



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



### Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello and welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 423. Today, we're talking about how do you know if you're ready, if you deserve a black belt and I'm joined by a guest who posed that very question. My name is Jeremy Lesniak and I host this show and I founded whistlekick and I love martial arts in all forms. I'm a traditional martial arts fanatic and I spend, maybe a little bit too much time, talking about martial arts but at the end of it, you get this show and hopefully, you enjoy it. If you do enjoy it, head on over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and show us that you enjoy it. Follow us on social media, subscribe to the newsletter. Make a purchase through the store. If you make a purchase, use the code `PODCAST15` to get yourself 15% off. You can use that as many times as you want. Share it with people. I don't care. It helps us know that the podcast is having an impact so we'll give you 15% to know that. the website for this show's a little different, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). There are links between the two sites but you go there, you're going to get transcripts, you're going to get photos, links, all kinds of stuff for the guest and the episodes of the show. Now, the guest on today's show, Mr. Jim Angelo, reached out and had a question. He was unsure about testing for his black belt in judo. He wasn't sure that he deserved it and the way he phrased it, just made me thinking, you know what? This may be a great episode. We've never really dug into this subject and I could talk about it but at the same time, it's been a while since I wasn't a black belt so I thought maybe having a conversation and exploring the topic together might make more sense. Well, of course, he was kind enough to agree, we scheduled and this



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

is the conversation that came of it. Hope you enjoy it. Mr. Angelo, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Jim Angelo:**

Thank you for having me. My pleasure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is a pleasure to have you here. I think this is kind of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time that we've done this. You wrote in with a question and I was kind of a jerk. Instead of just answering your question, I said how about you come on the show and I'll answer your question?

**Jim Angelo:**

I think that the short answer is an email would have been really long and we could probably wrap it up in just a couple minutes and a conversation between us.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Probably, probably but you asked a great question and, to be fair, it was a question that I wasn't quite comfortable just rattling off a one-sided answer. I felt like it needed a little bit of back and forth because the question that you're posing requires me to remember a time, pretty long ago for me, and it didn't feel fair to do that on my own so why don't you tell the listeners what was the question, that subject that you brought forward.

**Jim Angelo:**

Okay, should I take a second to set this up?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely.

**Jim Angelo:**

Who I am a little bit?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

By all means, please.

**Jim Angelo:**

I am an almost-55 year old Judo practitioner. I started doing that at around 31 years old. I was active for some time, earned a brown belt and then, dropped out because family, injury, career and I resumed a few years back because I found my passion had never waned in that time frame. I just didn't practice but



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

I had an interest in it and so, I entered back in at 51 years old. Much slower than I used to be so now, I'm moving up in the ranks and I am what is known as an Ikkyū, the highest brown level. The next best level's a shodan and my question to you, and I didn't know how to pose it, didn't know where to ask different people what I think of this. It's kind of a very interpersonal matter to me but am I worthy of the next level of a black belt and what does it mean to earn that black belt and kind of goes back to my teenage years when I first saw Black Belt magazine and I saw all these guys with cringed faces getting punched on the cover and I thought anybody that wore a black belt was a real tough guy and was super human and now, I'm learning that perhaps that's not true and I question whether or not I'm qualified to get that belt. Long answer but that's really what my question was.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But it's a great question and it's an important question. One that we've kind of dabbled in, we've talked about it a little bit and of course, there's a really short answer that I can give you here. Don't worry about it. Once you earn your rank, you'll understand it will make more sense than a black belt means different things in different schools in different styles, trust your instructor; sincerely, Jeremy. Right? I could've sent you that email and it wouldn't have been wrong but it doesn't go into the nuance. It doesn't delve into the psychology of where you're at because, I'll be very honest, I don't remember a ton of things of my time training 14, 15 years old, I earned my black belt at 16 but I do remember that feeling. I remember exactly what you're talking about. The look at my instructors and these other amazing martial artists that I've met and see their skills and say, how in the hell can you tell me I deserve to wear this rank when that's what they're doing?

**Jim Angelo:**

Exactly.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It felt false.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes, that's what I'm struggling with a little bit.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah! I remember feeling like a fraud even initially after I received my black belt. To go to class and to line up in that spot and have people coming up to me and congratulating me and treating me differently and an article going in the newspaper because, let's face it, if there is one universally, near-universally, lauded standing outside of academic pursuit, it is a martial arts black belt. I don't see people talking about their marksman awards in shooting. I don't see people talking about Eagle Scouts in Boy Scouts the same way people talk about a black belt in martial arts. It's something that everyone seems to



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

understand as being a big deal. Now, maybe they don't understand why it's a big deal, maybe they don't understand what goes into it but culturally, at least in the United States, we have this universal praise for a black belt.

**Jim Angelo:**

It's up in the first question you asked, right? When somebody finds out that I train in judo, the very first question is: are you a black belt? It almost makes me feel as if I'm unqualified to lead in Judo if I'm not a black belt and that's where I'm struggling like oh, I've gone to competitions and I've lost to people in lower ranks than me so how do I deserve a black belt?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, right and I think that the thing that we have to talk about first is what does it mean to be a black belt and spoiler alert: there's no one answer and this is a challenge that a lot of people have and if you look at the roots of a tremendous number of online hateful martial arts conversation, it comes down to rank and a disagreement over what rank means. You can look at someone who claims 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> degree black belt and other people will critique them, not generally because their martial arts is terrible, but because they look at that and this individual doesn't seem to uphold the standard that they would imagine that they would be at for that particular rank.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

In your experience, you talked about Black Belt magazine and these larger than life figures on the cover, what other experiences, what experiences in person did you have either at that time or in your first stint of judo with black belts? What formed your personal view of what a black belt is?

**Jim Angelo:**

I imagined somebody that was able to beat everybody up. That was my first indoctrination to it and maybe that's the wrong aspect of it but when you're a kid and you're trying to protect yourself and I graduated high school 1982 and the way for me to deal with things and just about every student back then was to defend yourself as the bully came up and I saw as a way of I'm going to get a black belt and I'm going to be able to defend myself against the tough guy bully. That's my first impression of what it really meant and I started late teens to try some different style of Karate, little Tang Soo Do, little Taekwondo. I would earn a yellow belt and drop on it. It just didn't appeal to me for some reason but I wrestled very, very little bit in high school and I learned really quick that I thought wrestlers really, really good athletes and probably some of the toughest people that I knew and finally, at about 30 years old, I called one of the local high schools to see if they had an adult wrestling program and that coach said no,



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

we don't teach adults but there's Judo so this is like 1993, 1994, right at the onset of the UFC and Royce Gracie doing everything he did with BJJ to bring that to the forefront of everybody so I'm like well, I don't want to do Judo. I don't want to punch and kick. I want to do grappling. No, judo is more grappling. There is no punching and kicking. Go to the local YMCA, there's an instructor and that was my indoctrination to it and I saw these guys doing moves that I just was fascinated with without all the, as I put it at one time, ballerina stuff and I just like getting on the mat and rolling around and so, when I saw them doing that, that was like dating a girl to me. I'd gone out with some many different girls, different styles of Karate, I finally found the one that I wanted to marry and that was judo and I stuck with it, again, was active at it, participated, went to a national tournament as a 32 year old, didn't do too bad, I was a brown belt at that point and I went up against a sandan, a third-degree black belt, I lost but I held my own and shortly after that, about a year, I injured myself and that was the end of it and then, I tried staying in shape by weight lifting and different things, aerobic activity and whatnot, running a little bit but it was always, I was always drawn back to Judo. I always stayed in touch with what the guys and it was just such a great workout, it was fascinating to me how I can walk out of a gym feeling so exhilarated, having learned something and got that anaerobic workout that judo gives you, those short burst of energy and so, that's what really did it for me. I just saw the energy and the fitness level of these people and I really learned that grappling for 3 and 4 minutes at a time is one heck of a workout and, to this day, I still get such joy out of training 3 days a week and walking out of there feeling like I really accomplished something so that was really how I got started in it. Ironically, my very first judo instructor, if I can mention his name, Gerald Wee, recently passed away. He was the guy that got me started in it and 65 years old, he ran into some health issues and just 3 days ago, passed away so it's kind of ironic that we're having this conversation about my favorite sport right now on the heels of that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, hopefully we can do a little bit of justice to his legacy in the fact that you're here now, having this conversation, possibly inspiring others to take not, if not judo, other martial arts or to try something out because of his selflessness in teaching you and others. It's that cycle, that continuation.

**Jim Angelo:**

And to that point, that's another thing that I really found out about a lot of the judo players in the Michigan area. It's not the corner dojo and the strip mall, they are doing this for zero money in a school gym or a YMCA that doesn't take anything because they really have a passion for the art. They're not in it to make money. I learned that over 20 years of the judo team in Michigan. They're in it because of the art, not because they're going to make a buck out of it and I heard Jimmy Pedro actually, when you mentioned that conversation that you had with him. He talked about that a little bit if I recall that they should be looking at it as a profit business and they don't. They're just really, really dedicated to the martial art.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Yeah, and you have a lot of people like that and certainly, I'm not one who is ever going to discredit someone for teaching martial arts for money. I'm as big a capitalist as you get.

**Jim Angelo:**

Absolutely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

In a political way, I mean that if you have a skill that other people are willing to pay for, you should charge for that. everybody's happy in that equation but there are a lot of people who find that it is easier for them, based on what's important to them, and we're going to tie these notions together in a moment to teach for free or for, basically, just trying to cover their expenses, insurance and whatnot because they feel it allows them to have a different mindset when they teach and neither is wrong, neither is right. Everyone has the right to teach the way that they want to teach and everyone has the right to learn the way that they want to learn and hopefully, the student and the instructor can find each other and everybody's happy. It works out.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes. I agree with that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And so, that's what I want to tie together. That individuality, that individuation of what martial arts can be to you, to me, to anybody listening, including what that rank of blackbelt can signify because we all know there are schools out there where you can earn a black belt in 3, 2, even a single year but there are also other schools, other styles, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu for example, is known for being typically a longer promotional cycle. 8 to 10 years is what I've been told from a number of people average to earn a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Now, the belt that you might put on could be exactly the same. They're both black belt and of course, we're talking about different styles most likely. Certainly, different schools but of course, what that black belt signifies can be both very similar and very different looking at it in those 2 contrasting ways. Now, when you talked about in your history and what it sounds like your definition of a black belt is, I suspect somewhere, probably in your younger years, you found some extreme value in the ability to defend one's self. Maybe it has something to do, I'm going to speculate and play therapist here for a moment, it has something with your relationship with your father, maybe you witnessed somebody important to you, be assaulted, something like that. Somewhere young, you placed a very large value on one's ability to protect one's self.

**Jim Angelo:**

No question.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

And so, as you got older and you're looking at martial arts and yeah, pretty much everybody looks at martial art and sees at least a component of martial arts to be self-defense so you start looking at what is held up as the standard of a martial artist, the black belt, should be able to be really tough, should be able to kick some butt if push comes to shove, if need be and now, here you are on the dawn of your earning a black belt and you mentioned, you've lost in competition to people who were lower rank than you so completely blowing up this archetype that you've built for yourself of what a black belt is.

**Jim Angelo:**

And that's where the introspection comes in, yes, exactly.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you're certainly not the first person, right? I've lost to plenty of people of all ranks. I've had white belts kick me in the head. I've had people who have, even regardless of rank, have trained far less than I have, wipe the floor with me. The ego can be such an interesting thing because it can provide fuel. It can provide motivation if we use ego in a healthy way, it can help us get better but it can also be another edge of that same sword and really hinder us. How effective is it to grab a sword by the blade? To me, that's kind of what ego is. Holding on to it, you hold to it and you hurt yourself.

**Jim Angelo:**

You go and hurt yourself. Well, that's exactly what I suffered through because I did lose to somebody in April, actually. Two belt levels lower than me and I thought well, my sensei is asking me to test for shodan and I just lost to somebody. Mind you, he was 30 years younger than me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That matters! It does matter!

**Jim Angelo:**

Well, I know that! I suppose it should matter to me but it was just a matter of am I worthy? I just started asking that question. Am I supposed to beat somebody lower ranked than me because I'm on the cusp of earning a shodan? So, that's why I posed the question to you and then when I started asking an Aikido sensei that I know and when I brought this up to him and his answer was similar to yours and it made sense to me. He says you'll never feel worthy of it because that's what a martial artist is and that kind of sunk in a little bit, I said okay. I don't have to be able to do everything perfectly and then I do a little bit more reading and research and I think a lot of people equate earning the black belt like a bachelor degree and you understand the basics pretty good and now, the real learning begins.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's a great analogy.



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jim Angelo:**

So I'm kind of coming to terms with that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah! Now, I think I've said this on this show before. I know I've said this in offline conversation. Martial arts rank has to be about more than physical skill. It has to be. Now, here's why. Because if it's not, then we have to start demoting people as they get older.

**Jim Angelo:**

Well, I'm glad you brought that up because that's kind of how I envisioned it to be so that's a very valid point.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If martial arts is about personal development, a black belt rank signifies a number of things. I don't want to say that these are universal but I'm going to say that they're darn close, if not universal. It signifies a dedication to your training and, at least somewhat to your school, your instructor, your fellow students and yourself and through that dedication, you have achieved an advancement in skill. Now, everybody's starting point is different. Everyone's physical capacity is different but you have progressed in some way. I've been fortunate enough, I've been able to train in a number of schools. I've been able to earn black belts in multiple schools, multiple styles and some of those times, I've trained alongside other people and tested with others who have also earned their blackbelts and what that black belt signifies for me is different than what it signifies for them if we look at it in terms of progress and skill. Now, you brought up age, you brought up injury, you brought up kind of physical abilities so I thought it's fair game to address, at 55, what you're going to be, more than likely because there's certainly variances, there are outliers, I'm thinking of a gentleman I used to do CrossFit with who, at 55, was in better shape than just about anybody else I've ever known in my lifetime. I mean, an utterly phenomenal athlete.

**Jim Angelo:**

That's an outlier.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes, Allen was definitely an outlier. When we think about how we age and just, physical changes, that's real. It's something we have to understand is there. So, does that mean at 75 years old, someone walks into a martial arts school and says I would like to train and the instructor says Nah, you're too old, get out because you're never going to be able to...of course, now, there's probably some jerk or several jerks out there who would say that but I think the majority of people listening and you sound like you're agreeing, now, we can always get better. Wherever we're at, we can always get better.





Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jim Angelo:**

Valid. Yes. That helps me understand it a lot better and reconcile it with myself because I questioned it and I questioned it last night when I left the dojo. Again, maybe because I was leading up to a conversation about it, I got pinned by a blue belt but he's 27 years old. He's half my age but I gave him a little run for his money but I walked out there thinking, how am I supposed to put on a black belt in the next 6 months after I test for it after this guy just pinned me? Come on, you need to be better than that and sometimes it's a fight within myself and I guess, that goes back to your ego point.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's imagine in an hour-long training session. Let's say, the two of you showed up to class. You and this half your age blue belt and the instructor said, you know, I had the wrong food for dinner. I'm going to have to step out, I'm not feeling well. How about you guys train together? Help each other out. Instead of one of you leading the class in a formal way, work together, practice together.

**Jim Angelo:**

Sure.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, in that scenario, I could imagine that there might be some things that this younger gentleman is helping you with that you're learning from him but I suspect that it's probably 80-20. He's going to be picking up stuff from you. You have life experience, you have martial arts experience, you have a better understanding of technique and probably, a better understanding of how to teach those techniques, how to apply those techniques and while he may have vitality that you don't have, he may be able to heal up from an injury better than you or I can, at our ages, I bet you could fill his training time, that hour with more than his brain is going to be able to take on and I think that that is the key. Now, not every martial arts school has a formal designation of when teaching starts. Some do, and those that do, it tends to be at different times. I bet, if push came to shove, you could probably substitute teach at your school.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes. Kind of in a small manner, yes. As needed.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah! Yeah! You have enough knowledge that you can help others advance. Now, in theory, everybody can look back. Your second day of class, you should be able to share something with people on their first day of class but you've got enough under your belt, literal and figuratively, enough hours, probably enough sweat, salt, maybe some fraying going on in that belt that signifies the time that you've put in and how far you've progressed and I've heard plenty of instructors say over the years that they don't



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

promote people when they've met all of the standards. They promote them when they feel that they will be able to grow into all of the standards. Not every school has that. There are some schools that you don't put on a white belt, day one, there are things you have to accomplish to put on a white belt but the majority of schools, you are considered a white belt even if you're not literally wearing one and that can kind of set a tone and I think that's pretty significant. What do you think?

**Jim Angelo:**

I agree with that and I'm probably selling myself a little short and I think that's probably because I'm competitive within myself and I just want to be as good as I can be. I suppose not wanting to have something handed to me and you had a guest on, if I can cite this a little bit, maybe a week ago, I heard this and I think he is probably, I think his first name was Chris and his last name starts with a G, I believe and he's done practicing martial arts for 50 years, has a beard. Do you recall who I mean?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm looking it up now. Give me one moment. This is why I keep my phone nearby.

**Jim Angelo:**

I just heard the interview, maybe about a week ago, Chris something or other, starts with a G, was in one of the 400-range episodes. He just celebrated 50 years, I believe.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sifu Chris Goedecke.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes, that's it and he had made a comment within your discussion about black belts being given out and watering down the martial art et cetera, et cetera and that kind of stuck with me and I felt, well, that's what I don't want to appear. That's what I'm afraid of. I don't want to appear that well, let's promote this man because he's been here forever kind of thing. I think I'm a pretty good judoka. I do have some knowledge. I've won, I've lost. I train, I teach, I do all, everything that you would discuss but for some reason, I still hang on to this, am I worthy of it and wanting to be able to uphold it, because it really is such a respectable attainment for me that I want to uphold it if that makes sense to its highest respect.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely, absolutely. I think that of all of the reasons that someone could question their own place in martial arts, this is probably the most honorable. The place with the most integrity because you so greatly value the arts, the rank and the other people who are participating that you want to be authentic and I think that that is amazing. It's tremendously important.

**Jim Angelo:**



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Thank you.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're welcome but I suspect that you are, in a sense, kind of keeping score and giving far more weight to the things that you see as negative or detrimental in your training.

**Jim Angelo:**

You're right there as well.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm positive and you probably do that in life, in general. I certainly do that.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes, I do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, if nothing else, we've talked about number of different ways you can look at this, that you can approach this. There's another one that we haven't mentioned and it's the one that I've been told multiple times in my training career, just trust the instructor. They know you. your instructor knows you, knows your school, knows how far you've come and knows what it's like to be shodan, a black belt, in that school, knows what the other side of that threshold look like and you might be able to watch it but you don't understand it in the same way and so, it requires a bit of surrender. A bit of blind faith. Not just in this individual who would be promoting you but in yourself and your own ability to grow into that role and hopefully, someday feel like you deserve it and I'll be very honest. There are times I feel like a complete and utter fraud as a martial artist.

**Jim Angelo:**

Wow, really?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And I suspect that the vast majority of us feel like that at times, absolutely. There're times when I'm on an interview and I'm speaking with someone and we're talking about martial arts, we're talking about something and I realize I haven't trained in a week. To be honest, sometimes that week is longer and I take a step back and then, I realize, you know what? Whether I'm wearing that belt or not, I could show up to class and not put my belt on, I am the exact same person. I have the exact same capabilities. It's not magic, it's not a cape. It's not my Ironman suit just because I like to think of it as such. It's a piece of fabric and whether it takes me a year to earn it and I didn't deserve it or it takes me 40 years to own it and I, most would say that, I had deserved it prior, doesn't change my skill and I find the black belt rank



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

and we even did an episode that I believe we called the Paradox of Rank. There is nothing more paradoxical in the martial arts than rank.

**Jim Angelo:**

Too right, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, how do you feel now?

**Jim Angelo:**

I feel like this has been, I can get off the couch now. It was therapeutic for me and it helps me believe in me more.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Good. You should believe in you.

**Jim Angelo:**

And will give me the desire and the purpose to move forward with this because I've been prolonging it, I've been putting it off, honestly, because there's that expectation. Oh, he's a black belt so I guess, because I thought, well I couldn't live up to it, I'll just prolong it. The expectation is there because you're a brown belt. I put on a white belt. I just started Brazilian Jiu Jitsu one year ago because I thought it would really enhance me. Judo is so, we do a lot of stand upright and takedowns but the ground game is not near what the BJJ guys commit to so I thought, I really need to enhance that part of my judo so I put on a white belt and I go to a BJJ class and it's so humbling to me and I entered a tournament just, actually, July 7<sup>th</sup>, I planned on going and I was ambitious with my weight loss and thought okay, I will register for 225 weight class and I've got a month to lose 10 pounds and it boiled down to you've got 2 weeks to lose 10 pounds and lo and behold, I weighed in at 235 so they DQ-ed me but I went in with the intention that, what have I got to lose? I'm a white belt. I'm a 54-year old white belt. I've got nothing to lose. There's no expectation. Now, if I put on the judo brown belt with 2 stripes on it, I feel, well there's an expectation and I probably shouldn't feel there's an expectation regardless of the belt.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But what's the only expectation that matters? It's your own, right?

**Jim Angelo:**

I'm just going to say it's my own that I'm learning, picking something up, doing what I love and what I want to do and I got a passion for it, period. That's all that matters to me.



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I could expect that you fly. Doesn't change reality.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

My expectations are only relevant and impactful to you if you put weight in them. If you put any stock in them. The expectation of your instructor is relevant because you, by definition, value your instructor. That's why you're there but at the end of the day, you're the one that determines whether or not those expectations matter so if you can, I'm going to suspect, I'm going to guess and we can wind down here, I'm going to guess that if you can figure out how to be content where you're at in your martial arts, with your rank, with how you approach competition, any of these other aspects, that you will find some peace in some non-martial aspects in your life. Everyone I've ever known, the way they live is the way they train. We don't stop being who we are when we start training so all of our assets, all of our liabilities come into training and as you work outside, your inside gets better. As you work inside, your non-martial arts life gets better.

**Jim Angelo:**

That's a comforting thought for me and talking through this, at this length, really pays off. To speak to somebody that has experienced this, I'm very close with my instructor but I haven't gotten into this kind of great detail about it because I've been avoiding it and what you don't want to pursue, you avoid and I've avoided discussing it because I never felt qualified and ready for it but you've given me a different approach to it so I thank you for that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're welcome and I thank you for your trust in me and the honor of bringing this question forward, your willingness to do what we might look back and call martial arts therapy episode 1.

**Jim Angelo:**

That's exactly what I was going to call it and when I said, get up off the couch, I kind of really mean that because I've googled and put the question in google. What does it mean to be a black belt?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Did your computer blow up?

**Jim Angelo:**



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

Well, there's a lot of keyboard warriors out there and there's a lot of different theories on what it means so that's why I posed it to you because I value what you're bringing to your martial arts community and I think that you're insightful and I think that your guests, younger and/or maybe older, may be this conversation, because now, we've interviewed for it, may help somebody else that might struggle with the same thing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And that was my hope as well and I think that we approached this from a number of different angles. We've given people a bunch of ways that they can look at it and hopefully, because I still feel that this experience, this feeling is fairly universal, everyone can find a way of looking at it that makes them feel better.

**Jim Angelo:**

Yes. Yeah, that helped. It helped and it will be nice to be able to go in the dojo tomorrow with kind of a, almost a sense of relief. Like a peace about it and start working toward some of the curriculum that I had been putting off for some time and start focusing on it. It's funny because, I shouldn't say this over the air, some of my passwords are shodan2020.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You have to change those now but I think that tells us a lot about you. It sounds like on some level, on a deeper level, you understand that this is warranted, that this is deserved and you're overthinking.

**Jim Angelo:**

Probably overthinking. You sound like my wife. I'm overthinking it, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're looking for outside validation and the irony is, the outside validation is what you're struggling with.

**Jim Angelo:**

Well said, well said, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You got to pick one and pick the one that tells you, let's do that one.

**Jim Angelo:**

Thank you.



Episode 423 - When Do You Deserve A Black Belt | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're welcome. You know, you're going to have to update us when this happens. We can drop some photos in the show notes because I have a feeling people are going to listen to this and want some closure for you.

**Jim Angelo:**

Great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We want to see you with that black belt around your waist.

**Jim Angelo:**

Great, thank you. I appreciate that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't know what you thought about today's episode but I enjoyed it. I had a great time talking to Mr. Angelo and I heard from him after that our conversation was helpful. Hopefully it was helpful to you. Now, if you like this format, if there are questions that you'd like to tackle on the air with me? Drop me an email, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com). Let's explore a topic and if it seems to make sense, we'll bring you on the air. We'll talk about it and see if we can help you and everyone else. If you want to follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick everywhere you can imagine and don't forget, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com), as well as [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). Sign up for the newsletter, save 15% with the code PODCAST15 and just, in general, support us if you can, if you're able to but if nothing else, knowing that you enjoy this show, that's more than enough. Thank you for your time today. Thanks for your support and until the next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!