



Episode 410 – Sensei Lee Taylor | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello, everyone! Welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 410. Today, my guest is Sensei Lee Taylor. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on this show. The founder of whistlekick and I love the martial arts. It's my job and part of that job is bringing you this show twice a week. On Mondays, we have guest interviews. On Thursdays, we release a topic show. Something that's maybe a bit of a deeper dive into a style or a person or maybe just a subject I want to rant about. You can find all of the episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and you can find everything we do from this show to all the other projects and the products that we offer at whistlekick.com and if you use the code PODCAST15, you'll save 15% off everything we have available for sale. As you might imagine, I love martial arts podcasts and so when we have the opportunity to speak to someone else who also has a martial arts podcast, I love the conversations we get into. The people I get to talk to have different but similar stories. They have different but still a martial arts take on the show that they offer and I just find we get into great stuff because they know how to have these conversations and that's what we have today. My guest, Sensei Taylor, offers his own show which you can check out. We've got links on the show notes and we've had every bit as good of a conversation as I've hoped for and expected. SO, here we go! Sensei Taylor, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Lee Taylor:

Hello! Thank you for having me!



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course! It is an honor to have you here, a fellow podcaster. I love having other podcasters on the show because they know how to use microphones and things and things like talking here and they turn away and then nobody can hear them and then they turn back and they turn the other way and then they turn back.

Lee Taylor:

I'm a newbie and just about the use of microphone, I'm a newbie. I'm a white belter podcaster.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A white belt at podcasting...oh! What a fun analogy! I'm going to have to noodle with that on my own because where do I put myself! I mean, we're 4 years in. Am I like green belt or brown belt...

Lee Taylor:

Oh no, more than that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Or maybe a short of rushed Shodan?

Lee Taylor:

Considering the esteemed guests you have and how many podcasts you put out, I think you're pushing Shodan easily.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thank you but if we continue that analogy, you could be a terrible martial artist and still train with some great people.

Lee Taylor:

True, that's right!

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I've known some of them. How have you learned from these wonderful martial artists who are also great teachers in their own right because, of course, you can be good at something and not be able to teach it and then you're just so bad?

Lee Taylor:



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I think they just don't take it in or act on the information they're given. They don't apply whatever they've seen or heard of or whatever have been.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I think there's a lot of that. I think there are people out there who simply want to check a box. They want to say I trained with so and so, I trained under so and so. They don't really care about their skill.

Lee Taylor:

No, I've come across a lot of that. Even attended seminars, you see quite high-ranking attendees and they're not really in the room, as it were.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah, I'm thinking the same. That I've been there and listeners know that I get the opportunity to travel around a little bit with Bill Wallace and people would come to the seminar, they'd pay the fee, they suit up, they warm up and then, they sit down.

Lee Taylor:

Yes, it's a pet peeve of mine. I see it all the time, they're not even taking any notice of the guy who spent money to be in the room with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No and then, at the end, they take a picture and then they post it on Facebook and say, I just got done with the great seminar with so and so and I'm thinking, no, you didn't! You showed up.

Lee Taylor:

You went to the room. That was about it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It sounds like we have the back of a t-shirt there. Martial arts: you have to do more than just show up.

Lee Taylor:

That's good. I like that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Feel free to steal that.

Lee Taylor:



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I might well do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, I'm glad to have you here and I'm glad that...I can already see. We've got good banter going. I think this is going to go well. I'm looking forward to all the places that we're going to go but I'd like to start in a pretty fundamental way just as we do in the martial arts, we start with the fundamentals so how did you first find martial arts?

Lee Taylor:

My earliest memory, I think I was about 5, and we lived opposite a church hall and from my bedroom window, I could see down the church hall and every now and again, there would be people in there with white suits punching and kicking each other so, as we all know, Karate starts in churches and village halls all across the world so that was one of my earliest memory. I didn't understand what it was about and then, a few years later, at my uncle's house and I saw a few huge trophies with some sort of strange man on top of it in a pole and a piece of paper on the wall with some strange writing on it and I was told that was Karate so, I thought, oh, what is this Karate thing that you get strange certificates and big trophies? And it intrigued me even more because my uncle said you can't try Karate until you're in secondary school, which I presume is high school for you guys? 11 years of age?

Jeremy Lesniak:

We'd call that junior high often. Junior high or middle school.

Lee Taylor:

So I was even intrigued then I was like, whoa, why is it so special that I can't try until I'm in big school so it was via my uncle. My dad took me along to my first session with him, that's how I got into Karate.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, did you, in fact, have to wait?

Lee Taylor:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, so here we have kind of a tried and true marketing tactic to say you can't do this, you can't have this and I suspect that made you more interested?

Lee Taylor:



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Yes, yes, definitely. It was like oh, what are those massive trophies? Do I get that for taking part in Karate and didn't realize it until later, obviously, while training. I understood that the certificate was his Dan grade and the trophies were for taking part in competing and things like that so..

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now was this something that you started the day you turned 11? Was this something that you've been building up?

Lee Taylor:

Pretty much, yeah, pretty much. When I started secondary school, that was it. I always thought, right, I can start now then so we start school in September and pretty much, pretty sure I wasn't far off on that. I went straight to the first class.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what hooked you in? You'd been building up this anticipation and when you start, and quite often as we all know, things that you anticipate, you look forward to for a very long time, can be disheartening. They can let you down.

Lee Taylor:

Yes, definitely. I think during that waiting period, there was obviously got involved in seeing some movies, Bruce Lee classics. I think my father introduced me to a couple of those movies so that was sort of wetting my appetite, punching and kicking and not understanding what they were doing but the look of it, I think, really, being able to do that type of thing so yeah, once we started, didn't matter what it was or how it was delivered, I was going to learn some martial arts so that was great and that was it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you're in!

Lee Taylor:

Hooked for life!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, let's fast forward a few years because I think we all know that, I'm making an assumption that culturally is similar over there, that here in the United States, we have a struggle with retaining children as they age into their teenage years because of the distractions of social life and team sports, you didn't step away during that time, sounds like?

Lee Taylor:



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No, right to the end of secondary school, with about 14 or 15, unfortunately, the club had to close so I went to college for 2 years so 16 to 18 and I didn't really get involved then. I just sort of dabbled and dabbled with the odd club that was close but not as intent as I was beforehand and then from 18 to 21, I went to university and same thing. I wasn't really that interested in being full-on in Karate as I was in my formative years so I had probably a 4, 5-year break from it so mainly, due to not having a club, I suppose, rather than not wanting to but yeah, I see the problem. I had the same issue with my clubs and the teenagers are becoming the adults but it's life. We're quite rural so a lot of them move away for college or university and let's just say there are other sports on their list of activities for the week. [00:09:51] so when I did it, I'd be taking part in one or two sports and then I'd be about it, one of those was Karate but children nowadays have got a lot in their diary. 4 or 5 or 5 or 6 sports and you happen to be one of them.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alright, during this hiatus, do you remember what your thoughts were? Was it something you were missing?

Lee Taylor:

It was always there. Yeah, it was always in the back of my mind, still thoroughly enjoyed anything regarding martial arts film-wise or reading or magazines, books. It was still there. I test myself now and again, see if I can remember some of the katas and things like that but it just wasn't at the forefront of my focus. I was studying in university then, chasing the career so it didn't reappear until later. It was always in the background, never left me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And when you decided to go back, when you decided to, I'm going to guess, jump back in with two feet, what was it you were looking for? Were you looking for a particular style? A particular type of instructor or maybe certain days and times of the week that would fit in with your life?

Lee Taylor:

Well, I always, yeah, I studied Leisure Management in university and I was chasing a career in Leisure so I was working for a big sports center so that includes shifts so I couldn't really fit anything in while I was chasing that but my circumstances changed when my second son was born, George. I managed to secure a training and development manager position so I could go around training people in the leisure centers on a day shift, as it were, so at 9 to 5 so I thought, oh, there's a possibility of doing something in the evening again and I think my wife just wanted me out of the house, to be fair, so she suggested and so, I just thought any Karate in the area, that was my first thought. What was the nearest Karate club? Then that was it so I found it and got back in about 1999.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Now, one of the things that seems to happen to people when they take a break, they come back in, they can often get frustrated with maybe failings of the memory or just muscle memory. I remember I used to be able to do this kick this way and that's not what's happening here.

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, what's happening to my body?

Jeremy Lesniak:

And then further, it's not the same school. It's not the same style.

Lee Taylor:

Yes it was a different style.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Add some complication, too, so how did you navigate that?

Lee Taylor:

My first style with my uncle's was Wadō-ryū and then, when I came back, it was Shūkōkai [00:12:48] So, not a major leap. It's obviously some of the basics, some of the katas are the same. The little bit different in terms of the class structure from when I was first in the hall so a lot more combinations, a lot more involved in the kumite side and with the Shūkōkai style, which is renowned for its power and impact, we give a lot of that on hands as well so that was new to me, as it were, which really enhanced my love for this training really.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right and I'm going to guess because we've already established that you're a podcaster and we didn't say specifically that your podcast is around martial arts, but it is, and when I think of the other folks who've been on the show who are martial arts podcasters, people who have dedicated things outside of their training to martial arts, they tend to be, I'd say across the board, they are incredibly passionate about their training so how did you go from I'm looking at getting back into this to being that type of passionate?

Lee Taylor:

It just organically grew, really. Once you start and no one's really thinking about I want to start to become an instructor, you want to train and things sort of snowballed from there. I got involved in helping the association with the squad's training and things like that. I was a competitor as well and I started helping out in class and it grew from there. It wasn't my intention and then, few years down the road, as it were, I knew a few of my contemporaries had opened their own club so I thought, well, that's



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not a bad idea, really, I can fit that in with my work life so, again, it was like a natural progression so I opened up a club in my hometown which is quite ironic because that's where I started with my uncle's many years previously so it sort of come full circle and from then on, it got to a point where I thought actually this is what I want to do as a full-time profession so by 2007, I think it was, I quit my job and became a full-time instructor.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We have quite a few people on the show who have started their own school but then, I'd say, the majority of our listeners are not school owners but a good chunk of them are considering it or would consider the idea maybe some time in the future. Can you talk about how you went from the idea of starting a club to building it, quitting your job and it becoming your full-time employment?

Lee Taylor:

Like I said, I was helping my instructor and the association I was involved in training and competing. Like I said, a couple of my contemporaries went with their own club so I thought well, I think it's about time that I had a club again, as it has been many years. A couple have drifted in and I think, over the years, with different styles so opened it with the association I was with and a couple of years later, it just grew from that, really. I was getting, not disheartened with my job, but it seems to be getting in the way, as it were. You don't really notice it until you look back and think, yeah, because I moved my job around trying to accommodate my club and that was life saying take the plunge and do it now but I ignored it and went to find another job to fit my club so I did and I was just like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, same job, different company, really. Same problems, different company and that lasted two months because it was at that point, it was like I was away actually on an association trip and my oldest son who had competed, he was competing and I was part of the squad team. We had such a great trip and it was on that trip that it was, I don't want to go back to my job and I rang my wife and said, I don't want to go back to my job. She said, fine. She's pretty supportive and that was it. I got back from the trip and handed my notice in and I was, it's not for everybody the way I did it, I literally handed my notice in and I had one month to replace my wage. I've got every possible outgoing that everyone has: mortgage, cars, bills but I had to do it and my wife said, well, do it then. It was a big, big commitment but it forced me to look at it seriously and I opened a couple of other clubs in the area within that month of using up my last wage and it's just grew from there so that was back in 2007 where I made the leap, basically. Like I said, it's not an ideal format. I wouldn't say this is how you start teaching full-time as I literally jumped but sometimes, you do have to. There are points where your life says here, try it but you ignore it and like I said, you can't really notice those points until you look back. When I look back, there was 2 or 3 major points where I ignored it and just find another job where it would fit the Karate club and it should've been the other way around but that was the way it was for me. You can plan it as much as you want. You can say I'm going to do it when this is ready or I'll do it when I am financially secure or when this happens and that never happens, never fits that scale so at some point, you just have to go, right,



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I'm going to do it now and you'll be surprised how successful you'll be. It's not easy and the way of the world isn't easy. It's the hardest thing I've ever, ever done but I've not worked a day for over the years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a great feeling, isn't it? The idea that I'll do something you love and people will pay you for it. It's pretty phenomenal. If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

Lee Taylor:

Nothing because it's where I am right now, talking to you on a podcast which is amazing so I wouldn't change it for the world. It's just...you can't have regrets. It just doesn't work that way because you wouldn't be where you are, at that point, if you hadn't made those choices.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, where there any, and I fully understand what you're saying there, so I'm going to ask the question in a slightly different way. As you were going through this process, as your leaving your job, starting these clubs up, is there anything that you could have done better from a professional sense?

Lee Taylor:

Possibly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm thinking the folks listening who...they're nodding along saying yeah, I want to do this but I'm scared so...

Lee Taylor:

I was scared.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, absolutely.

Lee Taylor:

Like I said, I had every financial commitment going like every family man, married with kids and houses, cars, so you could go down that road and say, well, I want to make sure that I'm financially secure but you'll always keep pushing that time frame. You can say I want X amount in my account before I make this step so if anything goes wrong, I'm okay to pay these bills and things like that but you'll always just keep pushing it because you really won't make that jump because it's still too comfortable. Does that make sense?



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Jeremy Lesniak:

It sure does.

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, so maybe at that but I think, for me, that was just the best way for me to just to do it. It made me go out and make a success of it. You could have everything in place with all you want and you really did go but you just won't go, right, it's time to start. It's still too comfortable. You need that feeling to go, right, it's on!

Jeremy Lesniak:

And when we think about that feeling, not everyone may have experienced that in a professional and entrepreneurial sense as you have, as I certainly have, but I think a lot of us has experienced that in our training.

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, I was just about to say that. It's just like stepping on the mat.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, how, for people who haven't done both, for people who haven't had that stressful experience of starting a business, how would you relate that to their experiences in their training?

Lee Taylor:

It's, literally, it's like walking into the dojo for the first time or trying something new. Anything for the first time, you ever get that feeling or that fear of trying something that you don't really know what the answers going to be. It's a bit like, I suppose, taking your driving test and that injection of adrenaline into you going but you don't know what the outcome is. I've done everything I can but I still don't know if I'm going to pass and it's the same with your martial arts training. It's like putting the gloves on and having your first spar and then taking it to the next level and competing and stepping on the map or kata performance, it's the same feeling. I've done everything I can but I don't know how it's going to go. There's a bit where you just have to let it out, as it were. You should be fine but life is never like that because a couple of years into teaching while I was just finding my feet, there was a big recession in the UK and my wife lost her job then so it came to a crossroads again. Put more pressure on me and that she find another job that she's been doing for some 20 odd years, that she retrain because she supported my decision, I said, it's up to you. I suggest you try something different so she actually went back to college full time for 2 years so, inadvertently, the same thing happened to her with that feeling of the unknown and a bit more pressure on me and the success. I'd only been teaching fulltime for 2 years but that's life. It throws stuff at you but you just find a way. You just find a way so we had no income for my wife's side for 2 years because she was retraining. There you go. It's just another thing



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that life throws at you to make it interesting or stressful, whichever way you want to look at it, but there's always ways around and there's always ways through and you come out the other end and she came out with flying colors going to college because she never missed that in her youth, going to college, so it was a big step for her and into the unknown and not having any income and training for 2 years and studying but it all turned out fine in the end but you don't know it at the time.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, right, hindsight's easy.

Lee Taylor:

Of course, it is. Hindsight's a wonderful thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Does your wife train?

Lee Taylor:

She used to but she couldn't take instruction from me or my sons.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Your sons train?

Lee Taylor:

Yes!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, so this, your martial arts career started as a family endeavor and it's continued as such?

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, I got back into it and then got my sons involved in it. Actually, my oldest son did the same as me, really. He has been chasing a career and he's really successful and he's, literally, where he lives in the other side of the UK, got back into a gi so I'm well-impressed that he's actually managed to [00:25:20] must be pushing 8 years away from it, maybe more, but yeah, he's had the guts to put the gi back on and step into a completely different dojo again and a different style and all credit to him and my youngest son, he's 19, 20 this year, is in it as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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One of the things I've told people because, you probably experienced this, two people come up to you and they want to talk about martial arts because they used to train and just seeing you, they seem to feel guilty and I always tell them hey, when you're ready, martial arts is there for you. It's not going.

Lee Taylor:

That's exactly right because it didn't leave me even though I wasn't training. It didn't leave me so, yeah, people do come say, I used to it or this and that I say well, when the student is ready, the teacher appears as they say.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, through this time, through your training, I'm sure you've experienced some dramatic events, some ups, some downs, you've probably trained with some colorful characters and that leads to stories and, of course, I love stories. That's the foundation of what we do here. We tell stories. I provide space for people to tell stories so if I was to put you on the spot, maybe at a podium in front of a group of people and say, Sensei's going to tell you his favorite martial arts story now, what would that story be?

Lee Taylor:

Few years ago, I broke my neck so probably that might be it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah! I think that falls under the heading of dramatic event.

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, I thought so. Yes, I was just finished teaching at a club, at my club, and my son is learning to drive so I said you can drive me to the club and we'll do some training with the guys there and drive back and he said, yeah, cool. So, it's a good training session, it's about half an hour away from where I live. February 2006, weather wasn't great but we made our way home, stopped at the garage, get some fuel and then some snacks so you can always go by the what if we hadn't stopped, I think. Continued on and I don't really recall much of it but my son just said, what's he doing? So I looked up and this car just came straight at us. I don't really recall too much but instinctively just pulled the handbrake and because the weather wasn't great, it spun around and took the impact on the back end of the car and, as we say, not much memory of that event but we were extremely lucky. It overtook a couple of vehicles plus a big tractor and came straight for us. Apparently, I said to my son, George, what are you doing driving the car? That was my first thing to say but it's a strange thing that you lose the timeline because we're quite rural out here and I know the fire brigade who would be attending our crash would take about 15, 20 minutes to get to us along with ambulances and things and all of that timeline is just missing but, luckily, my son got away with a few cuts and bruises and a broken finger and I got out of the car and I just about remember that, I think, but in searing pain and I don't really remember much after that but apart from



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breaking my neck, apparently...well, not apparently, it happened...got stretched up, got flown to hospital and there you go, your life literally changes in an instant. It doesn't flash before you but it does change on a dime, as it were.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what was the recovery like?

Lee Taylor:

Your world shrinks instantly when you are, then, confined to your back not knowing what's happening so it just, literally, shrinks to the room you're in, looking at the ceiling, waiting to see or hear what's wrong with you. I felt alright. I had nothing else wrong with me but apart from the searing pain in my neck and scans and MRIs and things like that, said yeah, you've broken your C2 vertebrae. We're a little bit concerned because it was pressing in the arteries at that time and so, you get told that and you just hope and pray that the fracture isn't as bad as it could've been and life-changing and life-threatening so yeah, your world shrinks instantly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How did your martial arts experience impact that recovery, that outlook, et cetera?

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, it's strange because at that moment in time, nothing mattered. Doesn't matter who I was or what I was or what I've achieved, that moment in time that it could've been lights out, over. I didn't know anything about it either so didn't feel anything or don't remember the impact or what happened after so on the morbid side of it, if other people have been involved in such things or have family members involved in such things, the little bit of comfort is, in my experience, I wouldn't've known anything about it if it was any worse so my training or my health, what does that mean at that moment in time when a car is coming in at the back of your car but my osteopath said, well, you could look at it that your training and your health helped you absorb the impact more efficiently. I said, okay, I could take that, probably. That sounds a little bit more correct because it was, literally, the fracture was...it's hard to quantify but it was that close from the hangman's noose one, as they say, the C2 but then, the recovery and that turns a bit, definitely, on the mental side, the aspect and then the physical recovery then obviously, the trainings helped to no end, really. Probably more of the mental side and the physical side sort of took care of itself but I was in a neck brace February to June, I think, managed to get back to the dojo...I think it was about April time so probably, still in the neck brace, put a gi on and started to get back into the dojo. I wasn't obviously doing anything. I was sort of like a figure standing there while my son and my other elder kept the clubs running while I was recuperating, managed to get and see them and that was the biggest lift, really. Being back in the game, back on the floor which helped to no end so I think it's more like a goal, really, that helped.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

How hard was it to be away from active training?

Lee Taylor:

I took about...it's weird because you think I've got to get this right. I've got to heal correctly. I got to take my time and get it right because it was the neck and so, on one hand, not really thinking about that even though it is a big part of your life because, like I said, your world shrinks and you think I won't be back on that floor if I don't heal properly and get this right so I was focused on that until a few months in, I was starting to feel better and move better even though you're still in a brace so you sort of come back to that part of your life then I think, well, I'm now, I need to start setting a goal to possibly get back in the dojo, get back on the floor with the students and that was a motivation to go see them, really.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What lesson...let's say it a different way. Most of us, fortunately, aren't going to experience that. That kind of physical, traumatic event, I mean, we all have events in martial arts. I took a quick shot on Sunday. I think most of us are used to something like that like oh, this leg won't work for a couple days or maybe you're out for a couple weeks or even a month but very, very few of us are going to break their neck so, maybe we can learn a little bit from your experience. What lessons came out of that for you that you might share with us?

Lee Taylor:

You hear the life is short analogy a lot and because of the events that you experienced, catastrophes and things like that, it's not that life is short. It's just life is very fragile and things can change in an instant that makes it appear short. Hindsight makes you think that life is short but it's not. It's fragile and so, an injury can put you out and, like you said, you took a shot but could've lead into something else. It's being more appreciative, really, rather than pessimistic about how long our life will be. I'm very much more optimistic. It didn't change me in terms of born again or spiritual but it just makes you very appreciative of the time that you have and the people you spend it with but life is life. You can't guess about our time here but it doesn't take much for it to flip on its head, as it were. Be appreciative.

Jeremy Lesniak:

When you think back over your time as a martial artist, in all the people that you've talked to, trained with, if we had to make a list of whose been the most impactful on who you see yourself as now, today, as a martial artist, who would be at the top of that list?

Lee Taylor:

People come and go in your life and some people stay for longer reasons and some people just drifted and drift out but every single one of them has a pivotal role as you go along your life so, obviously, from



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my first instructor, my uncles, if they hadn't instilled the love of the art into me then I may have just quit and moved on but obviously they have planted something in me and then, again, coming back into it with the support of my wife on many occasion like when my son was born, to get me out from under her feet and start Karate again and to go in full-time. She's obviously a massive, pivotal role that keep me on this path I've chosen and then back into the different styles, the different instructors, they all impart a certain part of them onto you so I'm going to say if there was a top of the list, top of the list would be the current people that I'm training with, I suppose. I'm sure they'll change again in the future so I'm more of the fact that everyone that you come across or cross paths with or spent time with affect you on your own path so more than a list of the person on the top, they all contribute.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can see that. So, lets kind of flip that question, who'd you want to add to the list?

Lee Taylor:

From the Karate point of view, from the Shitō-ryū Shūkōkai background then the founder of Shitō-ryū was Kenwa Mabuni and he had a huge knowledge base on kata that's why Shitō-ryū have a huge list of kata in its syllabus but even from his contemporaries, they all suggested that if you needed to know kata then he was the man to go to so even the founders of the other styles put Ken Mabuni out there as The Man. The go-to man for kata so yeah, I think he'd be pretty interesting to train with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I would agree, absolutely. Now, you mentioned earlier about competition and how competition was something that you would engage in a little bit but was kind of a passing comment. Tell us about your experience with competing.

Lee Taylor:

When I first started as a child in Wadō-ryū, there wasn't any competitive side of it. I think I've briefly touched on the kumite sparring with them so it came into it when I came back in '99 with the Shūkōkai group when sparring was more prominent so I got a taste for it then and then, there was like, oh yeah, we also do competitions so I was okay, what's that all about? So, it just built from there and took part in association competitions and enjoyed both kata and kumite. Quite successful at it within the association and competed for them locally, nationally, internationally within the Samurai Shūkōkai Association and after that, had my fair share of success and failure in both disciplines but enjoyed it thoroughly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about martial arts culture because something in my gut tells me that this is a piece that deserves a little more attention for you than maybe some others. You talked a little bit about Bruce Lee



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movies. You talked a little bit about...oh no, I think that's all we've said today. How important are martial arts movies and TV and maybe even books for you?

Lee Taylor:

Books was a huge part because when I was growing up, there wasn't much out there back in the late '80s. It was the combat magazine that was in the U.K. That was about it. There was hardly any material out there but obviously, in today's world, it's completely changed so the movies were a link. I suppose, at the time, in the mid-'80s, it was, for me, the quick link would've been The Karate Kid. That would've been the direct thing because of the Karate but, before that, obviously, the Bruce films were just dramatic, really, of how to kick and punch but I think the biggest influence probably would've been The Karate Kid because of the word Karate and recognizing some of the moves and the suit that he was wearing so yeah, there's a big influence. It gets your attention. It gets you interested and do something to work towards in certain parts of your training that you want to be that person on the screen or you want to be able to move like that person so, definitely; and the books nowadays, there's just so much out there including a couple from myself, shameless plug, but yeah, huge. I like to sit down and get a chance to go through literature so you get a good feel for it if you can experience it directly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You said you have your own books.

Lee Taylor:

That was a shameless plug. I got a couple.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Shameless plugs are welcome on this show. We carve out time for it so let's do that now. Tell us about your books.

Lee Taylor:

I just got a couple of kata books that I launched over the last 4 or 5 years. Again, based out of not having anything to reference when I was training myself so when I opened my club, I thought, I want something that the students can have a reference for so it was a simple kata and bunkai book on the Heian/Pinan series as a reference mainly but it was quite, called the attention of quite a few people so I've put it out there and had some great feedback on it for people who want to use it as a fundamentals book, as I call it, so it's got some good basics in there for people and then, on from there, there's a kata in the Shitō-ryū system called Ananko and again, there's very little written about that or history hasn't been kind to that kata so I, again, based on that and for my students, put some information together and some bunkai applications for kata Ananko so that's out there as well. So the first one's called The Heian/Pinan Kata The Fundamentals and the latest one is Ananko Form and Function.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Right on and where can people find those?

Lee Taylor:

You can find them on Amazon, via Lulu or direct by myself.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay and if you send us direct links to those, we'll make sure we'll put those in the show notes so we could make it easy for people and in case anyone's new to the show, show notes are whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and that's where you can find everything that we're talking about today and just to keep everything kind of condensed, it will make it easier for us on the back end, I know you've got some websites and some social media so why don't you drop those in now before we keep going?

Lee Taylor:

Yeah, you can find me on most social media sites under the banner Lee Taylor Karate. It's pretty straight forward, my social media's Lee Taylor Karate.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's easy. Alright, let's keep going, we're almost at the end.

Lee Taylor:

Cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about the future. We've talked about what's going on now, we've talked about the past. We jumped into the Tardis and we got a ways into the future and we find 5, 10 years later for you, what are you doing? What's keeping you going? What's getting you up in the morning?

Lee Taylor:

Everyday aboveground is a good day so just waking up and being appreciative of being awake is great, really. It's been quite a start for the year with a few people that have passed and some that were old friends and acquaintances and unfortunately, a recent instructor of mine as well including my beloved pet which we had for 14 years so, death, unfortunately, has played a bit of a part recently in my head so like they say [00:46:05] but for the future, keep training, keep learning and growing and always, as a person, as a husband, as a father, as an instructor and as a human being, really.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Alright. Well, this has been great. I've appreciated everything you've offered.

Lee Taylor:

I appreciate you taking the time when you first emailed me, I said, are you sure you got the right Lee?

Jeremy Lesniak:

You did say that! I remember that and I'll be honest, I wondered myself like wait a second. Why is he saying that? Did we end up with the wrong guy?

Lee Taylor:

It's because of the caliber of your show and the guests that you've had, I was like he can't be sending it to me, it must be someone else. You said it was a listener from my podcast so I just like to take a moment to thank that person, whoever it was. I truly appreciate you putting my name forward and I hope you manage to get something from my ramblings.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Of course! I think it's a good opportunity to point out that the goal on this story, I'm sorry, on this show is to tell stories. It's to tell the stories of martial artists and showcase the fact that we are all so much more similar than we are different.

Lee Taylor:

Certainly are. That's what martial arts does. It brings us all together regardless.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Or it should because, of course, there are times where it does not where we focus so much on what differentiates us.

Lee Taylor:

Yes, it is, unfortunately, it's like anything, I suppose. Different styles, different names and it's a shame but we should come together because of the love we have for the heart and not because of a label.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Couldn't have said it better and so what we do is we bring on the people that we think is going to have good stories. Some of those people are people that host podcasts, some of them are people that our listeners have heard of. Most of them are people who are neither.

Lee Taylor:

I'm neither.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

You have a podcast!

Lee Taylor:

Oh yeah, of course, I have a podcast.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But most of the people that we bring on are what we can call “everyday martial artists”, people who love training, they love maybe teaching and they’re just passionate. It’s become a lifestyle for them.

Lee Taylor:

It certainly has.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I believe that the more of us saying this, sharing this, the more opportunity we had to come together. I told you I had the formal interview here about martialartspodcast.com, the site that, I don’t know how many of the listeners are familiar with, where we essentially, if you want to look at it this way, promote our competition for this show because it’s not competition. It’s all martial arts. We do the same stuff. I would much rather have someone, say listen to your show, say you know what? I prefer this show to martial arts radio. We lose a listener but we keep someone engaged in martial arts and keeps them passionate and I believe firmly, over time, can help grow martial arts so that’s why we do what we do and I want to thank you for being a part of it.

Lee Taylor:

I thank you for letting me be a part and share my story. It’s been 20 years on this current ride and, like I say, it’s shaped my life, it’s challenged my life and it’s ruled my life.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fantastic. Now, the last thing I’m going to ask of you, the way we sign off all of these interviews, what parting words would you give to the people listening today?

Lee Taylor:

You could use my dojo creed which has helped students inside and outside of the dojo and that’s strength, respect, humility, generosity and you can put your explanations to any of those four.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I don't know if you believe in fate and destiny but I do, at least a little bit, and when I talk to someone like Sensei Taylor, it seems pretty clear that martial arts was always something he was supposed to be doing and here, now, training and running clubs and running his own show, it doesn't sound like he could be doing anything else. In fact, sometimes I talk to people on this show and it's clear martial arts is part of their life, maybe even a big part of their life, but Sensei Taylor, it is his life and I can, certainly, relate to that as you might imagine. If you want to see the show notes with photos and links and all the other stuff we talked about in the show, head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Sign up for the newsletter and then, head on over to whistlekick.com, use the code `PODCAST15` gets you 15% off, maybe grab yourself a t-shirt or something. Support the show! Help us out! If that's not the best way for you to help us right now, I would appreciate sharing this or another episode, maybe leave us a review on iTunes or, don't forget, you can leave us reviews for whistlekick in general on Google, on Facebook, plenty of other places. Anywhere that would take a review, I would be happy for. Our social media, of course, is @whistlekick. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a bunch more. If you want to email me directly, I'd love to hear from you: jeremy@whistlekick.com and until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!