



Episode 95 – Becoming a Better Martial Artist in the Car | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, everybody, we're back and it's time for another episode of martial arts radio. This time, we're Episode 95 and today, we're going to give you some real suggestions how to reclaim your time in the car to become a better martial artist. I'm whistlekick's founder but I'm better known as your host on this show, Jeremy Lesniak. Now, whistlekick, if you're new to the show, makes the absolute best martial arts sparring gear, apparel and accessories for practitioners and fans of traditional martial arts. I'd like to welcome all of you, new listeners, and thank everybody that's come back to hear my voice another time. Still get a big kick out of the fact that you, guys, actually listen to me, huh? Crazy, right?

Now, if you're not familiar with our products, you can learn more or buy over at whistlekick.com. All of our past podcast episodes, show notes and a lot more are on another website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. From either site, you can sign up for our newsletter and I hope that you do because we offer exclusive content, we let you know about upcoming guests for the show, we send out some discounts and really, we just try and periodically send out a good newsletter that you're going to be able to read through quickly and get some value from but let's jump into the show.

So, today's show is actually inspired by events from... well, let's see, it's Wednesday... four, five days ago, I was driving to and from Maine in a relatively short period of time because we had the whistlekick booth set up at a competition in Maine so that gave me close to 4 hours each way in the car and as I was driving, I realized, you know, there is some stuff that I do with my drive time, because I kind of have to, to reclaim it that affects my martial arts and it got me thinking what else could I be doing and as I put together this list, I thought, hey, if this is valuable information for me, I'm going to guess it's valuable information for some of you out there.

Now, of course, we have to start anything like this with a disclaimer. Don't be dumb. If you're in the car and you're doing anything, your driving has to take priority. If you take one of these suggestions and you implement it and you crash, that is your fault. That is not our fault. You agree full responsibility in taking any of these suggestions and implementing them and hold us harmless and all that good stuff so I won't go to any more detail but unfortunately, we do have to say things like that.

So, the first suggestion, and you're probably already doing this if you're listening to this show is listening to podcasts. One of the best ways that you can educate yourself on any subject is by listening to podcasts and, as much as we strive to produce the best martial arts podcast, we are not the only good martial arts podcast. Of course, we've heard from one other host, Martial Thoughts. Sensei Jared Wilson has been on the show. We are friendly with some of the other shows and we actually did a blog post on, I believe, it was the Top 7 martial arts podcast. We're going to link to that in the show notes, not going to run through them here but, of course, searching martial arts, taekwondo, karate, kung fu, are going to give you some great suggestions on other shows that you might want to check out and I hope that you do because, of course, you can listen to a podcast while you're doing just about anything and you can even listen while you're doing some of these other things if you have the ability to focus on more



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than one thing at a time and hopefully, if you're driving and you're doing other things, you have the ability to focus on more than one thing at a time, right?

So, the other thing, and this is probably the thing that caused me to sit up and take notice that I was doing. I was manipulating a kubotan in between my fingers. I was flipping it around and just really just working on some hand dexterity and I've been doing that for, probably, 15 to 20 minutes in one hand and thought, hey, let me try this in the other hand and just failed miserably. I was just dropping it in my lap and everything and I thought, hey, this is something that I could work on and something I can progress with in the car and no, it doesn't have a direct one-to-one correlation with my martial arts training but, of course, the better my hand dexterity, the better any grappling maneuvers or, even, weapons manipulation there's going to be so there's some value there. Now, it doesn't have to be a kubotan. It could be a pen. It could be Baoding balls, those Chinese exercise balls. You could do something like that. There's a lot of different thing you can do just with a couple minutes of time with one hand. Of course, if that somehow is illegal in your area to drive using only one hand, please do not do that and that kind of goes for all of these things. Please do not break any state or federal or local ordinances in order to implement these suggestions that I am making.

Hand mobility and that's basically just stretching. If you are like me, you've got a couple spots, couple fingers that have been banged up, maybe broken and they could use a good stretch so, you can gently stretch any of your finger joints while you're driving. Is it going to be the most enjoyable time of your drive? No, it's not but if you often find yourself jamming fingers or dislocating fingers or really, just ending up with joint pain from your fingers, this could be a good way to work on that to help pre-habilitate those injuries and, of course, you may want to check with a medical professional before starting something like that especially if you've had a severe injury.

Now, some of you out there, and I've worked with people like you, don't cut your fingernails enough and you should be doing that more so what do you do? You go to the drugstore and you drop \$2 and you get a cheap fingernail clipper and you keep it in your cupholder and when you get in the car, you check your hands and if you're fingernails need to be clipped, you clip them and you catch your fingernail clippings in your shirt or you throw them on the floormat or whatever you've got to do and then you're training partners are much happier with you so, I would rather have you need to clean out your floormat more often because there are fingernail clippings in it than cut my wrists with your long, often now, dirty fingernails. We all know people like this, don't we? And yes, I do cut my fingernails in the car from time to time because that's when I think about it.

Focus practice. So, this one's a little tricky and I think you have to be careful when you're doing this but here's the general idea: you're driving, you've got one or two hands on the wheel, probably just one to implement this and there are a number of things within arm's reach, how gently can you strike at speed, one of those things? So, pretend you're driving. You've got your left hand on the wheel and you throw a, let's say, back fist to the passenger seat, how quickly can you throw it to just touch the seat? You're probably not going to sit there and pop off 20 repetitions because you need to divert your attention



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back but if it's acceptable to remove your hand from the wheel to change your radio station or heating setting or adjust the mirror quickly, then it's okay to do this one once in a while. Again, you got to pick your spots but there's some value there.

Hand conditioning. So, if you were training on land. On land, right? Versus a car? Car's on land but you know what I mean. If you are training outside of the vehicle, you can do something like Makiwara Training. Striking a hard surface generating power and, more so, conditioning your hands. There're some ways you can implement that while you're driving too. You can start by bringing, say, a beanbag into the car and punching it. You could brace it on your leg and punch it. You could work up to a block of wood if you're really aggressive, maybe a block of wood with some sand paper, there's a lot of ways that you can go at that but bottom-line, if you find your hands in need of some additional conditioning, here's a good time to tackle it and I think one of the greatest benefits of bringing this idea of drive time training into your life is that you can do a little bit every day.

We've talked about on this show my personal belief that there's a lot you can do in. a minute, 2 minutes, 5 minutes a day to become a better martial artist and that, actually, we got some future show planned around that and even some other resources. Maybe a book? So. But that's a whole other subject and I think that that's something like conditioning becomes valuable. It's not something you're going to want to do 30 minutes a day but 30 seconds, 60 seconds, 2 minutes a day, whatever. Most of us have a commute that is much longer than that. I'm pretty blessed. My commute is about 12 feet from my home to the home office that I operate here and, of course, the warehouse is further away but this is the kind of stuff that I do when I'm driving. I might not have a daily commute but I still have a fair amount of time in the car driving to events and driving to seminars and things like that.

Now, here's one that seems to be met with controversy every time it comes up. Driving barefoot. I'm a huge proponent of staying barefoot as much as possible in every situation that's possible. I actually don't like wearing shoes. Just, let's see, we're recording this Wednesday, a week ago today, I ran a 5K barefoot. No, that was not on some pleasant surface and I'm not trying to brag, it's not about that, it's about the fact that I walked the walk. I don't just talk the talk. There's a lot of great benefits just as people to being barefoot. Shoes are terrible. That's a whole other subject that maybe we'll get into someday but as martial artists, most of the time, we are training barefoot so, the more time we can spend barefoot outside of our training, the more comfortable we're going to be just in that basic foundation of being barefoot. To drive barefoot, assuming again, that it is legal in your area. I have not done the research on all 50 states but I know where I am now, in Vermont, it is legal. I know where I grew up in Maine, at least, at the time, I was learning to drive, it was legal so don't let people tell you that it is not unless you actually go do the research so check it out. Pretty easy to find the answer to that in the laws on the internet, so.

Now, one that you probably already do and you might not realize the carryover to your martial arts training is that evaluation of what other people are doing on the road. So, that can go for drivers, for pedestrians, for animals. To evaluate them, to read the subtle cues in what they're doing, how they're



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operating their vehicle, how they're walking, how they're looking. If it's an animal, is it tensed up? Which direction is it going to go? The better you get at reading that, the better you're going to be at reading other people in a combat or a training-combat situation and that's really valuable. The better you get in one, the more carryover because it's all about these subtleties. Yeah, some people might say there's kind of a sixth sense thing going on and maybe, that's there but I know for a fact that people are better at reading subtle facial expressions and muscle tension and intent than we often think. We are. There's a great opportunity. Try paying more attention to what's going on and, not only will you be a better driver, but you're going to be a better martial artist.

We've got just a couple more to share with you here. The next to last one: driving especially if you've got 30, 60 minutes is a great time for recovery. If you're someone that gets sore from your martial arts training or for some other physical training, weightlifting or whatnot, driving is a great time for recovery and one of the best ways to implement recovery that I'm aware of is using something like a TENS unit. There's a lot of other devices that operate in a similar way. Basically, a TENS unit, the TENS is an acronym and I forget what it stands for, you can just look it up: TENS and the whole idea's you're using electrical impulse to stimulate the muscles in a certain way to create a certain effect. Bruce Lee used to do this on his abs. He swore by this and the science on that is a little conflicting but you can definitely use something like this to get a muscle to recover better. The science behind it is pretty interesting and it's a little bit more than we're going to go into here but you can get a basic TENS unit for under \$50. Some of the more advanced unit that do some pretty crazy stuff are available for \$500 to a thousand dollars and people that own them swear by them. They will never go back. I've got a cheap one, it's not something I use often because I've got other methods for muscle recovery that aren't going to work in the car. Foam rollers and things like that but if you're someone that's chronically sore, this might be a good thing to check out and try out. Now, of course, you're not going to want to put this on any muscle that is going to spasm and cause your leg to twitch because you got to drive but upper body, back, things like that, great place.

And, finally, one that I do pretty often: hand strengthening. I got a couple of those different grippers that are popular with rock climbers and other people that use their hands a lot and I'll just do, I think I'm back up to 50 repetitions on each hand with the one that I have and I like to get up to about a hundred and just kind of working my way back up there. For whatever reason, I do it and I clean my car and it goes back into the center console and I forget about it for a month or so and then it comes back out. You can also, you've got the hand strengtheners that aren't based on squeezing. They're based on extending your fingers so you can work both ways there but basically, there's a lot that you can do to strengthen your hands because you're not just strengthening you hand, you're strengthening the muscles in your hands, you're strengthening your forearms and that's also supporting your wrist so, whether it's for grappling or general striking, stability for pushups, there's a lot of carryover to the things that we do and, again, it's something you can purchase for under \$10 and it's something you can do relatively quickly.



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So, that's it! Quick episode today. What do you think? Do you have suggestions for other methods that we may have missed? We'd love to hear your ideas and get your feedback on the ones that we shared. Give them a try and let us know how they work for you. feedback is always appreciated.

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Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!