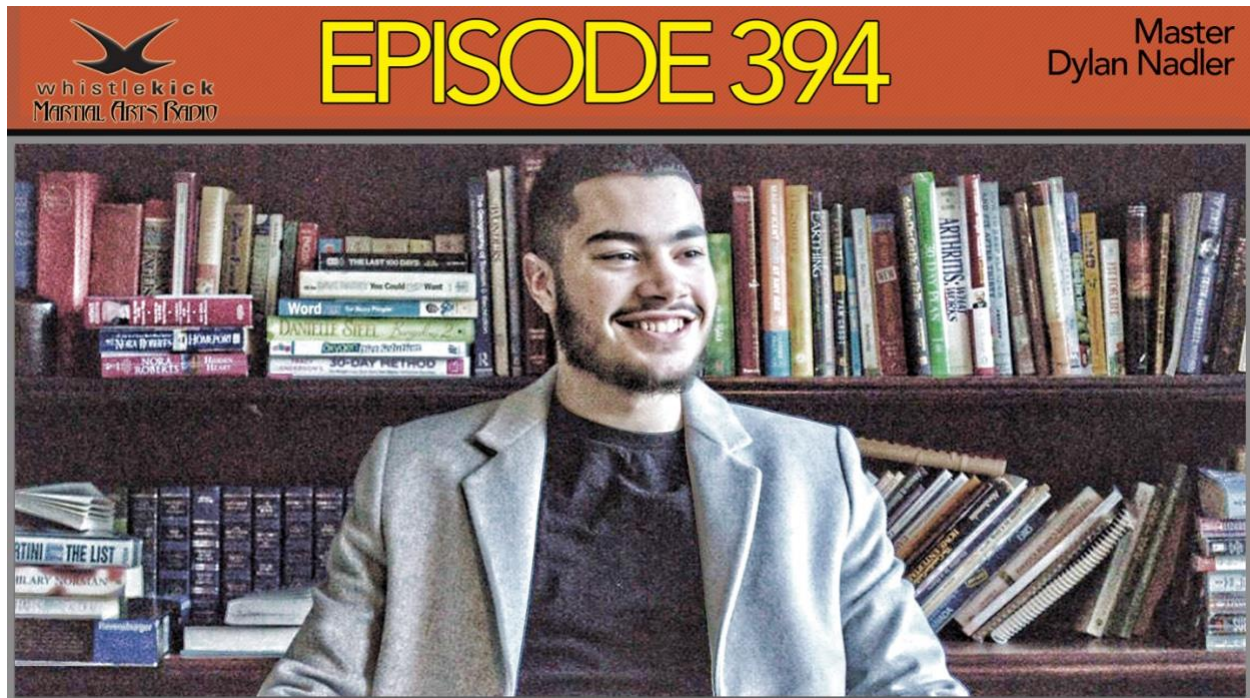




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### Jeremy Lesniak:

What's going on, everybody? Welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 394. Today, I'm joined by my guest, Master Dylan Nadler. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host here for martial arts radio. I'm a founder of whistlekick. I've been doing martial arts my whole life and it's kind of my thing. I love training. I love talking to other martial artists so I found a way to turn that into my job and so, here we have whistlekick martial arts radio. The show where I get to talk to amazing people about their martial arts experiences and along the way, you get to listen it. All for free! We do this show twice a week. Mondays, we do an interview. Thursdays, we have some kind of topic-driven episode. You can think of it like a difference between a novel and a short story. Thursdays, sometimes we talk about things that are bugging me or sometimes we have a guest on to talk about a very specific topic. Either way, hopefully you find something in one of the two formats or maybe even both, that enhances, improves or just you find it enjoyable. If you do get something out of the show, we'd appreciate you showing some love back in some way. You can head on over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), see all the stuff that we do and one of the things that we do is we sell some stuff and if you make a purchase at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), use the code `PODCAST15`, that's going to get you 15% off anything we do. From uniforms, to sparring gear, to apparel, to just all kinds of stuff but we do have our stuff over on Amazon as well but Amazon chews up a good chunk of the profit so we're not giving you any discount there but if it's easier for you, hey, go ahead and do that. Show us some love or if you want the free ways to show love, just share an episode or leave us a review or whatever it is that works for you. [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) is the place to



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go if you want show notes, with transcripts, photos, videos, links, all kinds of stuff to tell you more about the guest that we bring on or the topics that we have. Whatever it is that might be relevant, it's there so check it out. I think it's fair to say that everyone that trains gets something out of it. Most of us get different things out of it. We get different benefits for our lives. Martial arts, generally, martial arts makes us better but the specific ways that martial arts makes us better vary from person to person. Today's guest has taken his time as a competitive martial artist in the sport of Taekwondo and turned it into, not just a pursuit with his academics, but also of business and it's given him connection to some pretty amazing people. On today's episode, we hear about how that all started, how it, honestly, could've gone very differently, very easily and how it's turned him into the man that he is today. Let's welcome him to the show. Master Nadler, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Dylan Nadler:**

Awesome, how you doing, man?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm doing great. How are you?

**Dylan Nadler:**

I'm fantastic. I'm fantastic.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're one of those folks who has the distinction of living in the Great White North. You're in Canada but you're actually south of where I live which, I'll tell you, I remember the first time I saw Toronto on a map and I said, wait a second, how are they south of where I live? That's silly. In my brain, it doesn't make sense but here we are in, depending who you talk to, central or northern Vermont and it's cold and it's snowing again and I'm ready for it to be done.

**Dylan Nadler:**

Right, it's actually nice today. It's like 9°C but you never know. That's the crazy thing about living here. It's like next week it could snow and it can go back to being warm like it's crazy so you never know. You can't get too excited but yeah, I know that. I think it's been pretty consistent but it's definitely not what everyone thinks it is.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No. I'm sure it's not. I don't know about you being in the city but here in the northeast, especially if you're in a rural area, you are familiar with the fifth season, mud season. I don't know if you're familiar with the mud season, some of the listeners might not know what mud season is but bottom line is when the snow melts and quite a few of our roads, because they're not well-traveled are dirt and a lot of snow



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melt on a dirt road, creates a lot of mud that you have to drive through and I can't see out of the back window of my car right now.

**Dylan Nadler:**

Right? You get excited because you're like okay, I can dress nice now, I'm ready to go because you have to put on bummy shoes because you can't put them on all dirty.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's right and I've seen, to bring it full circle, I've seen a lot of people who get really excited depending on the martial arts training that they promote, progress and get to wear black pants so they don't have to have mud around the bottom edge of their pants for those who change when they get to the dojo.

**Dylan Nadler:**

A hundred percent.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Well, I'm impressed that we just found a way to bring weather and mud back to martial arts but of course, that's not really what we're here to talk about. We're here to talk about you.

**Dylan Nadler:**

Yes, sir.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, I'm going to poke at you. I'm going to ask you questions and I'm going to start with the most fundamental question that we could possibly ask beyond what's your name and that's how did you find martial arts?

**Dylan Nadler:**

I started martial arts when I was 5 years old. I started doing Taekwondo. My parents put me in a recreational facility near my house, it was really close by. Classes were a couple times a week and it was really easy and I had a lot of fun doing it. Something that taught me those core fundamentals of martial arts that any parent wants for their kids. Discipline, focus, self-esteem and most importantly, it gave me goals. As a young kid, I'm talking about 5, 6, 7 years old, just to get your next belt or to get a stripe in your belt. These are goals and aspirations that I think is really hard outside of athletics. Kind of focus on that young so that's why for me, it really caught my attention and I've always been really, really competitive so that was something for me that really, really caught my eye. As I developed and as I grew and as I aged, I really fell in love with sparring. I really love sparring. Like I said, I'm super competitive. I was pretty athletic and I had a hunger and a certain drive that I didn't see anywhere else so that's why sparring really, really caught my attention and like I said before, the place I was at was really great for building those fundamentals but in terms of competitiveness, it wasn't really up there in terms of one of



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the schools you go to if you want to be an Olympian, per se. By the time I was 12 year old, 11 or 12, and that passion for sparring really kicked it, it came like I had a real head switch and if you ever had to do that before, it's a tough call because you're kind of transitioning from somewhere you're comfortable with, somewhere you trust the people involved, somewhere you've built this connection and it kind of feels like you're, I don't know how do you say, it kind of feels like you're leaving and it's kind of a mean thing when in reality it's kind of for personal growth and people should feel, almost grateful, that you kind of see that for yourself and you develop your skills further. So, for me, it was a little bit tough to make that decision but I ended up switching to a different club in Malcolm, Ontario called Authentic Taekwondo and I heard about Authentic Taekwondo through the coach who was actually my headmaster and he had a lot of connections in the industry so for him to kind of provide a list of places to check off was really, really amazing for him to do especially because he was essentially, kind of, shipping me somewhere else. So, for him to provide names for me to check out was something that I'll be forever grateful for. I'll never forget my first day walking into Authentic. It was my first kind of club on the list and I had a list of about 5, 6 places to take a look in the area and that was my first one and I'll never forget sitting there and talking to the headmaster, Master Akmal and he was just going through kind of what they're about, what their goals are, who they've established and different people and just the whole kind of everything about it and then I walked in and I sat down and watched part of the class. I never forget, I had a broken hand already from a tournament, I went a couple months before so I was sitting there in the corner with my parents, with a cast on my hand and I was just kind of taking it in and I'll never forget, it was one of the masters who was teaching class and he was, he had all the athletes facing the mirror and he was saying, okay, watch yourself when you kick and watch what you do before. See if you can see yourself, how it looks to your opponent and see if you can change it or see if you can hide it or make it sneaky, right? Look at your opponent and see them as your shoulders. When their shoulders turn a little bit after you fake, for example, then you know they'll throw a back kick or when they kind of turn their shoulders forward, you're going to see they're going to attack and for me, that never had any sort of, let's say, brainpower in this. I was always just kick, kick, kick, punch, punch, punch. No strategy. Just kind of kill mentality with no formal training behind it. To see that was like holy crap, this is crazy and after that, I didn't have to go anywhere else. I didn't even look at any other clubs. That was the place for me and I was there up until, I'm still there teaching but I just stopped competing at a high level about a couple years ago but I trained there from when I was 12, up until I was about 18, 19 years old and from there, that's when everything started to change. I was a black belt already going into it but my skills were nowhere near black belt in terms of competing and I think that's a problem that a lot of martial arts clubs face is kind of the abundance of giving out notes and stuff like that and I knew all the curriculum and I knew everything that a black belt should know but it's a different world, the side of competition than the recreational side. I really had to adjust to that. I really had to learn from my teammates, learn from my coaches and luckily, I had a lot of National champions there. One of the coaches, Master Dominique Bosshart was the first Olympian from Canada to win a medal at the Olympics for Taekwondo so that was amazing and I always had so many role models to look up to and yeah, I can answer specific questions you have about training. It's such a vague question, oh my god.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And it's supposed to be, right? Because one of the things that we love about this show, that I love about this show is that people are encouraged to kind of go off into the weeds and to talk about the things that are important to them because that reflection of you, of your story as a martial artist. We don't necessarily follow the same rigorous format with every guest and that's intentional. We have some that we ask that first question of how did you get started in the martial arts and next thing we know, it's 45 minutes later and we've covered a ton of different things and I think that that's important because when we look at martial arts, as martial artists, it's all very different. You talk about your time in Taekwondo as being an athlete that competitive side whereas, I'm sure there are plenty of people that are listening and thinking of I never really thought of myself as an athlete or folks that maybe just a little more bluntly don't enjoy competition and that's okay because martial arts provides us the opportunities regardless of what we're passionate about within martial arts to express that and that's why martial arts resonates so strongly for me is that diversity, that openness to connect.

**Dylan Nadler:**

A hundred percent, man, yeah. I'd love to talk more about the competition side.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, so if we go way back, early on, it sounds like despite being at a school where competition wasn't a focus, you found something in competition, in sparring, that really clicked for you. How did you connect those dots?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a good question. The place I was at, we didn't really spar often. I would say, maybe, one or twice a year and for me, I looked forward to it so much and unfortunately, the other kids that were with me didn't. so that's why I think that's why we didn't do it as much but I went to a tournament one time because I saw the poster posted somewhere in the dojang and I showed up and I was all excited and it turned out that no one else showed up. My master didn't show up, any teammates, so what happened or what ended up happening was that my dad had to come down and sit in the coaching chair and try to coach me and he had the camera between his legs, trying to record me at the same time and it was just a mess but I still loved it and even though, I lost and even though, there was nothing technical about it, it just made me excited and that's how I knew, you know what? This is for me and after that, everything else seemed boring. Going through the patterns and going through all the other things that traditional martial artists do, even though I knew them, it just didn't give me that fire that I learned from fighting and competing. So, what happened is when I went to Authentic Taekwondo for the very first time, it was in January of about 2011 and as soon as I showed up, they were preparing to send their athletes off to Nationals in Winnipeg and for me, that was crazy because these kids were my age. They were literally my age, if not a year younger, a year older so to see these people my age heading to Nationals in



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Winnipeg that means going on a plane, they're staying in a hotel, going to different province to represent Ontario. For me, that just opened my eyes and I was like, wow, this is going to be me. This is what I want. I want to be a part of this team. I want to have the Team Ontario jacket. I want to know the cheers. I want to represent something bigger than myself so that's when I really...the first kind of goal that came into my mind is okay, I want to go to Nationals so I spent that whole year training really, really hard. We went to local games every month. When I say local games, I mean a club hosts it and they're all over Ontario so they're everywhere from Kitchener, Waterloo, like Ottawa to Kingston, Ontario. These are just different places in Ontario but Ontario is really, really big so sometimes you have to drive 2, 3 hours to get to a different tournament and we're doing this every month and we're just going this for fun. It's just local games, it's just for fun but trying to develop those skills and at the very end, in August was our provincial games. I guess that's something similar to like a State championship down there in the States but we had the provincial games and the way provincials work is that if you come Top Three, then you make Team Ontario so you get to go to Nationals. That was my goal. I was like okay, provincials is coming up, it's close by. I need to do this. I need to perform because I want to go to Nationals that was going to be in Vancouver. Up until that point, I only won maybe like 2 or 3 of the local tournaments that I went to. I did pretty well because I had a lot of energy and a lot of passion and the technical skills kind of followed behind me but I only won a couple so going to provincials, I wouldn't say that the odds were on my side but I really, really wanted it. I went to the provincial games and I was just on fire. I remember being in the zone and even though I was only 13 years old, I was going nuts. I actually won that tournament. I won gold and I earned my spot to be on Team Ontario and to go to Nationals that was going to be in Vancouver all the way across the country in January that same year so I worked even harder. I kept training and I got to kind of fulfill that dream of going across the country, completely across the country all the way to Vancouver to compete at my very first Nationals Championships and I went there and I won gold there too so for me, that was a crazy time of basically, knowing nothing in terms of how to compete and the technical side of competing and winning provincials, winning Nationals, all when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. That kind of kicked off a whole career of competitiveness and a whole career of that competition aspect that has never left me and it's taken me to so many places around the world, so many different events and I think that was a huge marker in where I am today.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're talking about traveling around the world so, I'm guessing that you didn't stop at some Canada Nationals. You kept going. So, keep going with the story. Where has Taekwondo taken you outside of Canada?

**Dylan Nadler:**

Sure, the nice thing about Taekwondo is it's so international, it's so worldwide and there's tournaments everywhere and the way that that works for competition is that if a tournament has an open class rating, for example, a G1 then that means you can get ranking points and ranking points are you kind of work towards your world ranking. It's more important for seniors. If you're 18+ in the senior division,



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world ranking becomes more important but the whole point is that these events matter a lot because they track your results, they're all measured and these are the things that help you grow. So, right after the Nationals actually in Vancouver, about a month later, February, we were off to Vegas for the U.S. Open and that was crazy for me too because I'm 12 years old, 13 years old, just came off a nice win at Nationals in Vancouver and I'm off to Vegas. How many 8<sup>th</sup> graders can tell their friends, hey, I'm going to Las Vegas to fight in a tournament. It was crazy. I went to Vegas for that and what happened in Vegas? I came. I won my...the funny thing about that is that the way it works in tournaments, for Taekwondo, at least, is that you can't do head shots unless you're a certain age and I think that age is always changing but at that time, it was about 14 and I was still 13 and so in Canada, we never did that. I always still only body shots but when we went to Vegas, they just changed the rules and it's a little bit different in the States so that actually was my first tournament using head shots and U.S. Open's a really, really big tournament. One of the biggest tournaments in North America so, it was kind of intimidating because there's a huge difference between just going to the body and going to the head in any sport whether it's kicking or punching or anything. It's a whole different game and I remember being super intimidated going into there but it was a really good event. I won my first match and then I won my second and then I lost in the third so I think I finished somewhere like the quarters of round of 16 or something like that but for me, I was really, really proud of myself because I was able to go out, perform and just feel really good about what I was doing. To capitalize on the places I've been, I've been everywhere from Canada, USA to Spain, Belgium, Dubai, Korea, Taiwan. Where else? So many places. Mexico, Germany. All over Europe, Asia, South America. It's been an amazing journey.

#### **Jeremy Lesniak:**

So that's so powerful and I think, even though you articulated it as Taekwondo being so global, martial arts really is global and while we do things different ways and Olympic Taekwondo probably has the best standardization in terms of competition rules because of the path up to the Olympics. We might see that change with karate, of course. But I think it's fascinating when people talk about their international adventures. We had folks on the show who have travelled to other countries where they didn't speak the language but they were able to train and they were able to understand each other through the, maybe it's hokey to say this, but the language of martial arts and I just find that so fascinating. I haven't trained in another country. I'm thinking back. No, I haven't trained in another country as much as I would like to but such great stuff.

#### **Dylan Nadler:**

I think it's funny that you say that the language of martial arts. I think you can be more vague than that and to say the language of effort. When you're really putting in effort, I think it's shown and other people respect it so regardless of if there is a language barrier or what country you're in, if those people see hey, this guy's really trying, it motivates everyone and you don't need language to motivate someone, right? You just need energy. You need passion. You need your voice to be loud as oppose to articulative, right? I think that language of effort and passion is something that expands into everything.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely. Yeah, if you've been in a martial arts class where a student visits or a new student starts and everybody kind of steps their game up a little bit. Puts their best foot forward and at the very least doesn't want to look like a fool. That's effort. That's more effort, that's additional energy that's being contributed back to the group.

**Dylan Nadler:**

A hundred percent and it's funny in our culture says sometimes to the little kids, listen, this is the only place that you can yell. You can't go home and yell. You can't go to school and yell so take advantage. Let this energy out and just have fun while you're doing it. You can't kick your friends at recess. You can't kick your dog at home. Have fun sparring and doing all these things and just take advantage of it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's right. Absolutely. Here on the show, we talk a lot about stories. You talked a lot about your origin story and I'm sure you've got more stories so if I was to ask you for your favorite story from your time training, what would that be?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a good question. Like I said before, I've been to so many places and so many different experiences and I think there's one that stands out. There's this one that's really funny. I went to Korea twice actually. Korea is the origin place of Taekwondo so they have professional teams. You can actually get a PhD in Taekwondo in Korea. They have like Samsung teams and it's ridiculous. Over there, it's the real deal. I went there because I had a really big tournament coming up. It was the youth Olympic game qualification for Canada so basically, what that means is Youth Olympics games 2014 in Nanjing, China so for that to happen, you need to qualify. There was a qualification tournament in Taipei but in order to qualify for the qualification tournament, you have to make Team Canada. Out of all the athletes in Canada and all the divisions, only three divisions could go through so it was a little based off ranking points, little bit based off a couple other things but primarily ranking points. The first thing you have to do was make Team Canada so that was a huge tournament for me. That was going to be in November so before that summer leading into it, we're thinking what can we do? How can I prepare myself? There are always options to go to Korea with a different group. My coach said, okay, I'll send you guys off. He sent me and my teammate off to Korea which was a crazy experience. We're the only ones there that didn't have our coach. There was about maybe 20 athletes from Canada but we're the only two without our coach there and I was 13 years old. We go to Korea which is a 13-hour flight, 13-hour time difference. The conditions were terrible. We were in bunk beds. There were dead bugs in the crevices of the bed and it was 40°C and there was no air-conditioning. No nothing and it was just like we were in the trenches. All of my mental toughness really came from that especially as a 13-year-old kid where your friends are at home playing video games and going for lunch and doing fun things like that. I was in





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Korea, really going through the hardest times of my life. I think it was really funny because there's a story where we had a drill where we had to run up a mountain. It started off kind of flat and it really kind of upped the angle as you ran. It was about 200 meters. We had to do it five times. We had to run up the mountain 5 times and it was really, really tough. On the 4<sup>th</sup> try, one of the other masters who was there kind of tried to show off, he brought his training gear and he said okay, let me try this one. He did it once and he went up the mountain and he ended up puking and throwing up. I think it's a funny story just to show that it doesn't matter where you come from or where your experiences. Hard work is hard work and that's just something that...it's just funny because I think it just shows how crazy it was and how intense it was. Another example of Korea too, there a lot of funny Korea stories. We go up to our room and it was me and my two teammates. This was the next year and we walk into the room and it was just hardwood floor, a pillow, a blanket and a box of frosted flakes and they basically said, okay guys, good luck. There were no beds, there was nothing. It was just hardwood floor, blanket, pillow and frosted flakes and they said okay and I think that just set the tone from day one. Oh my god, this is it. We're back. We chose to be here. I don't know why we came back but this is how it is and it's just stories that really shape you into who you are and make sure when you come home, you bring that intensity back. Whether I was the only one to go to Korea or have my 2 teammates, we made sure to come back and bring that intensity and show our teammates, hey, you have it easy over here. Let's step this game up. Let's make sure that we're catching up to the other programs in the world because we need to do more. I think that's one of the best thing about travelling and experiencing new things is that you really get exposed to different programs out there. If you don't travel, you'll never know so we're able to come back and say, okay, we thought we were pushing it. There's a whole other world out there. We need to step it up even more.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What's it like staying in a room that's just so bare and I'm going to skip the interesting choice of frosted flakes as to being food that they threw at you but what's it like to go from a bed and comfort into your training versus really having nothing, I'm assuming nothing but your training?

**Dylan Nadler:**

It's interesting, man. For lack of a better word, it's like prison. It really is. We're spending all this time there. We were training three times a day and the training is for about 2 hours and we would go, just to go to the training facility to where we ate lunch, it as like 2,000 stairs so we were always training. Whether we were just going to eat and lets not even get started with the food but the food was something else that we never experienced before. We thought we went up to the cafeteria and okay, lasagna and it was kimchi and we're like oh, wow. Especially as little kids, we really had a lot to learn so to be in a room like that, to be in a place like that so far from home, it gives you nothing but focus. The days seemed way longer, the hours seem way longer, the weeks seem way longer. We were there for about two weeks and it just kind of stripped you of everything that you knew and forces you to rebuild but stronger. You don't have distractions. You can't just go to your phone and scroll through Facebook



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or Instagram and you can't really call your family because they're sleeping when you're awake. There's not even air-conditioning. You can't even lie back comfortably so we basically just spent the time in a room either just laughing with each other or counting the hours until next training because by the time we got back to the room, we only had a certain amount of time so it was basically just counting the hours. Sometimes we just sit outside the facility because it wasn't worth it climbing back up the mountain to go back to the room. We were just like, you know what? I don't have the energy. I'm just going to sit here outside and wait for the next session. At least, I feel, for me, when I was in that type of atmosphere, it was just...it rebuilt everything but rebuilt it with a much stronger foundation and it made me realize that you know what? I'm a lot more resilient than I thought. If I'm capable of doing this then what else am I capable of doing? If I can withstand some of the harshest conditions ever, what's stopping me from really digging deep and building that relationship with myself when I need to compete? I say this all the time but I think the strongest relationship you have is that with yourself and the only way to build it is through adversity. Experiencing adversity, going through those, that kind of trauma really established that relationship with myself where I believed in myself and I believe that, you know what? I can do this. I just did it. Now, what's the test for school? I came back, I was in high school. How are people worried about exams? You know what I mean? That's nothing or girlfriend breaks up with you or friends like this is not even that big of a deal. I was just dying in Korea at 40 degrees, I couldn't sleep, there were bugs everywhere. This is nothing. I think it just reshaped your perspective on life.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

For folks out there, who can't do the math, 40 degrees is about a hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

**Dylan Nadler:**

We're talking at night too, at night time. It should be cold.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. I reflect back on my first black belt test because it was presented to me in this way that you were speaking of now. This idea that you've been able to work through something so challenging that other things just pale in comparison and if you can get through with that, you can get through this. Were there any times other than kind of the vague examples of a test or friends or girlfriend, where you really took a step back and said, this is nothing, this is so much less than what I've already been through?

**Dylan Nadler:**

I think it really just apply to the vagueness. I think, for me, even when I came back, I was training still 3 times a day so I come back even in Toronto, I'd wake up early. I have a training session from 7 to 8 in the morning and this is just the core group so me and my teammates. We were all in high school at the time and so, we'd wake up early, go to training from 7 to 8 and then our coach, he would drive us all to



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school. We went to different schools so he would drive across the city, drop us off at school and then afterwards when we were done, our parents would drop us back off at the club at 3 PM and we'd train from 3 to 5 and then after that we'd have a couple hours to eat, do our homework, do all of that and then go down for the regular training at night from 7 to 9 so we were training a lot and it's easy to get in the habit of complaining. You get in the habit of feeling this isn't fair or why me or I really just want to go see a movie tonight, I don't want to train, I already trained twice so those really big experiences of that kind of maximization of what trauma is and adversity, it makes you appreciate even those smaller ones more of you know what? At least, there's air-conditioning. At least, I can understand my coach. At least, I get to go home and sleep after this. Even on a scale of training, it really helped and on the scale of personal life, especially I was still in high school so I can't really relate with your problems because, for me, when you're in high school, school is one of the biggest concerns for tests and exams and people freaking out and really staying up all night and have anxiety attacks. For me, to see my friends and my peers freaking out over tests and projects, for me, it's kind of funny. Wow, it's like, I just couldn't relate to that stress because I felt the real stress and real adversity. For me, a test was nothing. I can do this. No problem. That doesn't mean I was a great student but I think the mentality of taking the test or doing the assignment was okay, this is definitely not impossible so I think it translated into a couple different ways.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I can totally see that. When you talked about, again, we'll go back to the beginning, when we talked about you finding sparring and finding competition really taking some joy in that, want to dedicate some time to it. I imagine that who you were then versus who you were when you went to Korea versus who you were when you came back and even, went again the second time and again, now, there's got to be some difference in there because people only tolerate hardship for so long without reward or benefit or a shift in mindset. What is it that's kept you going over these years and through this three-a-day trainings and stuff like that?

**Dylan Nadler:**

It's just...it's a sense of confidence and a sense of security that you come back from something like that or even just throughout the career and you think about martial arts that you're constantly testing yourself, right? Whether you're just training at the club or you're trying to remember your pattern or you're doing some light sparring or you're doing a test or you're halfway across the world fighting someone in a competition, you're always testing yourself. For me, I figure, hey, if I'm always testing myself, I need to be the best version of myself. That's why I was reading more and I was kind of...and I was watching videos and I was doing everything I could to be the best version of myself because I knew hey, I'm doing something where I'm constantly testing myself. I'm always in kind of in the international eyes. There's always people watching. There's always people listening and learning and how can I make sure that every time I go out and perform, I'm doing it to the best of my abilities so that's another way that these experiences have come and changed me and after all that, that just given me a different



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approach in life in terms of being a lot more just cool, calm and collected. I don't get bothered really easily. I don't stress a lot and that's not necessarily me being special, that's just what I learned from martial arts because before I was a regular kid. The only thing that made me different, I think, is that extra kind of drive and passion. Other than that, everything was normal. For me and going through these experiences, now, I think, whether I take this in my life at work, at school, at home, I just have a different outlook at, you know what? At the end of the day, things aren't that bad. Regardless of how big something may seem, how many problems there are, it's not that bad. I can get over it. I think that realization does a lot for just mental health in general. Me to realize, you know what? Regardless of what's happening, I can get over it. I'm okay. I've been through worse. It's a settling feeling that gives me confidence going at new situations because I know I can embrace them and I've done it before and I've probably gone through worse than whatever I'm about to do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, I can see that. Alright, lets switch gears a little bit. So, you've had the chance to travel and train and had a bunch of different instructors and I imagine that if we think of all the different people that you've trained with and even on a peer level, it's a pretty long list. Let's flip that list. Who would you want to put on it? Who haven't trained with that you would like to?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a good question. I think I have a pretty interesting answer. For me, what I would love is I would love to train with my masters at their peak. I think that's a different spin on things. I think, for me, I kind of had the opportunity to spar. I've competed against Olympians. I've competed against Olympic champions. I've competed against world champions, for me, I kind of lost that star quality when I look at them because it's my job to be competitive, you know what I mean? So, I never really looked at anyone and said, oh my gosh. I really would love to meet you because as an athlete, as a competitor, you can't do that, right? If you're in the NBA, can't really look at LeBron James and get his autograph because you want to beat him in the game. So, for me, it was always hard for me to look at it like that. If I'm talking about training with anyone, I would love to train with my coaches and those people that really helped me get there. Like I said before, Dominique Bosshart, first Olympian for Canada. My head coach, Master Akmal Farah, multi-time world championship competitor, multi-time National champion. These are people that I have looked up to. Master Ali Ghafour, same thing, world championship competitor, National champion and he even runs a business right now where he's creating a new form of chest guards for competitors so almost like a new e-chest guard that uses pressure as opposed to points so he's really changed the game as well. For me to take these people that have helped me grow and have been beating me up when in their 30s and 40s, to have the chance to train with them at their peak, I think would be something that I would never forget.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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What do you think that experience would do for your opinion of them? I mean, the benefit to training is obvious, right? But I think most of us have had, maybe all of us, have had some moment where we come to learn more about someone. We get some insight into who they are, who they used to be or something like that, it gives us broader context and quite often that is positive, unfortunately, for looking at it on the news or in media today is usually presented as negative, but as you imagine this theoretical universe where you get to train with those folks at their peak, how do you think that would change your relationship, there we go, that's what I'm asking. How would that change your relationship with them?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a good question. I think another kind of perspective that I can offer from the competitive side is that these relationships that I have with my coaches were already very different than what someone else would expect in the martial arts world. You bow every time you see them and you say hello, sir; hello, ma'am. We had that very formal relationship but since I was always travelling and it took, as opposed to a master-student, it was also a coach-athlete relationship so I really got to experience a different type of relationship with my coaches that most martial artists wouldn't in a personal level. The things we've been through. I'm already grateful that I've got to experience more of a personal level with them. I think through that training, through that sparring with them at their peak like you just said, that's the interesting that one of my coaches always said is that you can tell a lot about a person through how they are in the ring or the way that a person fights is how they are in real life. I think an example of that is are you timid? Is someone really hesitant? Are they confident or are they rambunctious? Are they...there are so many levels to it. I think when I reverse it, I can say I know how my mentors are in life so I would love for that to be translated into the ring where I know the passion that they have, I know the experience that they have so as opposed to what could I learn from them or how would the relationship grow? It's more how would that relationship translate into the match because I already know them on that level and I know what they're worth and what their value is. To see that translate into how they fight and then to how they would perform is something that I would just love to see and I think that relationship through fighting is something that's amazing. Fighting is one of the only sports where once you're done, you can't really complain because you fought them. It's not like you lose in swimming and now, I want to fight the guy I lost to because I'm mad, right? The competition was the fight so you can't really...there's nothing left to prove and I think that's why whether it's martial arts in a traditional sense or it's MMA like UFC and stuff like that, you really see the competitors after they're done, they have a different respect for each other. They really hug it out. They express their gratitude and I think that's something unique in martial arts is that you're testing it live on a fight against another human being and at the end of the day, once it's done, you kind of see who is better and that's something that you really only get from martial arts because you're going one on one with another person. There's nothing in the middle so to experience that and to build that fighting relationship is something that I think would be fantastic.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

As my original instructor used to say, there's no politics in a knockout. We can complain all we want but as the rules start to fall away, there's something inherently objective as you get there.

**Dylan Nadler:**

A hundred percent.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We've talked a lot about your perspective on life especially as it related to martial arts. I want to shift gears a little bit and I want to talk more about some of the fun things. Some of the things that make you tick. What do you do when you're not training?

**Dylan Nadler:**

For me, I stopped competing at a competitive level, like I said, a couple years ago and that was just because I was already in university and I had a lot of things to do. I was at the point that I really looked and say, okay, what is my goal? How close am I to achieving it in? what am I about to risk to get there? It was a really tough conversation I had to have with myself but, at the end of the day, I decided, okay, I need to take a step back from this but what else can I do? I still teach classes once a week with my original club to just to give back to the community and to kind of pass on that knowledge that they've given me and to give it to the youth. What I'm doing right now, I'm still in school. I'm pursuing psychology and I actually just created a sports psychology program called MindLock where I work with athletes to do exactly like I just said: to work on their mental game. Throughout the whole process of being an athlete, talking to other athletes, travelling the world, I've really gotten a sense of how much of a mental game it really is. When you get to the Olympics, for example, between the gold and silver medal is they're both going to be strong, they're both going to be fast. They're both going to be persistent so what it comes down to is someone has to win. It comes to that mental ability. Who's more confident? Did someone hesitate? Who's more committed? These are the mental things that someone choking, get nervous, how do you respond with the crowd cheering? It comes down to all these other things that you wouldn't think about and this really impacted you. For me, the mental game has really been one of my strong points because, like I said before, there was nothing really special about me growing up. I was never the tallest, I was never the fastest, never the strongest but I make sure to really work hard and I make sure to study my opponents. I had a whole binder of all the different competitors that I would have going into a tournament and I watch tapes and I pick them apart. I'd say okay, are they going to hit? Are they going to strike when they're in this stance? How are they going to counter when I attack like this? All the things from that, all the way down to how can I make them tick? How can I frustrate them? What's something that's really going to bother them when I'm fighting them? I would really, really my opponents and break them down and use the mental side as a tool. Just as important as my kicks and my punches and my stamina were that I make sure that my mental toughness and my



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mental preparation are one of my strongest tools and I really, really believe that and I really believe that it is one of, if not the most important, thing in terms of competitiveness and athleticism in any level. I really worked towards providing athletes with that. providing athletes with the tools they need to consistently hit that high level of performance regardless of anything that's going on.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, I'm not going to poke at you for being younger and doing stuff. I think a lot of times people would do that and I think that that's ridiculous but you are starting something with launching this program that most people your age aren't doing. Tell me...I'm attempting to ask the question in a way that is not disrespectful because I definitely don't mean it that way...

**Dylan Nadler:**

It's okay. I won't get...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Here's the way some people would as a question, why do you think that you have the tools at your age to be able to help people? Here's what I want to twist that into...

**Dylan Nadler:**

Perfect. 100%.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How was what you were doing different because I firmly believe in business. Every disadvantage can be flipped. The disadvantage here is unfortunately that you are younger. But the advantage is that you haven't been necessarily corrupted or indoctrinated into quote-unquote 'what's possible' so what is it that's different with what you're doing that other programs out there might not be doing?

**Dylan Nadler:**

For sure, like I said before, I've always been competitive whether it's with training or competition or even in life and that competitiveness has kind of carried with me so I've had sports psychologists, I've had therapists, I've had everything and it's funny but always in the back of my head is, if and when I were to do this, how can I do it better? And that's always been at the back of my head. For me, I've always been kind of taking tips and learning things and making sure that I can capitalize off my experience because I really believe that where I've come from and what I've been through is really unique and some of that, other athletes can appreciate. For me, when I was in the process of developing this program was I thought, okay, what do I have that other people don't have? For me, it's really that in-sport high level experience. I've been to National team. I've been the National team captain. I've travelled the world. I've [00:45:33] qualifications in Taipei. I've been through all the ups and downs that I know, at least, when I spoke to a sports psychologist that okay, I really believe that they understand in



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terms of an academic level. They've read the books. They understand some solutions on how to solve stress and how to solve nervousness but I didn't get the feeling that they've been there and for me, it was always that missing piece of okay, it's one thing to read it in a book but it's another thing to experience it. It's another thing to experience walking out to the ring in a country where that country's fans were cheering against you when you're going to fight them with their referees and feeling that pressure, feeling that anxiety and I really feel that that experience, that sport experience really helps me connect with my athletes because a lot of times, they go through things that you can't read, right? Things like weight cut with a lot of my fighters because I work with different...it's not just fighting. I work with different...a lot of...I have athletes in the UFC, I have athletes in Bellator, the CFL but, for me, for fighting is something I can always relate to on a different level so when an athlete is cutting weight. They're going through all these issues, whether physical or mental, emotional. That was something I can really relate to because I had to cut weight. I've had tournaments where I've had to lose 20-something pounds and I was already really scrawny so I know what it feels like to wake up with no energy. To know how it feels when your body is using protein for energy instead of carbs because you haven't given it carbs in 2 weeks so, it's those little, little things that I think make a difference and most importantly, it's the applied method. For me, whenever I went to these therapists and these psychologists, I always thought, you know what? It's so great that they're listening to me and then I'm going to them but it would be even more amazing if sometimes they would come to me. I really like sitting in the office and I'm explaining myself to them but I'm kind of giving them a sense of who I am but I feel like the only thing missing is that I really want them to make their own opinions, to develop their own opinion on what I'm doing, what I look like. If they could come to training or my competition, that would be something that would be amazing and I knew that that wasn't really possible. Who's going to do that? What psychologist or therapist is going to take time out of the day to drive to watch me train? It doesn't make sense. They're not going to go to a competition, right? It's just not realistic so for me, I thought, you know what, that's going to be a staple of what I do. I really want to make this applied. I really want my athletes to feel like I do care and that I'm giving them everything that I had in order to make them better and that's something that I'm implementing. I go to training sessions and not only do I watch and learn and say, okay, how does John look when he's warming up? If he feels good and he's warming up and he's smiling and he's laughing, then that means he's feeling really loose. Now, if I go to the competition that he's doing that then I'll say great, John feels good. He's ready to perform but if John, for example, is kind of tense and he's not really talking to people the way that he did in training when he felt great, now, I can say, okay, red alert. Now, what's going on? How come he's a little bit more held back or something's going on, let me go figure it out and let's make sure that this doesn't impact performance. I think that's something that's really, really important and it takes you to a different level. For me, it's always about, not only having that athletic experience, the back what I'm doing but it's really caring and being more applied. I know, okay, I want to conduct all these training evaluations and not just watch but also, give back so I'll work with the coaches and say, okay, put them under three situations that put them under high stress. Maybe they are losing with one minute left, they have to get 3 points. Maybe they're winning and they have to defend the lead, right? Put them under pressure situations and





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I'll analyze, I'll assist and see what they're doing, how are they responding? How is the stress level impacting them at different stages? I think that's something that you're not going to get from anywhere is that deeper level of applied methodology. It's not just saying okay, you're telling me that you're stressed. Here's my three solutions. It's okay, through watching you, this is how you respond to this pressure. This is how you respond to that and let's work it. It's much more personalized and I always knew when I was competing, I loved things being personal because I knew what I was doing was different and I knew that, as an athlete, everyone's different. For me, the more personalized and the more detailed it could be, the more I fell in love with it. I take it from an athlete perspective. I kind of run this program from the athlete perspective with the knowledge I have now and I think it blends together to create something that's amazing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Tell us more where people can find this. I think it took you some length but for people listening, where're they going to find more about this program?

**Dylan Nadler:**

Sure. You can check out our website, it's [mindlock.org](http://mindlock.org). I have an Instagram page, @mindlock\_ and you can message me anytime. You can email me at [dylansadler@gmail.com](mailto:dylansadler@gmail.com) and these are...I'm always around. I'm always engaging with people, with comments, with likes and posts so I'm always around. You can get some more information from the website, from the Instagram page. Send me a message, I can always give out a program outlined with what I love doing and I'm always open to communicating. Like I said before, in the short year that I have been doing this, I'm already working with athletes at the UFC caliber, Bellator, CFL. I'm really grinding and I really make sure that I expand this as fast as I can but most importantly, that the quality never changes. I would much prefer to do this at a slower pace and keep the quality versus trying to rush it and trying to spread myself too thin. I really feel like the timeline is looking really good and I'm always open to working with more athletes and it's something that gives me passion. It's something that, not only can I give back, but it's fun for me because I'm always learning. I'm always challenging myself and my clients and this is something that really makes me excited. Even after this, as soon as I've done this with you, I have a session coming up with a UFC fighter from Florida. I do these all over the world. I do this basically through video calls. You don't have to be from Toronto. You don't even have to be from Canada and I think that's something else that makes this program different is you don't have to drive to my office because you can do this from home, you can do this from the car. Take an hour out of your day and I can run through a very high-quality sports psychology session that you're still getting the worksheets and the activities and as soon as it's done, I'll just email it to you. That way you have it and this provides something that is really, really portable. I'm working with athletes in Florida, in LA, in Canada, in Milwaukee, all over and this is something that athletes feel really comfortable with because when they have to travel for a competition, they don't have to worry. They can call me the day of, the day before and we can run through a quick session and it doesn't matter because I'm always here. It's not like you're always coming to the office and you need to book time and



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drive in the car and kind of take this time out of your day and the moment that you leave the city for an event, you've kind of lost it. I think the fact that you can take it with you is something else that's really kind of special.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Great stuff and stuff that more and more people need. I firmly believe anybody that's making martial artists' lives better and better helping them express their passion or help them find their way within martial arts, I'm going to support it a hundred percent and that's part of why I definitely wanted you on the show. You're doing some great stuff here. Let's flip gears as we start to wind down here. We've talked about the present, we've talked about the past. Let's talk about the future. What are your goals as you move forward both for MindLock and for your own training, your life, et cetera?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a great question. For me, I hit a really big milestone this year for getting my 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt and becoming a master. Even though I stopped competing at a high level, it's really important for me to continue on that path and to be a master and to just kind of solidify the work that I've been putting in on the traditional side because sometimes as competitive athletes, you lose sight of the origin. You lose sight of the tradition and you lose sight of this is a sport, this is an event but at the end of the day, it's a martial art. It was really important for me to kind of fulfill that traditional sense, to get that 4<sup>th</sup> degree and become a master. You can always build on that to get more degrees but, to me, that 4<sup>th</sup> degree was really important. The ability to break through the concrete and have that visual is something that was really important to me. In terms of business, my goal for MindLock is to really just build an empire. As I say, if you go to the website, you go to the Instagram page, I really believe that this type of training has been kind of kept in the shadows for way too long. I really believe that sports psychology, therapy, these are things that aren't in the light. These are things that people don't really post about, people don't really talk about. If they're doing it, they're doing it, they're kind of keeping it to themselves. My goal is to make this cool, to make it popular. The same way that after you're done with a hard training session, you put up a picture of you sweating and saying, wow, I just work so hard. I want you to put up a picture after our psychology session and say wow, I felt really good. Just had a good talk, just had a good session. These are things that are making you better as an athlete the same way that you want to post pictures after training because you want to show the world that you are really putting in that grind, it's the same thing with this. There's no better way to show that you're taking your fate into your own hands working on that mental side. The thing I tell my athletes is think about all the things you're doing on the physical side. All the things you're doing to better yourself, to develop yourself. You're training hard, you have a strict diet, you're going to bed at a certain time. All these simple things but can you say you're doing that on the mental side? Can you really, honestly say you're taking that same authority on your training into the mental side and a lot of people say no. I would say most people, if not all. I haven't met anyone yet that's taken the same amount, if not more, importance on their mental training than their physical and that's nothing to do with the athlete. It's just about what's out there. It's just about



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how popular this is and my goal is to make this popular to develop something that is really an empire. Something where this becomes a normal thing. If you don't have a sports psychologist, you're not working on your mind then you feel like, let me go find something because I need to start. My goal in the future is to really develop this and to really grow into something that is multisport, multi-country. Something that, I'll say this again, it's just an empire. Something that when people think of sports psychology, they think of MindLock and they think of the quality that goes into training.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Great, great stuff and I look forward to checking it out more and folks, don't forget, if you're driving or on a treadmill or something like that and you're listening to this and you're thinking, hey, I didn't jot down any of that, you can head on over to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). We'll have the links for everything that we've talked about today and as we finish wrapping up here, I'd love to ask you one more thing and I've got a feeling that you've got some good stuff for us being everything we just heard about from you and all of this motivational, fundamental psychology...I'm not finding a good collective term...effort that you're putting in to help people and ultimately, help the world and I appreciate that. I think it's fantastic. Given all of that, what parting words would you have for the folks listening today?

**Dylan Nadler:**

That's a great question. What I would say to anyone listening is that nothing is impossible but I really want to...I really want to focus on it because I think it's said so often, it can become a cliché. When things are cliché, we jump over them and it loses its value so I would say, find a way to take that statement and make that work for you. If there's anything that I said that I think is most important from today is that, I didn't come from anything special. Like I said, I was never the tallest, I was never the fastest, the strongest but I had that effort and I knew that, no matter what, no one's going to work harder than me and you don't need anything for that. You don't need anything for effort. There's an Olympian that just won gold in Rio for Taekwondo who's from Ivory Coast and there's videos of him training on the concrete in Africa. You don't need a fancy facility. You don't even need raw talent and this, regardless of if you're a martial artist, a business or school or life, anything. As long as you're willing to put in an effort, know that good things will happen. There is always opportunities falling around you, you just have to reach out and grab it and I really believe that nothing is ever going to fall into your hand or nothing of value, so if you really want something big, you have to reach out and grab it and this is something that you need to be doing. I feel like there's a lot of excuses whether it's age or anything like that or you could think of a whole bunch of excuses for anything but at the end of the day, what I think is that as long as you're willing, you can make it happen. You can make it happen and even for this, a really small example is I even reached out to you even in this podcast because I saw what you were doing but I really like the audience that you had. I saw the quality of shows that you were putting on and I thought, you know what? This would be a great place for me offer my take, not just to enrich your listeners but to give the people that follow me a good place to check in on other things. I had to come to you. A lot of people could say, it's kind of embarrassing, what if they say no? What if they're busy? For



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me, I don't care. What's the worst case scenario and I think this comes back to, like I said before, my training experience of just being a kind of cool, calm guy. What's the worst case scenario? You say no. Okay, that's fine. I still tried. I think, even on a small level, this is an example of just trying and seeing what happens. The worst case scenario is that nothing happens and that would have been the result if you didn't try so the parting words I would definitely say is not only is anything possible but everything is possible. All these great things that you see around you were developed by somebody so instead of thinking about what they have that you don't have, think about how you can create something that people down the line are going to say that that's some amazing stuff.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If there's one thing that martial artists who have been training a while know and seem to know across the board, regardless of your style and experience, it's how to overcome. Whether we're overcoming something small in our training or something larger in our training, something outside of training that we use our training to facilitate, there's a lot of overcoming. There's a lot of growth that happens within martial arts and Master Nadler is taking that experience, that growth and helping others do exactly the same thing and I applaud him for that. Thank you for coming on the show. Thank you for your time and I wish you nothing but success. I hope you all check out his website. We have links to that social media and a bunch more at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). Remember, this is episode 394 and if you want to find more about us here at whistlekick, the best places are [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and the social media @whistlekick, it's all over the place. You want to share some commentary privately or give some feedback, you can email me: [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) and I love hearing from you. I appreciate everyone's support. All the love that you show helps me get up in the morning and do this show which, honestly, is a lot of work. Thank you for that. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!