



Episode 428 – Mr. Joseph Conway | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



### Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everyone, welcome! Thanks for coming by. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 428 and today, my guest is Mr. Joseph Conway. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on this show, founder of whistlekick and a passionate martial artist and I share that passion with you twice a week via this show. On Mondays, we bring you a guest interview like today. On Thursdays, we bring you some kind of a topic. Sometimes it's just me, sometimes another person comes on board and we tackle some subject, some idea, that we want to discuss. You can find everything we've got going on this show at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). Everything from transcripts to links, photos, videos and a whole bunch more, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com), [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) is the place to go for everything we do at whistlekick because we're more than just this show and in fact, we've got a store over there with a bunch of apparel, training products like uniforms and apparel, I already said apparel, protective equipment, yeah, we do that too and if you use the code `PODCAST15`, that will get you 15% off everything in the store. You can also see all the other things that we got going on. Now, today's guest is someone that, as I say in the interview, you're probably going to recognize in video, in photos. You might recognize his voice but you probably don't know his name because you know him as a character. A character that is incredibly important within the context of what he does but still, a bit behind the scenes and that's part of why we wanted him on the show because there's so much going on here with this man and he is so much more than this character that I wanted to talk to him. We talk about life, we



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talk about his martial arts history and we talk about all the things that you might expect once you figure out who he is so let's talk to him. Mr. Conway, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Joseph Conway:**

Hey, how are you, sir?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm doing great. How are you?

**Joseph Conway:**

Fantastic. Beautiful day.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Is it? What's the weather going on down your way?

**Joseph Conway:**

I am actually currently visiting my mother in Galveston, Texas so it's a bit balmy, a bit warm but beautiful. Just beautiful. I ran on the beach this morning.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Nice. Baywatch style?

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh yeah, in slow-mo. Just kind of like speed-hitting. Just off the back where we can see all the jiggly parts move.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right, but that's what people tune in for, is the jiggly parts.

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh, I got plenty.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, listeners, you may not recognize today's guest by name. Some of you are listening to the voice saying, I know that voice, but I'm going to guess that virtually all of you would recognize him if we were doing this in video and that's because you have the distinction of, I think, being hit, more than anyone I've ever known. I've watched you get beat up in some of the most ridiculous, creative and entertaining ways that probably anyone on the planet holds the distinction of.



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**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, Guinness is getting in touch with me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Have you ever done math on how many times you've been hit in the groin?

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh, man. Let me tell you. The quadratic equation just to bring it back and around just would boggle the mind. I often get questioned, do you have mumps? No, they just haven't dropped yet. Those are my testicles that are...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You threw a math joke at me and my brain just halfway wandered away with that  $a^2+b^2$  groin-squared? How do we get that one back?

**Joseph Conway:**

That's an algorithm. That's algorithms with algebra so what we're trying to do is create algorithms for the interspace, the interwebs if you kick the nuts a lot hard and long enough, you create an algorithm to make it go viral and guess it worked. The first time. Hundred away.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It did, it did. Of course, listeners, if that's not enough information, if you're still going what? What are you talking about?

**Joseph Conway:**

It's got to be the voice because although, Todd Woodland, you can't shut that guy up. He's always kind of, give his piece of mind in.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right? Absolutely. Today's guest holds the distinction of being the uke for Master Ken and we thought, you know? There's a guy under there. There's a guy who's more than Todd. I didn't introduce you as Todd and I'll confess, when the guest form came through, I had to, in my brain, I had to make that connection from your name and Todd. It worked because I don't know you. I don't know you as Joseph Conway.

**Joseph Conway:**



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That's awesome. Everywhere we go, it's Todd. It's actually become my alter ego. It's not just a character. I've actually have embraced Todd. I walk around with the Todd arrogance. Love him.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How are Todd Woodland and Joseph Conway the same?

**Joseph Conway:**

Both love getting hit, man. That's exactly the truth. I practice Kenpo-Karate, Jeff Speakman's Kenpo 5.0 and I was introduced to that by my best man before our wedding as a wedding gift, he paid my first month over at the Kenpo school and just immediately, just the physicality of it. I had done some BJJ before with Alberto Crane who was just getting started in Santa Fe but once I got into Kenpo, that was a lot of fun so it's a lot of choreographed striking and hitting so you kind of know where you're going to get the hit so you can kind of brace up for it and then, Matt and I were filming Enter the Dojo. He just had me in there as an extra because it's filmed at my Karate studio, the ABQ Karate there in Albuquerque. He did the break the finger gig. I don't know if you guys remember that one. That break the finger, break the wrist, break the elbow, stomp the groin, all that originated on the character Billy but Billy, he's an actor and didn't like getting hit so then, just by default, Matt went to me because Matt and I got our black belts together in Kenpo and he said, let me do this on you and from that point on, it was every time when he had to demonstrate something and to sell it, I had actually encouraged him to hit me harder. He's here to sell something if you're actually making some good content.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Anybody that's done any acting, any stunt work, knows that you get that focal point, that center person, the hero or villain or whatever, in this case, Matt and it requires so much from the people working with them to sell it, to make it real because it doesn't matter how good you are if the people you're working with could just be a demonstration at a local strip mall. If those people, in Japanese, ukes, aren't working with you well, the whole thing's lost so was that something you had a talent for early on and that's why he grabbed you second? Or was it something you grew into?

**Joseph Conway:**

No, I think it's very natural for me. I don't know what it is. I've always been kind of a ham and flat humor just comes plus I am also always eager to be the uke for whoever it is like when Jeff Speakman would be doing a seminar, I'd actually get a little irritated if he didn't pick me because I just like the contact and then, by being that in that position so often and putting myself in that position, I just started kind of getting the timing, rhythm. Just knowing how the reactions are supposed to be.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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What was that early stuff like and, obviously, we're going to talk a lot about your time on-camera, we're going to talk, probably more about your time off-camera, but I feel like because people know you on-camera, it feels appropriate to start there. That early stuff, you're on-camera, you guys are figuring things out, did you know you had something that the martial arts community was going to respond to so strongly?

**Joseph Conway:**

No. Matt talks about it a lot. He used to be in the film community for almost his entire adult life. He studied out of one of the art schools in Santa Fe, New Mexico and then when he moved to Albuquerque, he became part of the community of filmmakers there and they always do these competitions. 48 where they feel like they have a competition where they need to film. They get a premise and they have 48 hours to make a show out of so he kind of adopted that idea with also trying to figure out what this YouTube thing was. He'd done a couple things on YouTube and it hadn't really done much and he just asked me, hey, I want to get together 2 friends of mine and film. Can we use your school? I have this idea for this character, Master Ken, and I said yeah, of course. You're welcome here and again, we have trained together for a couple years prior to this and then, he said, you know if you want, I can use an extra, a couple extra students. I said that'd be great, I'd love to do that and so, it was just set out to be just this little weekend thing to put out on YouTube and on the internet and then, it just, by far, blew away anything else that he had put under his brand. I think his brand, Riff Raff New Media, if you look at that, he's got a lot of stuff. Little shorts that he has in there and you'll recognize a lot of other characters like Julie and they're all really good stuff but, for whatever reason, well, it's kind of a cult following. You get these martial artists that were just starving for this recognition because a lot of the cool martial artists is getting old. You don't see a lot of Chuck Norris movies anymore, Jean Claude Van Damme, there's not a lot out there so it kind of was good timing, I think.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely. I think, we, as a community always notice the ridiculous things that we do but there's something about humor, comedy, whether it's stand-up or satire that allows us to speak our truth. I listen to a lot of stand-up comedians. They talk about that, the ability to get away with saying horrendous politically incorrect things because it's done with humor and there's something there I think we all crave.

**Joseph Conway:**

Speaking of other comedians, one of my favorite comedians is Jerry Seinfeld. I just watch all his stuff that he does and the behind the scenes and one of the things that I just keep relating to what we're doing, to what Matt and I are doing, which was the whole Seinfeld explosion was this should be the show. What we're doing right now, this should be the show because we go through so many things that are just hilarious to us that we're thinking we're even bouncing around an idea. The idea of the



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Misadventures of Master Ken and Todd where we're going around and doing all these live shows which we are doing but putting it in that same kind of context like we did with The Office, with the mockumentary where we actually think we're going out and teaching these seminars but from the crowd's perspective, we're out there doing a comedy show but we really believe that we're educating them with [00:13:19] and gosh, the things that we just joke about and write notes about seems like that would be something that Netflix needs to pick up because they just moved in to Albuquerque, they just need to reach out to us. We got to figure out how that's going to happen.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

They do, I hope they do. We got a little bit of process of how you guys work when we were fortunate enough to have Mr. Page way back, episode 47.

**Joseph Conway:**

And what am I? 248?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You're going to be 428, it looks like.

**Joseph Conway:**

Nice.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

it's been a little while. It's been a little while. Listeners, if you haven't checked out that episode, you should. That episode holds the distinction of the first one, maybe the only, at least up till now, where I had to mute the microphone and bite my hand because I was laughing so hard. I've caught Matt on a number of other shows and he went hard for us and I really appreciate it. He made up some pretty good stuff on the spot. I mean, his improv is phenomenal.

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh, I'm telling you! Try to be his stand up, try to be his straight man. That's tough. I'll take talent anywhere you want as far as they can hit and what not but being able to keep myself from just imploding when he starts improving and I got to maintain character and thought, that in itself is a test that I don't think a lot of people can do especially when we're doing, when we did America's Got Talent, a lot of it got cut out but his banter back and forth with Simon was epic. It was just and most people think of as Simon as being the harshest of the judges but he and Matt were just clicking. They were just clicking. Unfortunately, it didn't end up well for us but it was a really great experience, I thought.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah, I got the impression, again, because I've only seen the edited version. I got the impression that the judges didn't really understand.

**Joseph Conway:**

No.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And so, it made me wonder, did you need to have roots in martial arts for the rumor to make sense?

**Joseph Conway:**

Not anymore and I'm glad that you brought that up because my view, that we're doing now, what I think most people that knew us about back when that first aired was the hundred ways to hit the groin and that's really funny to watch with sound effects and reaction and sped up video but to try and put that into an act is not really going to sell especially when you're trying to engage a crowd but over time, since then, we've developed this live show that just kills. I think we got about 2 hours' worth of material and we cut it and paste 15-minute segments to meet whatever demographic we're hitting so, for example, this year we're in Raleigh, North Carolina. We performed for The Caterpillar. So, we did a corporate event for them. That one, we went in with one of our hands tied behind our back because literally, right before we're getting ready to go on the show, the guy who was hosting us, he came up and said, we've had a really bad situation. We've had a tragedy where a couple of our people were killed in Florida but go have a good show.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What did you do?

**Joseph Conway:**

So, but the thing was is that when we were finished with our show, it killed. Oh, excuse the pun, it did really well!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It wouldn't have been a pun if you hadn't brought attention to it.

**Joseph Conway:**

I know. I told you I go dark but it did really, really well and the folks there were very appreciative of us. They're talking about getting us back out to Charlotte for this huge convention that they do. We'll see how that works out and so, from that, we went in Toronto just a few weeks ago and we did kids' seminar so we can take it down a notch where, if you watch the show, it's very edgy and has a lot of innuendo but we were able to put a full hour for some kids out of camp and of course, all the martial



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arts events we do, we actually get on the mat. We do a live seminar. That's a fun one where we're actually having a seminar and people on that. We did one in San Diego with [00:18:22] martial arts, I think it was, and then there's the actual stand-up where we're up onstage. We did one in New Jersey that we're up onstage and, like I say, we just cut out of that material and most of the times, we can run over. We're like oh man, we're 15 minutes over our mark then we stick around for a while and meet the people, do shots, do pictures with them and occasionally, the host will take us out to dinner and that's the really fun stuff. You and I were talking pre-show about how you get down, you sit and you have your stories after the fact and the funny thing is that's where we get our material, people telling us their crazy stories. Master Ken would love this situation and Matt sitting there listening and he looks at me and he's telling me with his eyes there, be sure to take notes on this one. We got to add that one to the show.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, I think it's pretty obvious how the martial arts comes into the comedy but how has the show, how has this humor changed your martial arts?

**Joseph Conway:**

Well, I've never really taken myself too seriously. I just really enjoy the martial arts kind of lifestyle because it's not just about being on the mat, what you're doing on the mat. It's the whole thing. Waking up a martial artist, going to bed a martial artist, it's not just okay, I'm in the dojo now, I'm going to turn it on. When you have that kind of, I don't want to say stress or pressure, you kind of put it on yourself that, we have a saying in Jeff Speakman's organization is that you lead by example so I wear a wristband that I put on since 2003 when I joined this organization that says that to remind me that I have so many eyes on me, on how I conduct myself, again, not just on the mat, all over the place. When you have all that pressure and all that stress and you know that you really got to lead by example, it's nice to be able to cut loose sometimes and make fun of yourself because some of the stuff, some of the stories that I tell them that I go through end up being in the show and all of these stuff somehow gets to him, Matt being, talking about Matt is able to take this information and put a real comedic spin on it. It's just brilliant and I'll use this opportunity just to really put him on a pedestal for a second because not a lot of people know that he does everything. Not only is he Master Ken, he's coming up with the ideas a lot of the time and running it by me and then we put them together but then after that, he's the one editing the show, he's the one doing the sound. He's the one that's managing the live show now so whenever somebody calls or emails, this guy is just full-time, 12, 14 hours a day trying to promote this. Originally, he was just trying to do that and his acting career but this has just pretty much taken over all of that and I hope the hard work pays off for him because he's really sacrificed a lot for it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

He has, he has and he does a phenomenal job. Anyone who hasn't taken a passion and tried to turn it into a career, it might be hard to understand, but if you've done that, you know how challenging it can





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be and especially in the martial arts, if you look at martial arts careers and if you take out owning and operating a martial arts school, there's not a lot left and there aren't a whole lot of us starting martial arts businesses. I think this is one of the things that Matt and I kind of connected over. I reached out and we chat periodically. There was something we were trying to do. We were trying to find a common angle for something and I was like Matt's done it. Master Ken's done everything. I don't know if you've seen that South Park episode. Simpsons did it, Simpsons did it and I reached out to him. It's just like that. I said do you know how frustrating it is to try to find something in the martial arts that's humorous that you haven't done and he said actually yes, we struggle with it all the time.

**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, we'll think we capped the well. That's it. We're done and then next thing you know, it's always going to refill itself. There's too many characters, too many incidents, too many things that go on that we sensationalize. Obviously all of the things aren't as bad as we make it. In today's society, sometimes we even have to kind of make fun of how the culture is right now and put a little bit of a martial arts spin on it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So, let's talk about you and your martial arts and your training. you said you had a little bit of experience before you started in Kenpo but you fell in love with it right away.

**Joseph Conway:**

I did, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What was it? let's go a little deeper into that because quite often, the second martial art for someone doesn't do anything. If anything, from my personal experience and conversations on this show, people find that their second martial art makes them miss their first martial art.

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh, right. It's funny is also almost come full circle. I've come back to BJJ but I'll back up a little bit before I go there but when I first got introduced to Kenpo, I went into a class by a gentleman by the name of Larry Hamilton was teaching and I come to find out years later that Larry was studying Larry Tatum's videos so he had a very Larry Tatum movement. His precision, his power, just the way that Kenpo snap works and I was like well, this is really dynamic, I love the way he moves. So, I really tried and probably has what a lot of people has a lot to do with speed-bearing structures. You can even say that for your best college course. This instructor was amazing because this person, this instructor was amazing, I went off into this field so I was, again, introduced by this amazing guy, Larry Hamilton and one of my biggest influences with my training partner at the time who is now a huge part of Jeff Speakman's organization,



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his name is Tony Potter and he and I went with Larry Hamilton and we trained together. We just loved the way he moved and hit and if you have seen any of the Larry Tatum videos then Larry Hamilton was just like him. Then, as the internet became more and more popular and you can find stuff on YouTube, then Paul Mills, when I saw that a big guy, because Larry Hamilton is a smaller statured person. I'm a bigger guy. I'm like 6'2". I'm struggling between 200 and 300 pounds depending on how late I eat at night but Paul Mills seem like a pretty big guy and he moved as fast, if not faster, than Larry Tatum but his power of his strikes just were so dynamic and so, I would just watch video and video of him and I go and I'd hit the bags because I couldn't hit people the way Bob does because you see those videos and you can feel it through the video and that was the thing. I just love the efficiency of it and then, what happened was, after I did a couple of classes with Larry then immediately, I went out and bought the Infinite Insight so I started reading those by Ed Parker and as I recall, this is something that I need because BJJ when I was taking that with Mr. Crane, there wasn't a lot of structure to it. It's just time on the mat. I need structure. I need something to refer back to. I need the Infinite Insights or the Encyclopedia of Kenpo and Understanding the written version of why it was necessary to have marriage of gravity or directional harmony or all these terms that are used in Kenpo and I was like yeah, this is what really helped me understand it. I took just the visual, added the written aspects of it and I was able to combine it and that worked for me to start developing my own kind of style.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And fast forward we were talking, before we went live here, that you've had to embrace some of the aspects of teaching with titles and whatnot that you're not terribly comfortable with. Tell me about that struggle.

**Joseph Conway:**

I'll even back it up. When I first met Jeff Speakman, he had a school in Albuquerque and it was run by a gentleman by the name Steve Hogan who I became very close with, just interacting with these people, you become close. They become family, so to speak, but they had a falling out and Mr. Speakman asked me to run the school for him and I had never ever been in that position. I wouldn't say I was the highest ranked but I had done a couple of privates with, I think he liked the way I moved and he liked the fact that I also understood the concepts and principles so when Mr. Speakman asked me to open the school in Albuquerque that Mr. Hogan was holding, I was very hesitant to do so. I didn't feel worthy of that but then he assured me that what his plan was to move to Albuquerque and just to kind of keep it going until he got there and so, okay, I'll go ahead and do that. I started that, I think, it was 2003 and lo and behold, it never came into fruition. He ended up moving from Lake Arrowhead to Las Vegas, Nevada but over time, I started really enjoying the teaching. I really, what I really, really got engulfed in was teaching kids and that's where, again, the whole lead by example came in. I know that we have such an influence on these young minds that I try to be a positive influence to where they're going to, whenever they leave my school for whatever reason, they have confidence in themselves, they're disciplined, and they know that they try hard, they get things back in return and that's when it started paying off for me.



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That's when I started realizing that it didn't really have to do with anything other than the influence I can make in the community and the younger kids because sometimes, when you're older, you're pretty much set in your ways but I learned how to teach adults by teaching kids because I could really dummy it down for the kids which then made me communicate better to adults and ultimately, I hope that I influence anybody that I interact with, not just from Kenpo but just socially. That they're going to walk through life with a little more confidence in themselves, a little more hop in their step and can reflect on it in a very positive way.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Was there a point when you started to recognize that you were good at teaching? For most martial arts instructors, there's a point. There's a point where they go from I can't do this, I'm not good enough to do this then they start to like doing it even though they don't feel that they're ready and then, most instructors that I talk to get to a point where they say, you know what? I'm doing some good work here, I'm having an impact. It's pretty clear that you've crossed that line. Do you remember when it was?

**Joseph Conway:**

It was a while back so I'm not sure exactly.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a good thing because if you said, you know, it was last week, I don't know where that could lead.

**Joseph Conway:**

10 minutes ago, I was feeling pretty confident. I think it was when Mr. Speakman actually asked me to teach the class or to take over his school because you got to take into account that this is probably the most iconic person I've ever met and for him to ask me to brunch and then, to ask me to run his school was pretty out of this world for me because another reason why I took that first Kenpo class was, of course, The Perfect Weapon was an incredible movie and it's really dynamic and a lot of people can say that they got into martial arts because of that movie and here I am sitting across the table from him and he had confidence in me to do that for him and he has a lot on the line as far as his reputation goes so at that point I was like okay, if this guy thinks I'm okay then maybe I should really start developing it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There's one other moment that I'm curious and that's the moment when you knew he wasn't coming back to take over that school.

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh man!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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It's one thing to do something temporarily, to throw your heart into it, to set a certain standard but when you find out that that temporary is now permanent, or at least, indefinite.

**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, he had family there. Both his, I think, both of his parents and his sister, at the time, were all living there, even his brother were there and then, through time, I think his sister's the only one who's left there now so he didn't have the same motivation without the whole family there and so, it was probably about 3 years in, like 2006. He started introducing the 5.0 around, when I met him in 2003 and kind of worked with him in the school there, he was in the very beginning stage of his 5.0 journey. Luckily, I was there, pretty close to the beginning. He had already started it couple years prior to me but he was introducing the grappling aspect of it, the ground work that we had to address in Kenpo with the popularity of the Gracies and the UFC and all the things that they were doing. So, when he introduced that, I was fortunate enough, even though I was running his school, because I was running his school, I was able to travel and share that knowledge that he was giving with me here in the States. I went to Australia with Dan and Suzanne Woods in Brisbane and David [00:35:18] in Sydney and I was able to kind of share with what Mr. Speakman was sharing with me and he was really pushing the 5.0 to a bunch of different Kenpo people at the time and so, once I found out that he was so engaged in trying to bring that worldwide, I figured that his priority wasn't Albuquerque anymore because now, we've grown to, I think, almost 30 countries. I think we are, to date, the biggest Kenpo organization to ever exist as a whole. Since then, he changed his focus to bringing that out and, in fact, there's talk, there's rumble that they're going to give him his Masters, his 10<sup>th</sup> degree, in 2020 which I'm very proud to say, I'll be eligible to test for my 5<sup>th</sup> in the very same test. That's another thing that Mr. Speakman does that really inspires me in that whole lead by example. He gets in every test. When he's testing for 10<sup>th</sup>, he's in line with us banging with us so it's not like he's just taking this honorary 10<sup>th</sup> piece. He's physically going in, performing his kata, he's hitting the technique lines banging with us so we can really, really respect that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Super cool. Super cool stuff. Now, you've mentioned travel and being able to go around and you're traveling for other reasons now too.

**Joseph Conway:**

Right, that's a blast.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you get to hang out with different martial artists and engage with them. What are they saying to you? What are those conversations like? Are there themes that come up?

**Joseph Conway:**



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What we hear more often than not, and especially, I hate bringing up the climate of today but people needing to escape from stuff so mostly, what we hear is thank you. Thank you so much for making us laugh today. Thank you so much for bringing this silliness to the world, to our world that we can escape from the stresses of the day and that's, I think, the motivation for both Matt and I is that to know that we're making other people's lives. It's not just this comedy. It's an escape for them. It's fun to hear that. It's fun to hear that you're helping people in different ways.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely and what do your students think?

**Joseph Conway:**

I'm sorry?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What do your students think? You are certainly not the stereotypical instructor or maybe you are but you've got some elements going on here that very few instructors have. I mean, you have direct ties to a legendary movie actor and you're, at least outside of your own dojo, best known for getting kicked in the groin.

**Joseph Conway:**

The funny thing is that a lot of my students are oblivious to all of that. I don't use that to enough of my credit. Like I said, the majority of my students are kids. I have a small contingency of jokes but I don't think it's good for our kids to watch our show. It's a little bit, not quite appropriate. Every once in a while, a parent will come in and they'll recognize that's who I am and they'll even let their kids watch some of the more tame videos but then again, we'll get, most of the people that come in through the doors because of Mr. Speakman are adults. They've seen the show or seen his movies but again, it's mostly just by chance. As far as marketing is going, some of the things that I had to struggle with as a business owner because, again, I love the martial arts but I've never been a really good business owner so the big part of Jeff Speakman's organization has introduced me to a lot of people and also, with Master Ken, we went to a premier out at Knoxville and I saw, oh, you mean, you can make money out of Karate school? Okay. I had no idea. I thought, I had a job to support my Karate school and then, again, with the culture within Jeff Speakman's organization, he has Tony Potter [00:40:00 and Dan Pribyl, they're considered to be his four horsemen and Dan Pribyl, out of California, has really mentored me on the business aspect of it. Tony is more my inspiration when we train. He's constantly trying to sharpen my skills but Dan's really trying to help me run a business. I appreciate all of them, even Pruitt out of San Antonio, he's always been more than eager to help me understand the business part of it. It's tough. If you would think that I could just go in and teach Karate and it's like build the dreams. You build the mat, they will come, no. They don't. Even if you're associated with an icon like Jeff Speakman and you're out



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and you have over 7 million views on YouTube, they will not come. You have to go out and you have to get them. You have to figure it out. Dan has shown me how to do that and since I've business-ed up with him, our schools are a lot more successful and I changed my focus. My focus used to be I just want to bang with adults, now the business aspect, again you want to teach these kids so we started an after school program. We go pick up the kids from the local elementary schools and we give them some homework time and then some mat time and ultimately, like I said, they'll be influenced by the time they hit junior high that they're the leaders, not the followers.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It's good stuff and yeah, I would say that the majority of martial arts schools, at least in the United States, are, if not, financially struggling. They're not what they would call successful financially. The success can have a lot of different definitions but your description of having a job to support your martial arts teaching habit is far more common than I think a lot of people realize. It's something that comes up on this show and honestly, there are a lot of behind the scenes conversations that listeners don't get on air where people are calling me and saying, I know you understand business, can I just bounce some things off of you because there are resources out there but there need to be more. Hopefully, there are more.

**Joseph Conway:**

Well, Century Martial Arts, they have the business, the masterminds and all that and I plan to team up with them a little bit. Hopefully, [00:42:31] out of Florida, he's always been, Century has always been really helpful with the Master Ken project but because of the Master Ken project, I was able to keep some of their business advisers. It's hard juggling all those things but that's on my to-do list is to get together more with their business assistance that they have but yeah, my day starts out at 7:30 and I'm a bookkeeper by day, a martial artist by night and a YouTube sensation in the wee hours of the night. I'm literally starting at 7 in the morning and getting home at midnight after we film and that's just, that's the typical day in the life.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Outside of martial arts, everything we've talked about today has been martial arts and hooked into martial arts. What do you do when you're not training or teaching or on film or travelling for martial arts? Besides sleeping and eating, is there non-martial arts stuff in your life?

**Joseph Conway:**

The thing that I really had to have sacrificed that I hope, in the near future, all these stuff is going to pay off is being a husband and a father. I just love my girls. My wife and my two daughters. They're twins. We just...that had just take a backseat to a lot of these stuff so a lot of it and what's really made our school become a lot more successful as of late is my wife quit her job. That's one of the things that I



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found out is that I had no business sense and she has it all so when she was able to quit her job and start running the after school program and then, my kids started attending the after school program, well, now I can kind of combine the two because of my long hours. I can actually interact with them during the day at work and every once in a while, we get lucky and I get to take them on one of our trips and spend some time. We'll plan it like a week later or a week earlier if we're going to do something like when Master Ken was hired to go to Europe which was an incredible experience. We started up in Scotland and ended up in Germany. I was able to kind of piggyback a family vacation on that. Took the kids to Disneyland Paris and the wife and stuff so, that's, if I have any free time, I try. Other than that, there's not a lot.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Other than, I'm sure they want more time with you and maybe they get, what does your family think about all this?

**Joseph Conway:**

Oh, my kids don't get it. They're still young, they're like 10 years old. They kind of get the fact that I'm on YouTube and that there are people all around the world who know Todd Woodland and Master Ken. They're always trying to get on the show. They want to be famous but they don't, I don't think they really get it and to my wife's credit, she's amazing. She is so giving and she kind of picks up where I leave off. Like I said, she's running the business side of stuff and raising the kids when I'm out on tour with Master Ken so I think she's eager for some of these stuff to pay off too because we both have sacrificed a lot as far as time together and time as a family and we're not getting any younger. We want to be able to reflect and say it was a good time spent together.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Totally. When it comes to your training, you've got about as exceptional a role model to look up to as any of us could ever hope for but who else do you look to, who else inspires you, who else would you want to train with if you could?

**Joseph Conway:**

As I kind of spoke to a little bit, those four guys that Mr. Speakman has kind of taken in as his diplomats. Tony Potter is one of my favorite people to train with, currently and again, unfortunately, I don't get to go as often as I'd like but he lives and breathes this stuff. He doesn't have any other outside influences so he's become one of the top in the world in our Kenpo world. Outside of Kenpo, I want to, like I mentioned to you before, I kind of gone full circle. I got back to Jiu Jitsu and in fact, more specifically, the Gracie combatives. I started training at New Mexico Jiu Jitsu academy a couple years back with Justin [00:47:44] but more specifically with Armando Sanchez. He's an incredible instructor and he's also under Ralph Machado so I get to train with a lot of really cool people. I've been on the mat with Mr. Superfoot,



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Bill Wallace. I wish I had his flexibility and his dexterity for his age. Geez, I mean, I couldn't even touch my toes anymore but, as far as training with, the person if he's still alive, man, just to keep me motivated to be the best of myself that I can be is Rickson Gracie. The Choke, have you seen Choke? The documentary?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No.

**Joseph Conway:**

Man, this great documentary of Rickson Gracie where I will watch it to inspire me at least once a month, sometimes, I might feel like my tank kind of running low but it's the one where this is being a martial artist 24/7. He is the Gracie Jiu Jitsu from the moment he goes to bed and he wakes up in the morning. I mean, the second he wakes up and the moment he, whatever he's doing, yoga specifically, to enhance his flexibility, his breathing. It's one thing in BJJ that I found is so underrated is breathing just because the pressure and being calm and being methodical. The breathing aspect of it is, if you can control your breathing that calms you and then you're able to stray away from there. He's a hard guy to get in touch with, though, he's so popular.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yes, we've made some forays into bringing some of the Gracies on and if you look through the guest list, you'll know that none of them have worked out.

**Joseph Conway:**

Speaking of podcasts, kind of wondering why Joe Rogan has reached out to us yet.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, well, maybe you got to reach out to him. Maybe that's it.

**Joseph Conway:**

Maybe that's it. Maybe we're just like build the mat and they will come kind of mentality, we got to get beyond that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Let's talk about movies. I would imagine that people bug you with this stuff all the time being a martial, I wonder how you're going to respond to this, being martial arts actor because you are.

**Joseph Conway:**





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Well, okay, cool. I mean, I'd love to get a gig. Matt is currently on one. I don't know if I can say that. He's actually getting to use his martial arts in a movie. He's not there right now, he's either on his way to but he's working with some really cool people right now. I would love, but I don't have an agent. I'm part of this Screen Actors Guild, I'm part of SAG but I just, I went to get an agent one day and I realized that I just don't have time. I got to figure out what my priorities are and right now, my priorities are my school and my family life so to then throw in the acting part of it, and I think, again, leading by example, that's the thing that Jeff Speakman had, the crossroads that he had to come up with. He's like what do I want to be known for? Do I want to be known for an actor or do I want to be known for a martial artist? It would be cool to take that little sideroad for a minute but I don't have any ambition to become a full-time actor. I would love to get a couple of B-role kind of thing like a cameo here and there and speaking of martial arts actors, Jackie Chan is, we need the next Jackie Chan. Somebody who can go out and do their own stunts and get good on the comic way.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I wonder if we could handle another Jackie Chan. If we would support another Jackie Chan. If you dig into his history, I mean, the things that had to happen and just the era that he came up.

**Joseph Conway:**

All the way from, what was it? The Burt Reynolds movie that he was in. That was the first thing that I saw him in.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I don't know that.

**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, he was in Cannonball Run.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh, okay, yeah. I didn't realize he was in that.

**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, from Cannonball Run all the way up until now being this international star. It took a while to commit and so, that's the hard thing to latch on for people to latch on to. Even like Jean Claude Van Damme, Bloodsport. Amazing. A couple of good movies there after that but it's hard to stick. Hard for those things to stick and even Steven Seagal, another great martial arts actor. A couple of good hits but it's hard to maintain that. The only person I think who had any real longevity in that was Chuck Norris, obviously, the icon that he is.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Right, right, and I think because his movies ended up with a bit of a formula and I don't mean that to be disrespectful but I think there's, you look at Van Damme's early work, you look at Seagal's early work, they were a certain type of movie but as those movies started to become slightly different, people just didn't respond to it.

**Joseph Conway:**

Yeah, [00:53:50] was cool but where do you go from there?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right. Bloodsport is a classic and we overlook so many terrible things in that movie when we call it a classic.

**Joseph Conway:**

Right, really I was about to say something about Perfect Weapon but I'm just going to hold back. Not a lot of Academy Awards in that but a great movie.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely, absolutely. Phenomenal movie and probably, just out of respect to your instructor to not bring that into the conversation. Don't want you to...

**Joseph Conway:**

Right now, would be the part where we're talking about editing.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Are there any newer films that you look at that mean something to you that you watch? You mention that documentary but something in the more, modern martial arts film space?

**Joseph Conway:**

Mainstream you mean? There really hasn't been a lot of opportunity for me. I think that's one of the things that Matt and I are really talking about everybody's talking about when are you going to bring back the show and the thing that Matt is toying with is should I bring back the show or should we do a movie? And more and more, he leans, I think, towards the movie part of it because there's nothing really recent that you can look at, as far as martial arts go, Jackie Chan's probably the closest thing because a lot of the stuff now is these John Wick and the Bourne Supremacy and all those things.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Super violent and hyper into your face combat.



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**Joseph Conway:**

But there's not a lot of martial arts in that. There's some really cool action and the manipulations of small closed quarter manipulation fighting but as far as martial arts go, I think there really hasn't been anything recent so it might be time for us and even the comedies that we've seen, the martial arts comedies that have come out recently, we're like man, they missed such a huge opportunity and speaking of formula, I think Matt has it. Matt has it figured out. He knows what you know, you're going to have this much dialogue but then after so much time you need some action you need some distraction, maybe with a pretty girl or something and then, from that you can go, his directorial kind of insight with all the movies he's been in, with the film study, the martial art that he just studies, the movies that have been iconic. Like you said, you look at them, they're iconic. You pull back and you watch them again as an adult, you're like huh, I can't remember this being that bad.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But you don't turn it off!

**Joseph Conway:**

No! You're waiting for the next scene. You're like oh, this is the scene that I was waiting for so I think that, again, when Matt does finally release the next big thing, I'm hoping that it will become like the next Clerks. That cult following that just people really latch on to. I have confidence that he has the ability to. It's just will people pick it up?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And that's actually, probably a perfect comparison. A movie that a lot of people really, really love but not a movie that the Academy is going to look at and say this is an exceptional film.

**Joseph Conway:**

We're going to send this to the SAG department and we want you to vote on it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I would want to be in the room when they evaluate it. That would be hysterical.

**Joseph Conway:**

But again, Clerks is a really great idea because of the comedy that they had in that, I think that follows kind of like our same kind of dry humor that we do.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Yeah, Kevin Smith is brilliant in a similar way that I could absolutely see that Matt Page is going to be as well.

**Joseph Conway:**

Exactly. Oh yeah, he studies him. He's talked to him, I think, when he's had opportunities whenever he's been in Albuquerque doing his shows. Matt's always the first one there to try to get into the mind of his brilliance.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right on, so let's talk about the future. What's keeping you going other than, I imagine, having a really good time? Are there goals, are there things you're trying to accomplish? Boxes to check?

**Joseph Conway:**

I'm pretty fortunate. If I were to just, from this day looking backwards, I can be pretty confident. This was a pretty good ride. I've done a lot of things that 21-year old self was looking at this 52-year old self and say you own your own dojo, you got a little bit of fame on the internet, you got a great wife and family, I think the 21-year old would say, yeah, I'll take that. I'll take that, for sure. Get to know some really cool people so that's my present and that's one of the things that I really tried to, as I get older, I acknowledge that the present is pretty important to me. I don't want to be too far off in the past or too up into the future because if we spend too much time outside of where we are right now, we miss it so everything that's going on right here, right now, I'm just really absorbing it and not focusing on anything else. Whenever we have an opportunity to do a live show and just the adrenaline rush that you get by not knowing how it's going to go. Matt and I, we have this ritual right before they announce our names, where we just look at each other and we just, we do our thing because you don't know how it's going to be. It's all a question. Are they going to like you? Are we going to miss anything? And so that uncertainty is just so invigorating so that's, again, an instant. An instant in time. Just really internalizing that instant and being one with it and just really enjoying it and then, we go on to the next instant where I have a group of 50 kids that just tested in front of me and I remind them that it's instances like this, it's times like these that just gives me shivers. This is what makes me just love being alive is to see you guys at this moment in time and how happy you are and, somehow, somehow, I have some influence over that happiness and joy and all the sacrifices you made to get to where you are right here, right now and really just take that second to enjoy it and then, when I'm home alone with my kids and my wife, I just, I'm right here, right now, I'm with you. I just want to be with you. I don't want to think too much about anything else and hopefully, those kinds of instances will continue for a while.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome. If people want to find you, follow you online, the Master Ken stuff, your school stuff, your personal stuff, give us all of it.



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**Joseph Conway:**

We are at ABQ Karate in Albuquerque, New Mexico and it's actually [abq-Karate.com](http://abq-Karate.com), if you want to look for us online. We welcome people to come in. Fans of all sorts. We have people from other schools all over the world that will sidetrack their travel plans just to pop in and we encourage that. We want you to come in. We want you to say hi. Matt has an office there that he sits at behind the doors where he's editing and writing scripts and coming up with the ideas so you can find our address on our website. Of course, I have my Facebook page that you can look for and friend me and one of the things that I need to do and again, this old guy is always a decade behind. I haven't gone on Instagram. I have an Instagram account but I know I need to develop that and I'm going to try to get more engaged in that but, like I said, if you're in town, you're in Albuquerque, you want to come by, just pop in.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right on. Nice and of course, we're going to drop links to everything that you just heard and all the other stuff that we talked about today at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) so you don't crash your car if you're driving. I appreciate you being here. I'm going to ask you for one more thing as we head out here. What parting words would you leave everyone with?

**Joseph Conway:**

Say that again, I'm sorry, I got a little sidetracked here.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah, it's all good. Parting words, words of wisdom, happy thoughts, how do you want to close this?

**Joseph Conway:**

I think just the way I summarized my future plans is just kind of, I think if we all really focus on what's going on right here, right now. It's really not all that bad. I mean, there are people that obviously are struggling but if you can just take a second just to kind of recognize all the things that are going positive in your life, just kind of embrace that because it's fleeting. We're going to wake up one day and be 52 years old and be like man, yesterday, I was 17. So, really slow down the moments, man. Take advantage.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Man, that was a lot of fun. Getting the chance to talk to someone who's had such an impact on so many lives and in such a powerful and positive way. I think humor is so incredibly critical to everyone's life and to a modern society. The ability to laugh especially at ourselves is so important and I really appreciate all the work that Mr. Conway does to help facilitate that so thank you, Sir. Thank you for coming on the show and I do look forward to talking to you again as well as the next iteration of anything from Master Ken. If you want to find the show notes, with all the things we talked about today, head on over to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) episode 428, you'll see everything we got going. Photos, links, you



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