



Episode 429 – Martial Arts Rivalries | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everybody, thanks for coming by! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 429. Today, we're talking about rivalries in the martial arts. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder of whistlekick and I absolutely love martial arts. I'm a proud martial artist and that's why I founded whistlekick. We do a whole bunch of things over here at whistlekick from this show to all of the products that we make and a bunch of other things that we're involved in so if you want to learn more about this show, head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. If you will learn more about the other things we do head on over to whistlekick.com. We've got a store there and if you use the code `PODCAST15`, that's going to get you 15% off everything in the store. You can also sign up for the newsletter and follow us on social media, there's a ton of ways to get involved and I encourage you to do so because there are a lot of us martial artists out there and I can't speak for everyone but it seems like the majority of people are really enjoying connecting around the show and the things we're getting going on.

Rivalries, competition, comparison. It happens, it's human nature and so as human beings engaged in a pursuit around other human beings, that's going to happen within martial arts. And this question originally came in from a listener and it was phrased as rivalries and I think there's a lot we can talk about there but it's not going to relate to everyone. So, I want to talk about rivalries but I also want to break it down into two: competition, we will talk about healthy and unhealthy levels of competition in comparison and I'll leave you with my thoughts and you can



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do with it what you will. We have a few clichés within the world of martial arts and one of them is the rivalry between martial arts schools. It's something that pops up in old kung Fu movies and it's something that we heard about from some of our guests on the show who trained in the 60s and the 70s and yeah it happened in the 80s and 90s and it's still happening today but it doesn't appear to be as common because people are a little more reserved but it does still happen. This whole my kung Fu is better than your kung Fu sort of thing. I see on the competition circuit, there are schools or teams that have rivalries with others and sometimes it's healthy, sometimes it's not. While there are circumstances where people will come in off the street and challenge someone in a martial arts school prove that what they teach works, that's generally happening for people who don't train now. I can't tell you the last time I heard a recent story of someone who trained and when to a different school and said, I want you to prove to me that this stuff works. Maybe that used to happen and certainly it did, at some level I suspect that it didn't happen nearly as often as people talk about and as often as people like to pretend it did because people like to tell a good story. And something happening once or once in a while isn't as good of a story as will back in my day.

So why we have rivalries? We have rivalries because we have people I already said that. But what is it about being a human being that makes us compare ourselves to others? When it comes to martial arts, we want to know that the time were investing, the money, the energy is worthwhile, it's beneficial in some way, it makes us better and so when we start talking about better yeah we can compare to ourselves our previous version of ourselves but it's a lot more concrete and it feels more objective to compare ourselves to someone else. Especially someone else right there beside us or depending on the context, someone right there in front of us. We compare because we want validation and I would argue to say that the people who spend the most time trying to compare themselves to others are the people who feel the poorest about themselves if you feel confident if you have good self-esteem, a healthy ego, you don't need the outside validation of someone else to say that what you're doing is sufficient or adequate or checks the boxes. But when you start wanting to be more, better, when your comparison in your own mind is against other people and what they're doing and knowing that your time and money are invested in a way that makes you superior, that's where we start talking about comparisons and rivalries that maybe aren't so healthy. Now of course I'm talking about this as if there are very few people who are engaged in this practice of comparison, but let's be real it's darn near everyone. I fall into this trap. I was training this past weekend and I noticed myself comparing what I was doing to other people. Some of what I was doing was healthy, some of it was not. But I was really glad that I noticed the unhealthy part so I could check it and say hey you're you, you're doing your best with where you're at right now and it doesn't matter if someone else is a thousand times better worth a thousand times worse. It doesn't change me. It doesn't change how I'm showing up and how hard I am working.

One of the greatest things about martial arts is that it's individualized. But there's something innately human about trying to compare and this whole team or group dynamic after all, human beings are social creatures and we bring that into everything that we do even in individual



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pursuit like martial arts. If you go to a martial arts competition, some kind of open competition where you have different schools, people who participate in different martial arts showing up, you look closely. You're going to see some comparison, you're probably going to see some rivalry among people who have competed against each other before. Many of you know that whistlekick, we sponsor competition team and I've witnessed some of the stuff even among the team members and some of the people that they compete against. There are rivalries out there there are people who will step up and say, you know what he got me last time, I have to get him this time. I don't know how healthy that is, I think that there's a fine line. I think you can use that comparison as positive motivation, to squeak out a little bit of extra practice or to inspire yourself to train a little bit harder. But when it becomes consuming, when it becomes negative, when you're willing to sacrifice something that's important to you be that time outside of training or your integrity, or heck maybe even cheat the rules a little bit that's where it starts to get negative.

If we think about the example of a point sparring match where contact is usually minimal to let's say moderate. If you hit one person with more force than you would someone else, simply because of who they are and your relationship to them, that's where it starts to tow and maybe even cross the line. That's where the healthiness of competition starts to fade away and we start to see a rivalry. And this doesn't just happen competition this happens in training. If your martial arts instructor you've probably gone to the well of comparing one student to another to inspire both of them and that can be really healthy. It can also be really damaging it's something that we have to be careful to tell student a hey I think student B has got you by little bit I think they're a little faster, I think their stance is a little bit lower. Well, if student A always feel like they're in the shadow of student B, now their entire relationship to martial arts is defined by being less than someone else. So, it's all about the individual. How we are motivated is incredibly complex, it's a symphony of factors, internal and external. And the more we understand about what those motivating factors are, for ourselves and for others, the better we can make sure that we are honing in on the healthy parts and tuning out the others. If we run with that symphony analogy, maybe you got somebody on violin that they're not tuned up and they're not healthy. Well what happens if we drop microphone right in front of them, it's gonna ruin everything that's going on. It's going to overshadow all the positive that the other instruments are playing.

I don't think it's going to surprise anyone that I'm not a fan of rivalries or unhealthy competition. It's probably coming through not only in this episode but 400 and something episodes prior. If you want to talk about examples of healthy competition or healthy rivalry, here's how I see it. Imagine a tournament, a competition were two people step out and maybe a compete against each other with forms and soon as their division starts, they stop talking to each other. They go to opposite sides of the ring they focus on themselves, they ignore the rest of the world, they step out, they do their form they step back out, they continue to ignore the other. And then the awards are handed out one of them earns first, the other earns second. And at that moment they stop. Now they're acknowledging each other. Now they're saying to the other, hey great job. I'll get you next time or maybe you almost had me, or a I had to get you back the last time.



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There's a smile, they hug. And when they go back to their training they train a little bit harder knowing that the other person is going to be there next time and that they will have trained harder, and they will have gotten better. And so, they use it as inspiration. I've been fortunate to witness this time after time in martial arts competition. It happens in all sorts of divisions, it happens across the country, all ages, all ranks, and I think that that is an amazing way to do it. Now on the flipside, I've also witnessed plenty of people who will do all of the things that I just said but before and after the division, the way they conduct themselves is negative. It's sarcastic, it's passive aggressive. Maybe there's even some sabotage involved. Maybe if it's a sparring division they're making late hits, maybe they're kicking little lower, a little harder than they need to. Maybe they start acting disrespectfully, to referees or people that are friendly with the person they're competing against. There's a certain element of this that's a natural inhumanity, but it's something that we need to be very cautious of within the martial arts because it doesn't represent what we do. Martial arts is all about personal growth, we need to make sure that we are discouraging this sort of behavior.

I've witnessed some incredibly skilled, high ranked martial artists, behaving like children because a call or a division didn't go the way that they thought it should. That they didn't win or somebody didn't see their point and now they're angry and or throwing things around and they're acting disrespectfully. So, to finish up rivalry can be as good or as bad as we make it. It's all about the intent. How we show up for ourselves how we show for other people matters because other people see it. Do you want the students in your school or your children or children of your friends or someone that is impressionable and looks up to you? Do you want them to see you acting that way? Probably not let's try to keep that in mind the next time we feel ourselves getting a little riled up that somebody else maybe is doing a bit better than us and we don't feel that's right. Focus on you, focus on what you can control which is yourself and your training because nothing else really does matter.

So, what you think? Do you agree with me? Do you disagree with me? I want to hear either way, in fact I would hear more if you disagree. You can email me jeremy@whistlekick.com or you can head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com and leave a comment under this Episode 429. We're on social media @whistlekick if you go to whistlekick.com use code PODCAST15 it's gonna get you 15% off. Thanks for tuning in today thanks for listening and I look forward to talking to you again. Until next time train hard, smile, and have a great day!