



Episode 443 – Does Starting Martial Arts as a Child Give You an Advantage |
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Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everybody, welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 443. Today we're answering the question, rather having a discussion, does the age you start martial arts give you an advantage or disadvantage versus someone else perhaps? I'm gonna tell you a lot more about what I mean by that question, but right now whom I'm Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host on the show on the founder at whistlekick and I'm a guy who really loves martial arts so I made it my career. And you can see everything that I the rest of the whistlekick team are working on over at you probably guessed it whistlekick.com. There you'll find our blog, links to all the other projects were working on, the only store, and if you use the code PODCAST15 say 50% off everything we got there. From uniforms to T-shirts to protective equipment, you name it it's probably there or it's in development. And if you want to know what kind of stuff were releasing, you should get on the newsletter we've got original content that appears only the newsletter and it's also the best way to get discounts and find out behind-the-scenes information, see what's coming down the pipe and were not gonna spam you, we'll send you one maybe two month. If you want the stuff related to this show, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com there you'll find transcripts, photos, links, videos, and every other episode we've ever done. I get emails all the time for people hey you should interview this person well guess what, quite often when they ask, we already have. So, if you're interested in in individual or a subject related to martial arts, check out that website, do a search. There's a good chance we've addressed something related



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to it and if we haven't or if you want us to go deeper, there's a form on the website you can reach out, make a suggestion were always looking for great suggestions.

Today's topic comes in from friend and fellow podcaster Sensei Jaredd Wilson who's been on the show several times and we've built a pretty good friendship, so when things come up oftentimes will discuss them. We've collaborated on a number of things and I really appreciate his perspective and his thoughtfulness in the martial arts. So, here's his question that he wrote in: does starting martial arts as a child give you any advantage over starting later? I'm going to pick on you and I is an example because I know our stories, were approximately the same age but you started younger, he's referring to me, does that give you any long-term advantage over me who started at 20. I really don't know the answer and would not be offended anyway by your answer. So of course, I like that questions, it's a great question and if you haven't checked out and you're not routinely listening to Sensei Wilson's podcast, Martial Thought, you really should check it out Martial Thoughts, great show similar to the show but's different enough that it's got its own flavor and I hope you do check it out, I really like what he does. One of the few podcasts I routinely listen to, I mean that.

So, let's unpack this. What Sensei Wilson's referring to is the fact that I started training martial arts was in karate at four years old. He waited until he was 20 we're just about the same age, I'm 40 I think he's got a year maybe two years on me. But we're both really passionate about martial arts, we've trained in different things but he's a very skilled martial artist I've train with him, i've watched him instruct and I have to say I think that we're pretty similar in not just our approach but our let's say our relative competency so that does beg the question: do I have any inherent advantages or disadvantages because of when I started? And I think there are some things to consider, I think the first thing it's actually a disadvantage for me and it may not apply specifically to me but I think it can apply to a lot of people start training younger and that is children aren't generally held to as high of a standard. But there still put through quite a few repetitions so that can mean that the quality of the technique that they're practicing reinforces some bad habits. I've seen people like this, people been training a long time and don't realize that the techniques that they're throwing really should be better especially given their age and they're otherwise skilled physical practice. And no not someone with limitations but someone who has control of their body. But because they've thrown that punch that way 10,000 times and because their instructors let it go because they were 5-6-9-10 years old, they've built these bad habits that are really hard to change. On the plus side starting younger gives you the opportunity to ingrain the martial arts will say mindset into who you are in your lifestyle. And that's something that I have something that I reflect on from time to time, something I'm very happy I have. The approach I bring to my life, to business to my personal relationships, has a lot to do with the way I was brought up in the martial arts. To be dedicated, to be honest, now all the other positive attributes that we generally ascribed to martial artists and martial arts training. Another negative one that we've talked about on the show is that starting younger can often mean that someone, sort of check that box I tried martial arts and they never go back to it. If you



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are a martial arts school you know that right around adolescent age, a lot of children leave, they stop training, they participate in team sports with their friends and they come back because sometimes instructors or parents force them to remain in it longer than maybe they should. So, their last memories of the martial arts training are in fact negative. Maybe those people will come back to it later in life but quite often as I've seen, if they have a negative experience as a child it will delay if not completely eliminate their later training.

Where does that leave us then? As I'm talking about these three different examples, I'm realizing that there's a common thread and it's the quality of the people around the child if the child starts young it is held to a very high standard and appropriate standard is taught well is nurtured supported, they're going to develop skills and an attitude that not only keeps them in martial arts, keeps them training and benefits them later in life both in their training and their non-training lives. But if that same child is taught as basically daycare, if their parents make them do it, if the instructors hold them to a low standard, if they become bored or resentful of their training, I think that sets them back. I think most people are probably somewhere in the middle. Most instructors by definition are going to be adequate to good. The best instructors are going to be rare just as the worst instructors, it's a bell curve. Everybody can't be the best. Now if I take the specific example of I and Sensei Wilson, I had a pretty good martial arts upbringing I was held to a pretty high standard, I progressed pretty well and I developed good skills and some good experience. But because martial arts is something I've done virtually forever, when I hit my 20s it wasn't something I was as passionate about as I'm going to expect Wilson was. By 20, by the time I left college, I've been training for close to 20 years. So, right around the time that he starting I've got a significant amount of experience and that passion that tends to come up when you start something new that you're really into, I didn't have that but I expect he did. And at that time, he also had the physical abilities and the mental abilities of an adult, something that you can use to learn and understand and process information and internalize it and express it physically in a way that no child is going to be able to. So, while on day one of his training, I'm going to have far more experience and skill, I expect that through that decade he caught up to me because he was training actively, passionately. And I expect more so than I was.

I love martial arts not saying I don't, but as you might imagine whistlekick is part of my martial arts and it doesn't provide me as much time for my physical training. I think I've gotten pretty good at contemplating things like this, answering questions, having discussions on the fly, interviewing guests, but on the first to admit a lot of my physical skills have deteriorated. There are things that I do now that I used to do better even as a child. Although as an aside one thing very proud of my flexibility is right about the same, maybe even a little better in some ways. To bring it back around, to answer Sensei Wilson's question, does being a child starting in martial arts give you an inherent advantage? No. But I suspect that overall for most people, it's going to give you enough benefit that it makes sense to start earlier rather than to wait right? If it was inherently better to train as an adult and not beforehand, we would encourage children to wait. We wouldn't have kids classes, but that's not the case. The exceptions of course are for children



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who aren't enjoying it, are not going to enjoy it, or instructors who, let's face it, aren't good at teaching kids. To say it another way, like most subjective questions, it all depends. Now this doesn't mean that Sensei Wilson and I are going to square off in some kind of to the death match although I'm sure there people out there who would enjoy watching that. I'll be honest I would love to to work with him more because he's become a good friend and I trust and it's always fun, I think most of you out there know that, it's fun to be able to train and train to be a little bit harder with someone that you like and trust because you can you can push things a little bit more. You can push each other, and you can develop your skills even more from that. My favorite training partners are people that I like and trust. So, thank you Sensei Wilson for posing this question, we'll have to collaborate on another episode sometimes soon.

If any of you out there haven't idea a topic do you like Sensei Wilson and I to tackle together on a show let me know. Email me Jeremy@whistlekick.com you can find us on social media we are @whistlekick everywhere you can imagine and make sure you're subscribed not only to the podcast but to the YouTube channel because were rolling out new stuff all the time and yeah there are some video only content coming out. Remember you've got PODCAST15 that's gonna save you 15% at whistlekick.com we do have a number of our products at Amazon, no discount code over their Amazon eats that 15% and then some. Other ways you can help us out if making a purchase doesn't make sense leave us a review iTunes, Google, Facebook, lots of places for reviews share this or another episode, share the memes and other content were putting on social media. Help us grow because it gives us more opportunities we turn those back around to provide things do you, the traditional martial artist. I hope you have a fantastic day. I enjoyed talking about the stuff I hope it comes through. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.