meathead and I said yeah I'd like to make some money in nightclubs do you have anything and the answer was pretty much can you start this weekend? so yeah and I was again I was very green I was 19 years old. I had never been in a real fight in my life. actually I take it back I'd had one real fight in my life and I was 10 years old or 11 years old. I was swimming in a lagoon and another kid I didn't know came up and punched me in the face because he thought I was somebody who said something about his sister and my response to that was to leave the lagoon and cry. that was my only exposure to real violence at that point and here I was thinking that I'd be brave as bouncer. I started working in night clubs and pubs doing door work and that really changed the game for me. I started to realize that the real violence doesn't look like what I've done in the dojo. that combat sport and by this point I dabbled. I did a little bit of Brazilian jiu-jitsu. I've done a little bit of a striking arts mostly playing around with friends who are also martial artists. I realized that combat support provides a good platform for the physicality of real violence as those traditional martial arts depending on how its trained. but there are



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so many other aspects that I wasn't prepared for. I wasn't prepared for threat of real harm. for example, at the point that I started bouncing, I was in pretty good shape I could do five-minute randori judo rounds with top-level judo guys and I'd be okay. my cardio wouldn't be too bad but a minute and a half rolling around on the floor of a nightclub with a big tongue in and about be - them here gasping for air because the threat of losing entailed physical harm. he wasn't he wasn't going to stop when I run out of gas he wasn't going to stop about that yeah door. you know there's a chance that I really had stomped on or I was going to get blast or something. there are so many different factors that I become aware of in terms of in terms of the risks of real violence and the different facets which we'll get into for short that's subject my podcast. but I from a training point of view, I started doing more Brazilian jiu-jitsu because all of a sudden I was working nights and most judo training was at night time so I couldn't keep training as regularly as I was. but there was a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy they had daytime classes. so I started doing more BJJ at that point just - it was also nicer to my body and work at that point. my shoulders were kind of beat-up. yeah my knee was kind of beat-up and it was nice to just sort of be on the ground and not being throwing around and taking that impact all the time. that was kind of where my training went for a little while. the big evolution for me was when I was really dealing with this real violence on a three four five nights a week basis and figuring out that there is so much that martial arts hasn't prepared me for here and I'm figuring out some of it on my own. but there has to be something I can do that bridges the gap between what I'm training and what the reality is. and at that point there's a really good martial arts publication in Australia for many years called Blitz martial arts magazine. Blitz was something I subscribe to and I read every episode. I read every issue. they so growing these stories on this one I'm Richard Dimitri from Canada and yeah Justin called (25:21) was essentially a reality-based self-defense method where Rich was quite well known for his applications of scenario-based training and making training as realistic as possible. more considering safe fuel sometimes not really considering safety to be honest but he they said he certainly made it realistic. I reading these articles and I thought man this guy's on to something. this looks a lot like what I'm dealing with. as it turns out, Rich was coming to Australia for his first seminar tour that year and I've bought some plane tickets and I went out and I met the guy and we did four days of training. it really opened my eyes to reality based self defense and how really was just it was a different delivery system for my existing skills. so I came away from that seminar with a couple of new tools but more importantly more training how to apply the tools I already had. that kind of started the evolution of me from traditional martial artist and combat athlete to what I would call a self-defense practitioner or personal safety expert or whatever term you want to put in. I call myself a violence management practitioner now. that's what I do. I manage people's violence whether they physically or psychologically or whatever. that corner was the next evolution for me. was diving how do we take people and prepare them to deal with real violence as opposed to stylizing at all.

Jeremy Lesniak:

hmmm. we've tackled this subject a few times on the show and it's interesting that subject of being a bouncer. you know some kind of security in a nightclub really seems to be the kickoff for quite a few people as they start to understand the difference between the way violence is presented in a martial arts school and the way violence really is.



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Joe Saunders:

I think it's just the exposure I mean most martial artists need to become to be fair most martial artists are fairly well-adjusted people. it might be a stretch but I think most of us grow up with people look at they grow up studying martial arts on a regular basis. typically come from fairly stable environments. they typically have some sort of positive influence in their lives. therefore, they're not likely to go out picking fights. they usually grow up around violence because who people grow up around violence aren't usually concerned about finding a hobby. they're concerned about surviving and getting fed. so because of that, I find a lot of martial artists don't have exposure to real violence unless they have an occupational exposure. so given that, I find that really the very few martial artists that really get it when it comes to real violence or those that have either worked in as some security roles or they've worked in law enforcement or something similar, that's given them some exposure. but I think generally you good people don't end up in violence on a regular basis. so I mean if you're a good person in your environment in a regular basis you need your life so I guess. I think that's probably why I mean it's for most martial artists to get exposure to violence it's going to be a choice. unless you're just an ordinary human being in pants why do you we didn't we find those in martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

fortunately,. yeah. let's try to educate the listeners and I'm including myself in that group. for those of us who have not spent time as a bouncer or in some sort of security role, how do you summarize the differences between and I guess you can use yourself as an example, what did you find that struck us as odd or surprising as you started in this security role that made you say wow I had no idea?

Joe Saunders:

yeah I guess the hard thing is about that question is there is there's a lot of things that when you think about it, it's common sense. but at the time especially being I was 19 I've been training more or less for 15 years. there's a lot of stuff that was instinctive that was a bad idea (30:01) that's just what my training said to do so for example by baptism by fire. my first shift, the first bouncing shift I ever did as it remembers I've never been in a real fight in my life really at this point. I signed on at 7 p.m. I was in my first fight at five minutes past 7:00. so it was welcome to the industry kid. I was on my own. they had mucked up the roster and I was doing my first shift solo for the first hour before the second guy arrives at 8 p.m. so I had to figure out for myself. thankfully I wasn't actively being attacked but I was trying to break up a fight. there's a fight outside the car park. one ago I had the other guy bent over backwards over the hood of a car and he was punching him in the face. I now know that he probably deserved it because it really did end up with a fight like that between few people without someone instigating it. but my instinctive reaction was to obviously pull the guy that was punching away and the guy that was being hit was bleeding and I put my body between the two guys and literally kind of covered up the



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(31:15). I covered him with my body and was getting hit in the back of the head and I took I took about two or three shots before I realized that was a dumb idea because I've just sacrificed my safety for someone I don't know. there's no context as a whether he's that the good guy or the bad guy. I knew it was just the one who's losing the fight. I became aware of it. then other people helped and separated them. as I was nursing the lumps on the back of my head I thought I needed a bit of strategy (31:50). but I was kind of naturally a protector. my mindset was I protected people that were weaker and I'd always be in that way even as a kid. I was always someone who could step in and try and protect people. those there was one sort of evolution being aware of weapons became another thing I dealt with the guys with real knives occasionally. And there's always improvised weapons and that environments. you always thinking about bottles and glasses and things like that. the multiple attacker situation which every martial art pays lip service to if you have a multiple attacker, here's what you do. but the reality of bouncing is that very few people are in the nightclub on their own. but also you have to consider okay they're in a group but who's going to fight? if this guy might be the loose cannon of the group and no one else has any appetite for violence whatsoever and you might have to deal with him but his friends are going to stand back and go well that's just Tom being Tom. they know they're happy to let him be dragged out or you might have a whole group that are all going to start fighting at the same time or you might he might have a group that are itching fight the whole time. reading their group dynamic is important. understand the social hierarchy of the group you're talking to so for example you if you're dealing with a family that I'm getting rowdy and I need to be controlled there's no point talking to the little brother. there's always going to be someone who has control over the group and you need talk to that person and try and build rapport there as opposed to just taking the most problematic person and doing them first. there's an element of group psychology to be aware of. let me say from a technical point of view probably the thing that most martial artists don't really wrap their head around for a little while is the law with use of force and appropriate levels of force and so on. that is a really major stumbling block and I know it still makes me shudder when I see some martial arts teaching self-defense with no regard for what the law will say about what this technique is doing. for me as a bouncer I mean you can glorify the violence and you can say that I was in real fights there three nights a week or whatever but the reality is the vast majority of my "fights" were removing intoxicated persons who refused to leave. they weren't actively aggressive all the time. they were just passively aggressive. I'm just trying to resist or pull away or escape or yeah they might be flailing their arms but they weren't a real threat. My reaction to that flailing arm was to throw an oblique kick and collapsed his knee and then crippled the guy and he can't work for six months then well that wasn't very good self-defense because I'm going to find myself in court. an unfortunate thing a lot of martial artists who are who are operating in some people say what's the difference between reality based martial arts and traditional martial arts. it's a traditional martial art is good there's not a lot of difference but it's the difference from between reality based martial arts and fantasy based martial arts. I find a lot of martial artists are just they're laughing. they're operating in a fantasy world but they hope when they don't, they might have a chance to be Bruce Willis in Die Hard but the reality is they don't really know what they're talking about. I think you understand the use of force. understanding the legal repercussions of violence and that we live in a civilized society most of us and you can't just go around practicing martial arts techniques because you want to see what it looks like for real. you have to have to understand the whys and the how and be prepared to deal with the aftermath. probably also the last factor I throw in there is



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a big one is his understanding that violence isn't over when you think it's over. like that the fight isn't over when someone taps out it isn't over when the person leaves. that the fight is over once that person has decided it's over. so we had oftentimes would throw someone out of a club and yeah not even not even harm them in any way just remove them and come back three hours later still hold a grudge. sometimes, thankfully not anywhere I work but it wasn't uncommon for someone to come back and try and stab the bouncers the guys to be have instance in the car park. I was followed home three hours after I removed these guys and probably home back to my back to my parents' house and I think there was able to shake them before I got to their house. there's stuff like that you just don't think about in you wouldn't cry, how you going to handle that situation.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. I would imagine that like any other skill, the ability to perceive and understand and work with violence gets better over time just like you know like practicing any technique any other skill martial arts wiser or not, but how do you start?

Joe Saunders:

I wish I had a really clear answer for that but I find that the best case scenario is your training reflects reality. so I think you need to build a base level of physical skills and I don't mean having a black belt. I think realistically if you've done martial arts three nights a week for one to two years, you've probably got enough skill to defend yourself. to play on the quality of instruction you can shorten that learning curve dramatically but I think most people one to two years in a style that has a little bit of contact a little bit of pressure. you've got the physical skills and then from there you hopefully at a level of scenario training so you learn to talk. that's probably not downside that martial arts didn't prepare me for is that nearly every conflict starts with communication, and you need to know how to communicate and also how to read how that communication is going so that you know when to pull the trigger to make things physical or when you don't have to pull that trigger. I find the larger caliber of the larger that caliber your packing the longer you can wait before you pull the trigger. I always encourage my fellow bouncers to train because it gave them more confidence that they could talk longer and understand that if it could win. things went pear-shaped would still be okay because they trusted their training. I actually found that the more physically adept someone is the more patient they can be. when they weren't dealing with someone as aggressive and violent which was an interesting side effect. I think you need a base level skills scenario replication and then you just kind of do it. there's nothing that prepares you like doing it and I wish I had the magic ingredient that bridges the gap between the training and reality. but the best you can hope for is that your bridge gets you and I would say the way there and it's just last 10% but I figure out. I found I came in my bridge got me back thirty percent away there and I had to take a really big leak to cover that 70%. so my goal when I'm training people now is to make that leap as short as I possibly can.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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yeah. and the one thing I will speak to on this subject. the one sliver of understanding I have that's relevant here has to do with some of the drills that you can run within schools and I've been very fortunate that some of my instructors have been very aware and again just as as with you because of personal experience outside of their martial arts training, they understood the difference between traditional martial arts and the application of what you've learned in a real violent scenario. and a lot of the drills that when I was younger, the higher ranks were taken through had almost nothing to do with technique and skill they had to do with adrenaline. I've been lucky enough because of whistlekick that I get the opportunity to travel around and train and oftentimes lead instruction. one of the things that I will go back to time and again if I'm not sure if nobody has anything else they want me to work on with them. if they're not quite sure what to do, that's usually what I'll pull out is some of these admittedly to me very fundamental "reality-esque" and I underscore esue very much drills and watching third fourth fifth degree black belts that when confronted with a little bit of adrenaline and a free-form situation, have no idea what to do. they can execute their forms. they can they can spar under different rule sets incredibly well. but the moment it becomes even a tiny bit real, they break down.

Joe Saunders:

Yeah and to be honest, it's not their fault. It's something they haven't been trained for. and I think this is even just giving away from the idea of real violence for a second, I think that sparring is critical. I mean if you're not learning to apply your skills or whether you want to call it spar and kumite randori rolling whatever. if you're not learning to apply your skills in someone who's actively resisting, and there's not some risk to yourself whether it's being hit, whether it's being submitted, whether it's being whatever, then you are nowhere near reality. because the real violence involves risk. it involves timing and distance and application of pressure and power and all that stuff you just can't get hitting a bag or doing up and down the hall. you need to have a live opponent who's resisting you if your goal is preparing for real violence. this is something that I try to make a differentiation of because so many people in the "reality-based" world which I don't really like using the term anymore but know what I'm talking about usually when I said. so many people in that world rubbish traditional martial arts and so they're useless or they don't have occasional whatever and I hate that because I love martial arts and I consider myself a martial artist and always have done. I think there's so much more that martial arts can provide that that have nothing to do with violence. and if martial arts make you a better person. but then that's actually really good violence prevention because if your martial art I don't mind if you do the most unpractical non-contact. it completely fantasy level martial art. if it makes you a better person and you don't have an ego, or you have a very controlled ego because of that training, then that actually has prepared you to not get into fights. because you're less likely be punched in the face because you're well-adjusted person. so I think is that there's an application there that has nothing to do with the physical skills of violence that still makes you safer, because you're a better human being and look I think there's so much more the martial arts provide than just learning how to fight and it can be very easy to simplify things and go well. if you don't you're not getting punched in the head 15 times a week then you know that's just rubbish and I think in this combat sport as well like I've gone through stages in my life where I've trained purely for the spiritual development, the personal development. there's been times where I've trained purely for winning medals and trophies. there's been times where I've trained



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just for my own mental health just to manage my stress, and there's been times where I've trained for survival and for making sure that I got to go home each night that I but I finished work. It's not any one of those stages is more important than the others so I've taken benefits from all different angles for martial arts and I think that's it's important. but I don't I don't judge a black belt who can't fight for real because if they haven't been prepared for it hasn't been something that's required of them then I why would there be any good at it. I'm a person because we teach me a lot but not about that subject.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, and I appreciate you saying that. Being so direct in saying that because one of the things that I've often said is that martial arts has you know different tracks that you can go on. and not everyone's interested in learning how to be a you know a tough guy. you know not everyone is truly interested in learning how to you know mix it up how to get in a fight.

Joe Saunders:

that's right yeah and the reality is that most of us don't need to be doomsday preppers. that we'd like we most martial artists I've met in my life have a steady nine-to-five job and they have a wife of that or husband and kids. they go out for dinner on a Saturday night and they have good friends and they volunteer at church on Sundays. that's their life is that person really really really need to obsess themselves three nights a week for five nights a week with fighting in a gutter and worrying about hypodermic needles? probably not. I mean that's probably not their reality so and that's a that's my other big gripe about reality-based self-defense that a lot of instructors that their reality is so obscene that I'm like whose reality are we dealing with here? okay okay yeah Bob Hope from the from the church host team is he going to be really rolling around in gutters? is his reality making sure that he gets some cardio in so he doesn't die of a heart attack in his 60s? that's reality by self-defense because that's the real threat. Not like being attacked by a group of ninjas they're going to rappel out of a helicopter

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right well I think the moment you know we all started to accept you know as martial artists we accepted that there was validity in reality based systems. that there were some who kind of took it to the extreme. oh well you know your system is great for one on one but what about when it's three on one? okay so now we've got this. okay so what about when it's three on one and there are weapons? what about when it's three on one and you're on an airplane? or it's one on one and somehow you're in an airplane bathroom with this other person and one of your feet is wedged into the toilet because mystically that I suppose could happen probably not but it could so now we need to make sure that our system is able to answer that possibility

Joe Saunders:



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Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know what if someone comes up and knifes you in the back? no system defends and get that. no system defends against random blind violence with no opportunity to respond. and unfortunately what has happened once in a while so you have to - I see that, and that gives me a sense of freedom because I have to accept that there are some things I can't defend against

Joe Saunders:

yeah absolutely I understand, ask me once what would I do if you're hit in the head with a baseball bat?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'd probably die.

Joe Saunders:

I said I'd probably bleed. I mean I've already been hit what do. but yeah I 100% agree with what you're saying and one of my clichés always yelling at training is trained for probability not possibility. training for the possibilities sometimes it's fun if you if you take it for the ridiculousness of what it is, you can kind of stack the odds like if I've got a a good level martial artist who's is kind of their basic drills and their basic skills are quite good. then you know we can play with some fun stuff and go okay well you've got an arm in a sling and you've got a seven-year-old child with you and you're confronted by three people what are you going to do? and that is a different level of stress and problem solving but it's fun to play with, but it shouldn't be your regular training because it's a very stressful situation and I do like that I do like to throw in variables so with the training we didn't to get there in the development but I do I do teach reality based martial arts and I'm an instructor as well but and as an instructor under (48:43) eventually as a with senshido as well. I teach a reality based system but I do like to throw in variables so I find that sometimes we oversimplify violence and sometimes we over complicate violence. I think to get someone ready for violence doesn't take that long. I think anyone who's willing to train hard can get there in six months two years if they're not training that regularly where they have enough prerequisite skills and knowledge to be safe for most people. I mean if someone's a law enforcement officer making daily arrests then they're probably going to need a little bit more training and someone's bounced it they're going to need a little bit more training cause their exposure is greater. but I think we can over complicate things by adding in so many variables that we forget that skill sets actually fairly basic. but the same time we can oversimplify things by for example this is a pet peeve of mine: women's self-defense classes where you've got someone who is going to be exposed to maybe five techniques over the period of two hours and they're going to do about ten reps on each technique and then they're going to walk away feeling safer which I think it's rubbish. some of those some of the clichés of well you



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don't need to win the fight you just need to run away. running away is great with a mom with two kids. is she going to run from the fight and leave the kids behind? is that what we're training her to do? or is she going to have to stay with those kids and either make an escape with the (50:09) or finish the fight, will get help without leaving those children. or if you're saying a wall you just need to run away is great until the person you're training is a 70-year-old person with decreased mobility and who wouldn't be able to run away? or you're trapped or you there's there is no way to run because you're in a confined space. you you're fighting for your life in an underground car park, or an elevator or. so there there's there are so many variables I like to throw in just to change up the in state because yeah it is great to just be able to stun and running that's a good skill to have but you need to have something else that that's not appropriate for that situation. but for example if I'm training a bouncer, he can't run away his job is his job is to stay there. I've had guys that have run away during this shift and they don't get another shift so that's your career done like if you leave. unless it was a really serious situation and you're literally saving your own life okay. but if you run from the fight because they've got a little bit dangerous then you're probably in the wrong line work. so yeah there are different levels and different skills and I think we are equally guilty of over complicating as well as (51:26) and I think it's a matter of there's no syllabus. it's what does this person need? what's their exposure occupationally and personally and domestically? what's going to be the appropriate skill set for them to learn to keep themselves safe and how do I get them to that end point as quickly and efficiently

possible?

Jeremy Lesniak:

is this the type of stuff you talk about on your show?

Joe Saunders:

Yeah it is. actually talk about a variety of different subjects about surviving violence. it's not always martial arts. obviously it's the martial arts conversation.

Jeremy Lesniak:

well take a few minutes to tell the audience, I think everyone knows I have no problem encouraging folks to listen to other shows. I hope they continue listening to this one but you know what if somebody finds a show that better resonates for them and they don't have time, I prefer people you know get well the knowledge and the entertainment from the shows that they want so take a few minutes and tell people about your show

Joe Saunders:



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yeah sure. okay so my show is called the Managing Violence podcast so have you just searched for Managing Violence podcast, you'll come up in pretty much every podcast platform that's out there. the idea of the managing of violence podcast was taking what I do professionally so my professional my day job again. my day job is I'm an Aggression Management Specialist. so I work with organizations that have customer aggression or client aggression and work with them on strategies to manage that aggression. so I was taking a lot of what I teach my clients and putting it into a podcast or an educational tool that anyone can access. my goal with that podcast is not just to provide the noise that I have between a few people that experts in areas that I'm not an expert in they have a different viewpoint or yeah sometimes it's just a vehicle for me to talk to someone I've looked up to for a number of years. that's great part of conversation as peers. but I look at violence from all different angles. so we can be too easy - it's too easy to fixate on the physical of violence and there's only so much time you can spend worrying about how to defend against a right looping overhand punch. when what we should be talking about is situational awareness and understanding risk profile and understanding what kinds of people get into fights and what kind of people will pick fights and understanding how predators think and predatory groups versus predatory individuals and target selection and identification all these sorts of subjects that are so important because if you understand all of that, then you don't have to worry about being punched because you weren't there in the first place. or you weren't an attractive target in the first place. so we talked about those sorts of situations. we talked about the truth of surviving violence and what the most important most important attributes are, and as a spoiler alert the least important thing is your knowledge of technique. the most important things your mindset, your physical fitness, and your ideally an exposure or an experience with violence. we talked about criminal psychology. we talked about sociology. I've had experts from health care from mental health practitioners on the show talking about the risk that they deal with on a regular basis dealing with patients who through no fault of their own are quite it can be quite violent that due to an illness, they're unpredictable or explosive a psychosis or whatever. I've had experts from Matt Larson who's a lifelong martial artist that director of combative at West Point Academy on the show and that was a fascinating conversation about not just training but also about the psychology of combat it is working that field. we've had experts from the training world. had a couple of overlapping guess from that from this show as well. I had Gershon Ben Keren who was one my early guests. had Rory Miller as well who's been on this show and I'm really interested in talking about the preventative side of violence as opposed to the physical. the physical I think it's very hard to learn physical self-defense in an audio platform but you can send them a lot about psychology prevention of violence through that platform. so that's my focus with the Managing Violence podcast is equipping regular people and martial artists alike to be safer without making them too paranoid hopefully.

Jeremy Lesniak:

great and of course folks we're going to link to everything that's relevant to this conversation and help you find coach Saunder's show. you know our links are at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com of course. this has been good stuff so we've spent time talking about the now. we spent time talking about the past. let's talk about the future. you consider your career and everything that you've got going on and your training, what are you looking forward to?



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Joe Saunders:

Well I'm looking forward to one of your listeners deciding to fund my operation and allowing me to (56:42).

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well get in line because they haven't done that for me yet. I got dibs!

Joe Saunders:

Actually it's interesting I mean a kind of a fun stage my journey at the moment where I've mentioned a couple of times I think preparing yourself for violence doesn't take that long. to be completely honest and to be transparent about my own training at the moment, I mean I'm a big guy. I'm I don't present as an easy target and I've done a lot of training over so and I feel like I have a pretty good handle on all the preventative stuff when it comes to violence so I don't really train for self-defense that much anymore. I train to keep my skills sharp. physical perishable skills, I trained those to keep them sharp. but in terms of my motivation, I'm fairly confident that I'm okay and when it comes to - if violence were to visit me or my family, I feel like I'd probably manage it okay. so that's not my motivation for training anymore and I identify myself adrift a little bit in terms of my own training. not just teaching is one things though teaching it depends on what the students need. but for my own training I found myself a little bit adrift and wasn't sure where I wanted to progress next. quite funny because the end of last year, my I've got four kids. I've got four daughters so yeah talk about having a need for self defense. I've got I've got four daughters under seven so their teenage years is going to be fun. but my oldest two started in getting to an age where they wanted to do some get some sort of sport. so the first thing I want to do is I'll be in roll them in judo and hope they enjoyed it. I took them to a friend's dojo and I hadn't been on a judo mat in five years at that point. just through work and life. I'd sort of stopped training judo and was focusing more on teaching him what I was doing professionally and kids into the judo class thankfully they enjoyed it. I was going along each week. I was watching the class in the dojo had a boxing class those at the same time as the kid's judo class so I started joining in the boxing class just to sharpen some skills and keep my fitness happen and also to stop them running off the mat. talk to me every five minutes. but sitting at the side they're going to keep running off so I'd try to keep busy today they wouldn't confine. but after a little while I was like you know what? (59:16). I was watching sometimes they'd have two adult instructors and forty kids running around and there's chaos. you know I shouldn't be helping. I'm already here and help kids. so uh that progress that knows I well yeah there's an adult class that comes straight after. I think we should get on and yeah have a little bit of a roll and have some fun. so I got on the mat, this doesn't feel like - I'm not as rusty as I thought I was. kind of feels like home and obviously things were a little bit laggy. sometimes when you haven't trained for a long time your brain knows that you know something from where the moment has passed. so I battled that quite a bit. so it's like I know what to do for me if I can't think I know what it was hard. so that was my existence for a little bit and then I thought you know I'm feeling pretty good and I'd really like the kids to get into competition. but I think especially for my oldest daughter I thought competition would be good for her because I think there's a lot of lessons that you can only learn from sport and from competition and I



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thought she'd benefit from it. but she was very very risk-averse. she wasn't interested in competing and but you know what maybe she sees me compete because I've done all my competition before my kids were born. but maybe she sees me compete that might lower that barrier to her so I started talking to my coach about competing again and doing some local competitions just low level stuff. I mean we decided on a game plan so yeah that's cool we can do that and then I started talking to him about so who the top heavyweights in the area? like who the top guys in my division that I should be aware of? and he gave me a couple of names and said these are guys that are currently in the national team that you're at in your division and that's how good are they and he said well because my questions I should know me from my previous competitive career as well so he said look if you got back to where you were and you put in because six months of training you'd be competitive. we can't really say that to someone who's a natural competitor without sort of stoking the fire a little bit so like wait on a minute, on a minute when a period of three months I went from I'm going to take my kids to the dojo to yeah maybe 2020 Olympics is not out of reach. I'm 33 years old making a making a comeback this year in competitive judo and it's funny like even though I kind of moved past combat sports for a number of years, the back training twice a day doing my strength and conditioning in the mornings and training judo classes in jujitsu classes in the evenings, I'm preparing for competitions and mapping out game plans and peaking and tapering curious stuffs. it's really lit a fire underneath my training is better than it's been in years because I've got something that sort of making me passionate and excited for my own training not just my teacher. at the moment, my current situation is I'm training judo because in jujitsu four or five nights a week. I'm teaching my Krav Maga classes three nights a week and I'll persist with that. I've sort of promised my wife but this is an early midlife crisis and that I'll try to get another good two years at a competition while my body holds up and now I find something else. maybe start doing old man judo instead bro I just throw people and don't you throw myself. I'll be the guy sitting on the side with the big belly in there with the black belt that doesn't actively get involved in much because I'm too broken. that's my immediate future. It is sort of making a bit of a dad's army come back to the competition and I'm hoping to keep growing the podcast and so I say almost plug the thing that was most important to plug: on the 8th of April I'm launching a website called defendyourself.tv. defendyourself.tv is essentially I'm hoping to grow it into an online encyclopedia of everything self-defense. so I want to have bulbs on my podcast but also video tutorials ranging from short three-minute clips on how to defend against this particular type of attack, or right through to hour-long lectures on psychology and sociology and whatever other subjects I can think of. we'll have academic journal articles. will have blog articles. will have video interviews. basically anything I can think of that will be relevant for learning how to protect yourself against violence. that will go on defendyourself.tv and I'm also hoping to have an instructor portal as well where we can share drills. I'm very big on creative drills. I like to make training interesting and I've got a lot of ideas on how we drill that reality at the safe engage if we entertain why because we any instructor knows that the commercial pressures of teaching martial arts don't mean that you can't just be educational, you also have to be provide some level of entertainment most people won't spend their money to keep coming back and seeing you. so you've got to make training interesting and I try to do that as well. so my goal is to provide an online resource so anyone who's interested in either defending themselves against violence or teaching others to do it can access that website and can derive some benefit from it.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

it sounds like a wonderful resource and if I'm reading the calendar right, this is going to come out just before so if you're listening to this episode, that website should be out so now there's a little bit of pressure. we've just told everyone that that's up so it's got to be ready.

Joe Saunders:

yeah that's right. and now I have to think of the deadline. that's part of my motivation for giving you a date. I'm just saying at some point in the future, you're going to defend yourself. defendyourself.tv will be live on the 8th of April or earlier. If it's not, feel free to send complaints to Jeremy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

oh absolutely and I will forward them on to you. I will filter in my email so I don't view them and they go right to you. I might upload some kind of image. hope that that makes it clear that you are responsible. I don't know. we can have some fun with that. but yeah I've launched a number of websites and I know the moment you put a deadline on it and you tell people about it, no honestly that's for any goal right? I mean that's the expert advice on goal setting is tell everyone you know that you're going to do X by such and such date and to hold you accountable and then all of a sudden oh shoot I have to do this now.

Joe Saunders:

Yeah the hard thing for me is - when I said the hard thing, the limitation for me other than time is just getting all the content I've generated over the years and kind of re-branding it and some videos I want to re-shoot. you know I shot them in 2008 on a potato. look at the video quality now and go well the content was good but I think I might need to re-shoot that. it's not really going to find 2019 that level of video quality but yes it's just a matter of going through and trying to get all that content in one place just and branding so that they know what they're looking at. I would encourage anybody who wants to reach out and suggest a topic, I'm the guy. I will talk martial arts all day long and I can talk about violence prevention all day long - so if you've got suggestions of anything you would like to see or anything you're curious about, you can email me at joe@defendyourself.tv and I'm more than happy to take suggestions of content. if you ask me a specific personal question I'm happy to respond to that too but I'd rather respond to me in the website so that other people can benefit from it as long as it's not too particular. but yeah absolutely anyone who wants to contribute - oh that's so that's another thing too I'm hoping to eventually grow a database of contributors as well so it's not just me writing juicing. I'd rather have a whole team of people that want to contribute to the greater good and put good material out there. so again joe@defendyourself.tv

Jeremy Lesniak:



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well this has been a lot of fun. I've enjoyed our conversation and I certainly learned some stuff I hope everyone listening did as well and you've listened to the show so you know how we kind of send this out. What parting words would you offer up to the people listening today?

Joe Saunders:

Parting words I think probably the most important thing that I've learned especially over the last 10 years of my training is that your training needs to add to your quality of life. Not detract from it. and what I mean by that is that in the reality-based self-defense world or you know, you can tell you know reality based if you train you exclusively for self-defense, consider why you're doing that, and consider whether that training is actually improving your quality of life or detracting from it. because if you are training from place of negativity where you're training because you're paranoid or because you are scared, then engaging in that training on a regular basis it's only accessing those negative emotions more powerful ways repeatedly and I think that can be more detrimental to your safety than not training at all. so you need to make sure that what you are training has a positive outcome. it's a positive emotion for you. so if you want to enjoying your training if it's not something you look forward to doing but you're doing it because you feel you have to or else you're going to be victimized, then something's wrong and you need to look at what you're doing. so whatever it is and like what we've discussed I've been through so many different stages of training for different purposes and different odds and different outcomes. but it has to serve you it can't detract from your quality of life. so I think I urge everybody to keep that at the forefront if you're not enjoying your training, do something different. but if you want to learn how to protect yourself it doesn't take that long. you don't have to train for ten years and get a black belt. if you have to have a black belt before you can learn to fight, then your instructors not very good. sorry. that'd be my takeaway is enjoy your training. do what makes you happy because longevity in the martial arts is one of the secrets. if you can persist and keep enjoying it and keep doing it for a number of years, it will it'll keep giving back to you. but if you don't enjoy it then you won't get any of those benefits.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I love when I have other pod casters on the show, it just makes my job so much easier. we get to have a better conversation. we can kind of dig out in the weeds a little bit. and more so my favorite part about it, is I don't have to work that hard. coach Saunders was great at just taking the conversation running with it and really presenting some awesome information. I hope you all check out his show as I already have done. if you want to find the show notes with links to that show and everything else he's got going on, head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. check that out there. don't forget podcast15 gets you 15% off everything at whistlekick.com. we'd appreciate any help you can give us. be that a share, or review, a purchase, even a comment, even feedback anything that you do that lets us know you're listening and you appreciate what we're doing is appreciated right back in return. find us on social media. we are at whistle kick on Facebook Twitter YouTube and Instagram. you can email me directly jeremy@whistlekick.com and I love seeing those emails come through. until next time. train hard, smile and have a great day.



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