



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there, welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 466 and today, I'm joined by Mr. Jason Davis. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host here at whistlekick, founder here at whistlekick, chief cook and bottle washer here at whistlekick and I love traditional martial arts and that's why I've invested all of my time, all of my money, all of my heart into everything that we're doing here and I hope that comes through and if you want to check out all the things that we're doing, go to whistlekick.com. There's links all over the place to the different projects and products that we make. Speaking of products, there's a store. If you make a purchase, use the code `PODCAST15`. That will save you 15% off, maybe a shirt or a hoodie or a uniform or some gear, there's all kinds of good stuff. Check that out. We've got another site for this show: whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. That's where you can find out everything about this bi-weekly show with the goal of connecting and inspiring and educating martial artists all over the world. Martial arts mean a lot to a lot of different people and our goal here is to support that and to give you more and if you value those things that we're doing, whether you make a purchase or not or there's another way, a newer way that you can support us; through Patreon: patreon.com/whistlekick and if you spend more than 5\$ a month, it's really isn't that much, right? All the stuff that we're bringing you, 5\$ a month, you're going to get more. We're going to give you free stuff on top of what we give you and it's just another way that you can say thank you and let me say you're welcome in advance and thank you for all that you do to support this show. I've known of today's guest for years. He's doing something pretty amazing, pretty much in my backyard, and for some reason I have not met him yet but it's going



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

to happen and logistically, we recorded over the internet because it's easier. It gives better quality but I don't want everybody to think that I'm adverse to sitting down. We used to do a lot of those and I'm sure I'm going to meet Mr. Davis sometime soon and sit down and we're going to have a long chat because he's doing great things. One of my favorite things about martial arts is that passion for martial arts can manifest in very different ways for very different reasons and today's guest is a great example of that. Martial arts changed his life and now, he's on a mission to help others change their life through martial arts. Let's get into it. Here he is! Mister Davis, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio!

Jason Davis:

Hey, Jeremy! Thanks for having me on. I've been looking forward to this for quite some time and I'm glad to be here this morning.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thanks for coming on. We were chatting and we both have kind of vague memories of it but we tried to do this at some point and I think you expressed it well that it wasn't the right time but I'm glad we found the right time.

Jason Davis:

Oh, me too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I'm excited to talk about your story and the things that you've got going on because they're big and they're powerful and I think, more important than other of those adjectives, important.

Jason Davis:

Well, I'm glad you're excited to talk about it because, quite frankly, after almost 10 years, my wife is I'm so sick of hearing your story. You know what I mean? It's the same thing over and over and over so it's nice to have a fresh set of ears.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, it's important to make sure that you're sharing the wealth when you're talking about your victories and losses and not dumping too much on too many people the same time. My cat gets the brunt of it. I live alone so...

Jason Davis:

She travels with me a lot so she hears the same thing and she's like you even have it down to like the short version, the medium version and the long version and you know which one to pick. I said that's



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

part radio experience and part just knowing what fits and she goes but I got to tell you that I'm sick of hearing it all, she says.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We'll make sure if she listens to this, she skips over the first however many minutes. You got the short, the middle and the long version. I'm going to let you choose whichever version seems most appropriate right now and tell us because I've got the feeling that that story, not only is what you're doing but how you started martial arts. Am I guessing right?

Jason Davis:

You did! You got it right on the head and it is, I don't see it that way and she doesn't see it that way because we're around it all the time but I guess when you sit back and look at it from 30,000 feet, it is a story of inspiration and overcoming and just not taking no for an answer and so, it is something that's worthy of sharing and I'm glad I have this platform to do it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's dig in. Let's do it. Give us that story, that origin story and how you found martial arts.

Jason Davis:

I was born with cerebral palsy and I am the youngest of 5 and my parents were actually told by the doctors that they didn't think I was going to survive. I had some serious health complications and they brought in a priest and gave me last right and listen, we're not sure what's going to happen and so, I survived that and my parents had no experience with any disabilities before or anything like that. As I said, I'm the youngest of 5 and everybody else is normal, whatever that is supposed to mean, and they said no, we're going to take him home and we're going to figure this thing out and that's exactly what they did and they raised me like my other brothers and sister. I was told that I could do anything that I wanted to if I put my mind to it and I wasn't excused from chores or anything like that. I was expected to do it. I was expected to do the same thing that they did and behave the same way that they did. Just had to think about things and do things differently so for me, life with cerebral palsy was normal and I didn't let it stop me and it probably wasn't until I was the age of 8 that I kind of realized that maybe I was different. Up until that time, I was the first student with the disability to be integrated into regular classroom. I had regular friends, whatever that means, and we did regular stuff. They treated me the same way as they did everybody else and I wrestled with my older brothers and did everything like that and it started out that my mom used to yell at my older brothers, stop that, you're going to hurt him. Stop that! Well, she finally realized I was the one that was instigating all this and she finally said, if you're going to do that, you're going to get what your brothers give you and so, it was the double chicken wing and the headlock and all of that kind of stuff and so I was treated and raised like everybody else and as I said, in school, it was the same way and I really looked up to my older brothers. They were



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

my big brothers and I wanted to be just like them and so, when I was about 8, as I said, my older brothers started in martial art and I wanted to, too and my parents said well, fine. We'll call the school and get you going and this was the early 80s. Not as much was known about disabilities then and over the phone, they were told I couldn't train, I never would be able to train and kind of what were they doing calling a martial arts school to find out if a kid with a disability that's in a wheelchair would train in martial arts. That it didn't actually make any sense and so, for me, when I was told that, it was a pretty big blow and I didn't understand because that was the first time that I was told that I couldn't do something or be like everybody else with a few modifications and I didn't get it but as I grew up, that sort of stuff went by the wayside and me and my friends were me and my friends and I didn't think much about it. I got into school and I actually found that some learning disabilities went along with the physical so I'll get into that part in just a second but that first section, do you have any questions for me about that? I feel like I need to give you a second here of thought.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I appreciate that. Don't worry! If I've got to break in, I'll break in but no, I'm following along with you. I'm nodding along and interested in where this is going and you're giving us a lot of details and I appreciate that. Please continue.

Jason Davis:

Yeah, I popped into the regular school system and have regular friends, as I said, and academically, found that I had some difficulties and I had been going to schools since I was 2 years old. It was school for early education which was incorporated in my physical therapy and so, by the time I got to 6th grade, I was so done with school. Done with it. Had the learning disabilities that made it difficult, was basically told I was being lazy, that I didn't like school and I just didn't apply myself and that was partially true but wasn't until the age of 12 that I found out that I had those learning disabilities that went along with the physical. Fast forward a little bit and you hop into junior high and that experience was a little bit better academically. It was a lot of fun from a social standpoint. I had a lot of friends, did a lot of stupid stuff just like other teenagers and just really enjoyed it. Academically though, I still didn't care to be there, just wanted to get through and basically, I was told I needed to go into college. I said college isn't for me and they said how do you ever plan to be successful? I said I don't know and I don't care. I just want to get out of here. What are you going to do? I don't know. Hang out with my friends. I'll figure it out. Whatever! I had summer jobs just like everybody else and I felt like it was going to be easy for me to find a job. Fast forward to graduation, I'm an 18 year old kid with all the answers and then the real world hit. It's like ok, all of your friends are going off to college. You're hanging out the porch in the summer because they all gone back and life isn't so fun anymore. What are you going to do and I'm like well, I'm just going to get a job. It will be easy. I've got work experience, I've got a ton of computer experience from hanging out at the computer lab at high school every chance I got when I didn't want to be in class and sort of hide. I said this will be easy. I actually found out that it was going to be very difficult and I was told by several agencies that I was unemployable, worthless and I would never hold down a job and



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

I should go to the mailbox and collect the check every month and be happy with it and I said I don't know who you're talking to but you're not talking to me and that's not what I'm going to do and they're like well, what are you going to do? I'm like I don't know so I began volunteering and I volunteered in the local grade school and volunteered here and there and volunteering was great. I can do great things as a volunteer but it wasn't paid and so, finally, finally realized maybe I did need to swallow my pride and get some job placement help and I contacted the state. I had a lady I was friends with and she's like this worked for my husband, why don't you give it a try? I said all they're going to tell me is I got to go to college to be successful and I'm not going. She goes please give it a try and so I did. I got a hold of a counselor and then, that's the next part for me was my career in radio.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I have a question, a thought, at this point. So, quite often, when we talk about children who have a challenge. Whether that's an academic challenge or a physical challenge, they tend to turn; if they have an academic challenge, they tend to become a pretty physical kid. They find that place in the world where they feel comfortable and confident and that's the direction that life often takes them. If it's someone who maybe is a little smaller, pushed around a little bit, this is my identity, I gravitated towards academics but what's interesting to me about when you're talking about your childhood, you're not...it doesn't sound like you're talking about someone who didn't have a place where they felt comfortable. You're talking about academics weren't your thing and you're talking about how physicality, while you were able to keep up, is kind of the sense I'm getting, I'm not getting the impression that that's where you're spending all your time so I'm wondering what were you doing as a kid? You were hanging out with your friends but what was your thing?

Jason Davis:

We did anything you can think of. I remember playing football in the backyard, believe it or not, and they're on their feet and I'm crawling around and so it was kind of like makeshift kind of football and we wrestled around and roughhoused but I think, for me, growing up after that 7 or 8 where you're really trying to find yourself; for me, we played video games and we were into computers and things like that and then we hung out at the mall and just did, I don't know, to me, what seems to be typical stuff that kids in the 80s did so I don't know if I can really give much of an answer to that other than what we did seem normal to me and it seemed ok to them. You know what I mean? I figured that it couldn't be too far off base but if you look at my time during high school, my brothers had race cars and from the time that I was about 10 until I was 14, everything was about dirt track racing for me and I could tell you how to build a dirt-modified from top to bottom and I can tell you how to build and tear down a Chevy 358 and all that goes with it and I can tell you all the numbers on the racetrack and the drivers that belonged to those numbers but I couldn't do my math and that was one of the things that the teacher said, how do you know all these stuff about racing and you can do that inside and out but you can't do your math or remember your spelling and then I said because I don't care about those stuff. You know what I mean? This is what I love. This is what I do and so, racing was a big part of that and it was a big family



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

thing that we all did it together and, even that, everybody had their part and I had mine too. crack up the car and they'd be like well, we'll let Jason have a hammer and beat the body panels back into shape or change the oil and so, all growing up, from my family to my friends, they all found ways for me to fit and ways for me to contribute and that was huge and that was very important to who I am today because I don't look at myself any different. I'm like well, you want to do it? We'll figure out how to do it. Why would you think that you can't? And that comes from, as they say, raising, so to speak. You know what I mean? In high school, I found another interest, which is also this is where the martial arts gets tied into things and that answer is, Jeremy, was the wrestling squad. My brother, well, 2 of my brothers and my sister and my sister in law were members of the local rescue squad in town and at the time, I was 15, 14, 15, 16 and I have some anxiety issue that went along with having a disability, I think, and being so close to family and things like that and I was always worried about medical issues and my parents had some health issues and what if this were to happen and things like that and my sister in law said, why don't you just come and at least take the classes that go along with being on the rescue squad and she got clearance for me to do that and just learn about this stuff so that you're not so afraid so you know what you're doing. All the CPR and basic first aid and said oh, that'd be great and so I'm 16 years old, in high school, barely making it by and I sign up for this class and I take the class like everybody else so it's a big thick book that you're reading and she helped me with the reading and I ended up getting on the rescue squad at the end of it. Not only did I get on the rescue squad but I passed the written test with a 100% and I was able to do all the pacing curves and the lifting and I knew exactly what I was doing and the members of the squad were just super impressed. They're like this was amazing. You take that back to my school atmosphere and my school is ok, what's going on, Jace, because you just got a 100% on the state test for the ECA level, test for the rescue squad and again, my answer was because I'm interested in it because I'm saving lives with it and that's why I could do it and they were just like oh and that's kind of where that went but the piece that ties it all together and I kind of got off on a tangent there, sorry about that, but the piece that ties this all together was there was a member of the rescue squad at that time who owned a martial arts school in town and at that time, I didn't think much of it because I've gone back to years ago when I was 8 when I was told I couldn't train when I was in a wheelchair. I was no longer in the wheel chair. When I was 11, I had surgery that helped me get out of the wheelchair and it was the worst pain in my life but it was well worth it. I was surrounded by family and friends and ever since that day when I was 11, I haven't been back in the chair since but through my time in the rescue squad, I met this lady who had a martial arts school and I kind of just went back to what I was told many years before and it made sense. If you can't stand to punch and kick, then you probably can't do martial arts, right? That's what you'd think.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, seems reasonable.

Jason Davis:



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

So, I kind of went along with my life and said well, martial arts isn't for me. It's probably one of the things that I can't do. I was older and I kind of realized that everybody has limitations or whatever so now, we take that story of my early childhood and we tie it back to where I was when I left trying to find a career. The job placement coach put me at a radio station because I had a friend whose mother said boy, you like to talk. You ever thought about being in radio and I thought that would be perfect because basically, you work a 4-hour air shift, you go home, you hang out and all I saw was the cool aspect of it and I was like that's for me. So, I started out through a state program answering the phone and I almost got myself thrown out because by then, I was 18 years old and I had all the answers. I knew where I was going, I knew what I wanted to do and I knew for all this volunteer work, that people would take advantage of the skills that I have and they probably wouldn't want to pay me if I didn't have to and so, I was on a 6-week program and I was supposed to be answering the phones at the radio station. I was sneaking in the production department to learn how to do commercials because it was using computers and all of the stuff that I was comfortable with from growing up and I had a fellow that took me under his wing and showed me this stuff on the down time but the general manager came to me and he goes, son, you're here to answer the phone and you keep sneaking into production and I said yeah, because I'm here to learn radio and if I'm not going to learn radio, then I'm going to leave. He said you can't talk to me like that. He goes you call yourself a ride and get out of here and never come back and I said that's fine. I was like I guess, it's not going to work out for either of us so I went in to tell my friend goodbye, that I kind of blew the opportunity and he goes you go back and apologize. I didn't do anything. I said, he's the one that sort of taking advantage of me and he said you told me when you got into this, if I took you under your wing, you told me you'd grow up and kind of learn the ropes and not be such a punk kid anymore and I said I did and so, I went back in and I apologized and finished answering the phone but one day they had a candidate come in and he was running for office and when he was around, my buddy who was the head production guy was gone somewhere. It was just me and the general manager and he comes to me and he says Jace, we got to get you to the studio. This guy's coming in, he's recording and he goes you got to do it. I said why? I can't do it. I said the phone will ring and you'll get all upset because I'm not answering the phone, I said, and you're going to fire me and my dad will have to come pick me up and all. He said no, no, I'm telling you, just do it. So, I did and that was my break into production but the cool thing about that story, Jeremy, was this candidate actually had a disability himself and he was like man, tell me your story and I told him and he goes that's amazing and I didn't let him off the hook. I said no, that doesn't sound good. Take that again and try and try this with this inflection and by the time, he left, well, this guy's never going to want to work with me again and he said, he goes this is my first ad and I've got a series more to go, he says, I want you to be the producer so that was my break into radio and from there, used that time as my hands-on college. I learned everything I could. I wanted to be on air but because of the cerebral palsy, some of my muscles were weak and one of those muscles were my diaphragm muscle's weak so no matter how much I practice, I just wasn't going to be the Casey Kasem kind of guy but I finally realized that you're given certain strengths and things like that and my strength was production so I really got into that and excelled with that and I had a 20-year career in radio. As you know, from what I told you in high school, writing and



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

reading were difficulties for me but I learned how to write copy and I actually wrote award-winning copy. I got a couple Vermont Association of Broadcast awards for my copywriting skill as well as production skill and during my time at radio, I met a guy. We were coworkers kind of in the same cubicle, if you will and this is where all of this starts to come together, Jeremy, in terms of martial arts and me and the organization. We were sitting, talking one day about our favorite martial arts movies and I said mine was Roadhouse and Patrick Swayze was the guy I wanted to be and he goes well, he says, I'm half-Japanese, he says, I was going to be a sensei but I couldn't afford the uniform. I said well, did you know I was going to train in martial arts but they told me I couldn't and then, I never would because I was in a wheelchair? He goes well, that's pretty stupid. How's that ever going to work out? I said I don't know but I'm about ready to find out and I got to hold of the lady that owned a martial arts school in town that I knew from the rescue squad. She was actually on vacation on the beach somewhere and it was mid-afternoon and she had a couple of drinks and whatnot and I sent her a Facebook message and said hey, I want to train in martial arts, is that possible? And she said, sure, Jay, you've grown up like my kid. You know that anything is possible. I said ok, when do we start? She said well, I didn't really mean with me and she goes yeah, I guess I can train you so we got together and basically, the first introduction was me falling down her stairs at the time. The building she was in was not necessarily the most handicapped accessible but I wanted martial arts so bad that I was willing to figure out how to get myself there through her studio and we started training and she knew nothing about disability. She had a kids' class and that's all she had and we started training and she learned about disabilities and I learned about martial arts and I learned about disabilities as well and from that comes the adaptive martial arts association. Any questions to this point?

Jeremy Lesniak:

So many question! So many questions. I think up to this point, I think we can follow along with this journey even if it's not something we've experienced personally. We've all experienced challenges, we've all experienced being told no and having to find ways to move through but this part at the end when you finally do get the opportunity to start training, from there to forming the organization; I think even that path in hindsight can make sense. Oh, I'm speculating, you want to make sure that others who had similar challenges weren't told no. You wanted to make sure others had the opportunity that you didn't when you were a child. Am I guessing right?

Jason Davis:

Absolutely, you hit the nail on the head and to me, it was ok that they were told no. That was ok but to be told no over the telephone before you even take a look at somebody, that's what didn't sit right with me because how do you know somebody's abilities, true abilities, until you take a look at them. For me, that time in my life, I'm 31 years old at this point, Jeremy; and I'm set to be married about 9 months and as far as my physical health goes, I was in pretty good shape. I maintain pretty well but I was having some trouble with some extra tightness in my legs and so, I went to see a specialist and he said I want to put you on muscle relaxers and I said no, I'm not one for medication. We're not going to do that. That's



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

not going to work and he said that's the only option and I said really? That's the only option? He said I just started in martial arts. I was like why don't we give that a try and see what happens. He goes, in the short time that I trained, it was probably 3, 4 months, I was like it's done some pretty amazing things for me and I was like why don't we give that a try? He goes you could try anything you want but he goes but nothing's going to work other than this medication and I said ok, well, we'll see and I kept training and I incorporated the martial arts into my physical therapy and Jeremy, when somebody's been doing physical therapy since they were 2, it becomes pretty old and the chance that I actually stand on top of that and do what you're supposed to are slim to none and so, for me, martial arts was kind of the way that made me do the boring part of the exercises and the physicality of it because I knew that I wouldn't be able to do martial arts if I couldn't walk and if I wasn't flexible and so martial arts was kind of the vehicle to help me undo my physical therapy then I go back to the doctor 6 months later and he's amazed at how I can control the clicking in my heels and then crossing my feet and he goes how are you doing that and I said it's the martial arts training. I said it's about concentration, mindset and all those things. All those pieces are tough to explain to somebody who doesn't know martial arts and he's like wow, this is amazing. We need to tell other people and I'm like yeah! So, Jeremy, a lot of my ideas and things like that come to me in the middle of the night and anything. So, it's the middle of the night, right? My wife and I, Susan, she's like dead to the world snoring and I'm like hey, hey, wake up! I was like I got something to tell you. She's like what's the matter, is it some emergency or something and I said no but it's going to be huge. I was like I want to start this organization and help others with disabilities, have an opportunity to experience the same wonderful things that I have through martial arts and never be turned away and she was like oh, that's great, I'm going to go back to be and I'm like no, seriously. You got to write this down. It's going to be called the Adaptive Martial Arts Association of the Green Mountains and she writes it down. Ok, I'm going to sleep now and so, there was one other girl in a wheelchair that was actually training by herself with another instructor at the time and I was like no, we'll have tournaments and we'll get together and we'll showcase this because this is some great stuff and she was like great, I'm going to bed. Forget about it, I'm going to bed and so, from that point on and then I brought it into my martial arts instructor and said what do you think? I can be the driving force behind the idea but I'm pretty green with martial arts. I don't know much about it. I said would you be able to help in terms of the martial arts standpoint and giving people the information they need and she said Jay, you're the only student I've ever worked with and so we had a shiai and up until that point, Jeremy, I didn't believe in my martial arts abilities. I kind of felt like she was being easy on me or because she knew me and so she said you don't believe me but you're really good at this. I'm going to bring in an outsider to test you and he tested me and he said oh, you've really adapted this well and you do it well and I said so, you really think that this could work with somebody with a disability? He said yeah! He says with the right mindset and some modifications, yeah. So, myself and my instructor, founded the organization and she was kind of the person that would field the questions from other instructors on how to train and so, you may say well, what is this organization or how does it work and basically, what the organization is, well, now, it's a national organization which provides information and other resources to instructors on how to train individuals with disabilities and we also help individuals



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

with disabilities get placed in martial arts schools in their area. What we say is that if you're a martial arts school that's listed on our directory that's willing to take on somebody with disability, that you don't necessarily take them on but you need to be willing to offer them face to face interview to see if you're able to train them and if you're able to train them, that's great. We'll provide you the support in training them. If you're not, you send them back to us then we continue the search until we find them the school that fits both the need of the student and the instructor and we also provide scholarships for individuals on fixed incomes to help with transportation and to cover the cost of classes and all of this is free of charge, Jeremy, so that's basically in a nutshell what the adaptive martial arts association is.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, it's pretty amazing, pretty powerful stuff!

Jason Davis:

Yeah and so, I wanted to take it back for a second into building that. So, building that, I was like ok, well, this is great. I'll get ahold of some disabled agencies, I'll talk to martial arts schools around the area, everybody will be on board with this and basically, it was quite the opposite. I called some disabled agencies and they said what do you know about helping people with disabilities, it will never work, nobody cares about martial arts. All they care about is skiing and horseback riding and how do you even know that this is going to help people with disabilities? I said because it helped me. That's how I know and you'll see it too but you got to jump on board with this and they said before we're even going to talk to you or tell people about you, you're going to need to show that you have major support and I hung up the phone and I said well, thanks for your support. That's great and I googled Century Martial Arts. They were the world's leader on martial arts supply and at the time, they had Bill Superfoot Wallace as a spokesman and so, I googled Bill Superfoot Wallace and I found a number and I called a number and somebody answered the phone and I said Hi, is this Mr. Bill Superfoot Wallace's headquarters or office? And he said, office or headquarters? It's Bill! What do you need? And I explained to him what I was trying to do and what I wanted to do and he said man, I support you. You get ahold of my buddy over there at Century, David Wall and he said he'll hook you up and get things going and so, I got hold of David Wall and months and months went by and I heard nothing and then, a few months later, I got an email that said we love what you're doing. We'll be able to provide individuals that you help with uniform discount and so that's kind of how it all started but I had a vision for this thing. Very much a grand vision, really, grander than anything than any guy from Vermont could probably ever come up with. I wanted to be an international organization and the place that everybody went for all the answers in terms of adaptive martial arts and all the support that they could offer and I wanted it to be free of charge because I feel like everybody should have the same opportunity as I did and so, I just kept working and plugging away and trying to make the non-believers believe and fast forward, trying to get to be a speaker at the Century Super Show in Las Vegas and just really, I knew where I needed to be and I tried to get there. Wasn't able to be a speaker, again, had some flack about we're not really sure about this thing called adaptive martial arts and so I said well, ok, if I can't be a speaker, I'll at least be a guest



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

of the show and I was like what does it cost to have a booth there and they told me. They said we're not really sure somebody could raise those kind of funds to be here but we'll save you a booth space and if you can get here, that's what I did. Locally, I went around and said look, there's this thing I want to do. It's very important. You're going to be helping tons of people and I raised the funds to get to the show and got us a booth, they covered the flight. I got to the show, once I was at the show, something that I learned in radio was you take somebody else's event and you make it your own and you make sure you're the biggest thing in the room and I hit every booth there and just talked like I had it all figured out and it kind of started to come together and then, this is the part where the wheels kind of fall off, Jeremy, and I began to say well, maybe I'm going to throw in the towel. Do you have any questions at this point?

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, keep going. I'm loving the story!

Jason Davis:

We go to the super show and I take my instructor with me who, like I said, was a close personal friend for probably 20 or 30 years and I knew her kids and grew up with them. We go to the super show and we start kind of telling what the organization was about and at the time, looking back on it, in retrospect, like we said about being on this show, we really had no place being there but we made it work. We got the word out and we made it work and we figured it out when we came home but after that show, when we came home, the paradigm started to change. My instructor, who is also one of the consultant, had begun to look at things different. We had lines and lines of people out into the lobby to see our booth and one of the things I remember is on a break, she comes back, she says, Jay, this thing is going to be huge. Do you know the amount of money you're sitting on? I said it's not about money. It's about helping people and that's all I want to do. The paradigm for her began to change and I trained and things like that and before you knew it, it was, in order for you to progress and do certain things, you've got to do certain things with the organization and I was just like I can't afford to lose any of these, I worked too hard when I went the way the wind blew and the board of directors came to me and said Jay, this isn't your vision. This isn't what this was about. You've got to do something so I did and I finally said look, I understand maybe the monetary aspect of this, for you, is important but I don't think this is going to work anymore and so, she parted ways with the organization and we continued to try and train but the dynamic didn't work. When you mix the two things together, it doesn't work. For me, personally, it was kind of very sad and it still is and she was, why don't you just leave this martial arts things to me anyway? I've got the school and you don't really know much about the instructor and you just leave it to me and I was like no, I don't think so. I'm like I'll figure it out and she's oh, I'm just going to focus on my own school. I don't think this is working out and I said I respect you there and we kind of parted ways and she opened her own non-profit organization with very similar acronyms less than a mile away and swore that it wasn't a competition and to this day, I have to believe that. At the back of my mind, I kind of wonder and again, the message was why don't you just kind of fold it up and leave it



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

to me and I'm like no. By this time, I built a pretty good relationship with Leon and the folks at Century and in case, you haven't figured out what the deal is through this podcast is I don't give up. There's no can't, no quit, no excuses and so I took this thing and I rebuilt it and I took this vision and I got some people around me. We got some other martial artists on board that could give training advice and went and got an occupational and physical therapist on staff who you will be talking to later in another episode and just kind of rebuilt the thing from the ground up. I mean, we were really struggling but I wasn't going to quit. I rebuilt the thing and that's where we are today. It's been a process but it's been well-worth the process and now, we're looking at international status. We got some people in England that are looking to open the first international chapter of the adaptive martial arts association and looking ahead in that realm and to be honest with you, I really, everything that I learned from radio and every aspect that I learned and I plugged those things into the adaptive martial arts association and it seems to be working and the folks in at century and other folks are just like wow, this is a new breath of fresh air as an approach to look at things. We're doing some research and development for them on some adaptive product lines. We've got a podcast. I do video blogs so it's all the things that I'm comfortable doing. I plugged into this and for me, I was a big, super huge, wrestling fan of the 80s and you take and you look at what the WWE was in the beginning and those struggles and you match it up to what we're doing and it's pretty much the same things with a different brand and so what we're doing here is building a brand and someday, it will be where I want it to go. I've got the vision. We've got the members from all around the country now and the thing was, before we were even ready for national status, people started to come find us and now that we have kind of a national status under our belt and we're comfortable with what we're doing, now people are coming at us internationally and so, we're not quite ready for that and we'll be there and the main point is that I want to get across to people, it's not about me, it's not about my story, it's about the other stories that you hear and it's about the other folks with the disabilities and stuff they have overcome but my point is to tell you that you can do anything you want to if you put your mind to it and there's no dream that's too big or too small and you've got to take all that negativity and all those people that try to put you down and hold you back and use that as your fire to continue and say no, this is what I'm building and this is how it's going to be and just don't stop until you get there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I don't think that there's anything more martial arts than that sentence. The idea that you keep banging against the problem until it happens. I think we all experienced whether it be learning a particular form or a certain technique or maybe sparring with a certain person in class, feeling like you're not getting anywhere but refusing to stop and ultimately getting there and I think most people in your shoes, maybe I shouldn't say most; many people in your shoes, when things didn't go well and it required parting ways with someone that you had looked up to and respected and, I get the sense, cared for, that would be the nail in the coffin for that dream for a lot of people in a lot of circumstances. The world is filled with these cautionary tales but you had a why that was pretty substantial and I think we can roll back to moment one in our conversation. That why is pretty apparent. You aren't going to let anyone tell



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

you know and I have incredible respect to your parents for making sure that that was instilled in you because we wouldn't be talking without that.

Jason Davis:

Yeah, my parents and my family are, were and are, a big part of this and I know they're proud of me and for me, it just seems surreal and it's almost like, from the time I was little, I just knew that something like this was going to happen and I'm like oh no, you're just kind of thinking that in your head but really, I keep popping back to it and I'm not where I want to be yet and everybody is like what are you training in now. If you haven't figured it out, I'm pretty brutally honest and I'll tell you, right now, after that training with my first instructor, I really haven't found a good fit for me and I've tried to go back and I'm like, I wish you no ill will and anything like that and training is training but we both decided that for me to go back there and train is probably not the best option so I've tried a couple of different mediums and things like that to train in. I just haven't quite found the same fit yet so am I a martial artist? Yes. Am I training right now? No but I'm about to try a new journey. I'm going to try taekwondo in the first part of the year and see if that's the fit. I think I found an instructor that gets me, that understands it and I'm going to give that a try. Do I use martial arts every day in my life? You bet! Whether that's controlling anxiety or whether that's in the classroom as you talked about before we started this interview, I do substitute teaching and I use martial arts every day in the classroom to control the classroom and to know how to speak to people and to know how to get out of people what I'm looking for and everybody thinks martial arts is punching and kicking but I can tell you from personal experience, martial arts is so far away from punching and kicking. It's just one aspect of it. Martial arts is about being a better person and being able to utilize those skills and the mindset to help you through your day to day. That's the true component, it's the day to day getting through life and martial arts helps me with that every day in my life. So, am I a martial artist now? Yeah. Am I training now? No but will I be? Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, so listeners, one of the things we haven't talked about is that even though Mr. Davis and I haven't met, he doesn't live that far away so I'm going to push him a little bit once we get off this call and make sure that he knows that...I've got an idea of who you're talking about and I know some other options too if we follow this path of refusing to give up and working to find the way forward, I have no doubt that that's going to resolve itself.

Jason Davis:

Absolutely, no.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's not a situation you're alone in. There are plenty of people and I know others listening to this show right now because they write to me and, excuse me, for whatever reason; it's the work schedule, where



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

they are, they're injured or whatever it is that they're feeling pressured against that identity, their belief in themselves as a martial artist because they are not training as much as they want to or they're not currently training and I've been pretty open too. I don't train as much as I want to but that doesn't change the fact I love training and I love martial arts and it's a part of who I am just as it is for you.

Jason Davis:

So, Jeremy, I talked about kind of comparing this organization to the WWE and my wife is like you do realize that the WWE is, I won't say the word fake, but you realize that it's kind of...what you see there is less than the truth and I say no, no, no. You're not getting it. I'm looking at the WWE strictly from a business standpoint and so, as you heard me before; I talked about incorporating radio into this and the elements that I do with the podcast and things but I feel like it's my job as the founder of this organization to kind of be the spokesman for it and to be that driving force that continues to show people with disabilities that you can do anything you want to do so I told you earlier, I look up to my older brothers and in that time when I wasn't training, I'll be honest with you. I kind of got fat and my brother called me out and he goes hey, fat boy, it's time to hit the gym and I was like ok, well, thanks. Yeah, I know I gained a couple of pounds over the holidays. No, seriously, it's time to start hitting the gym and he hooked me up with his personal trainer and I hit the gym and that combination of my traditional physical therapy, the martial arts because I found the instructor and started training again and the combination of that and the gym and the personal trainer, it was all clicking and things like that and my brother had done the Spartan Race on Killington the year before and I said next year, we're going to do it together and he said well, you know, I never discourage you but it's pretty tough. He says it's really tough. I don't know if it might be downright dangerous for you because I don't know and so I went up to watch him race and I spoke to a gentleman up there and he said, are you into Spartan? You look like you're jacked and you look like you're an adaptive athlete, we have a category for that. You do that. I'm like no, no, I'm going to do that next year and he goes well, there's this team you got to get a hold of. It's Team Believe 923 and they help individuals with disabilities do obstacle course race and so I got ta hold of them and basically that team, all they do is support the athlete. They don't tell you how to do it. They'll just support the athlete with what they need. They'll carry you through sections that you need, they'll bring a specialized chair and so they allowed me to have a team around me of my choosing and I chose my personal trainer, my brother, our family vet who has really become a close personal friend who is an obstacle course racer beast and if anybody knows obstacle course area and you mention the name Robin Crossman, they'll definitely know who it was so we formed a team and for me, it was a pretty special day because a year's worth of training went into it. I was doing my job as the adaptive martial arts spokesman. I went and got sponsors. Century gave me, I couldn't find any gear that I needed in obstacle course racing that would work for me because a lot of it was going on my hands and knees and things and Century was wonderful enough to say this is what you're doing, we know why you're doing it, to spread the word about the fact that anybody can do anything they want to and we're going to help you and so I had some bike shorts that with sponsors on them and they really did it up and so, I got to choose that team and I chose my brother to be on that team and that was kind of like my



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

going back to 8 years old and saying yeah, I'm going to do this with my brother. It was the one time we actually got to do something together on the same playing field and it was a pretty cool experience. Killington is the toughest course on the Spartan Circuit and I chose to do it and Team Believe tried to talk me out of it. I said that's the one I'm doing. This is when we're doing it. Either you can come along or I'll do it alone and we did it together and I used martial arts every step of the way for that. Everybody looked at the course and this long course and how it's going to be so tough and I broke it down and I paid attention to my breathing and I stayed focused and it was one obstacle to the next, to the next, to the next and I came up over the cargo net which would go the last obstacle and I felt like I wasn't going to be able to go anymore. A, I'm afraid of heights and B, I was just gassed. It took me over 10 hours to complete this course but I completed it and I'm going up over the course and somewhere along the trail somebody had a UFC speaker and they're like hey man, nice job, what's the song you need to keep going and I said Eye of the Tiger. Well, by the time I got to the end of the thing, they were shutting the lights off and we're don't shut the light off, I'm coming, I'm almost done and that person went to the end and said play Eye of the Tiger, that will push him up over the top and I climbed up over the top and down and I did it. It was Facebook live and so, to me, I accomplished 2 things that day. Once again, I proved that with no can't, no quit, no excuses and if you want it bad enough, you'll go get it and I got a chance to do something with my brother on the same playing field. It was just a really cool experience and it brought some huge exposure to our organization so for me, that's what it's about. Right now, we're just trying to get the word out about the organization and the work we do and as I told you, for me and the people around me, it's not about the money. It's about helping other people realize that they can be more than they thought they can and they have a support for them to be able to do that and as far as instructors go, to teach them not to be afraid of folks with disabilities but learn how to help them and know there's support there for them in doing that and that's what we do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome stuff and a pretty powerful story. It's one that got me kind of fired up and I can see you there with Eye of the Tiger and that a song that will get me fired up too. flashbacks to Rocky and, something I've never mentioned on the show before, when I used to compete, that was a song that I did a musical form to so there's a special place in my heart for that song so as you're talking about eye of the tiger, I'm moving around. I can't sit still when I'm thinking of that song.

Jason Davis:

That's awesome, man, that's awesome.

Jeremy Lesniak:

If people want to find out more about what you're doing, your organization and maybe they're interested in helping and actually, before we get there, let's ask 2 questions. If someone is an adaptive hopeful martial artist, what can you do for them? You talked a little bit about that and I think the part



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

that we didn't really talk about was if someone is a martial arts instructor or school owner and they want to make sure they're doing what they can to be supportive of adaptive martial artist, what can your organization do for both groups of people there?

Jason Davis:

For the adaptive martial artist student, they can come to us, visit our website, adaptivemartialarts.org. There's a form there that you fill out, little bit of background on yourselves and your disability and then we begin a search in your area for a school that maybe listed on our free national directory of schools that are going to interview those with disabilities and if we don't have a school listed on that directory, then we will hand search out of school in their area until we find one and get back in touch with them, help them set up an initial interview with the instructor, let the instructor know that they're coming, find out if the instructor would be ok with it and then hopefully we get them training and we provide support for both student and instructor to continue training and have the same success that I've seen.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Cool, awesome.

Jason Davis:

Looks like I stepped on you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, I'm just chiming in to say that's great. I think a lot of organizations would stop at the point of sorry, we don't have anyone but you talking about you're going to go out and you're going to dig and find someone, that's powerful and I think that that as a function of the organization is a testament to you. that's you in a nutshell, isn't it? We're not going to say no. We're going to find a way.

Jason Davis:

And those searches, actually, believe it or not, as much as the organization, pardon me again, and those searches, believe it or not, as much as the organization has grown and folks within the organization want me and my wife let that aspect of things going to let that aspect of things go, we actually do those hand searches ourselves. My wife researches the schools and she's not much of a talker as I am so I do the calling and all of that but we still keep our hands in that and we're very close to that part of the organization. It's important to me because I'll try to change somebody's mind on the phone like oh, you don't train someone with disability? That's ok so I told you that we have free support and things like that to help you train them, would you change your mind? And I'll just keep going until they finally say yeah, you've made me feel comfortable enough to be able to at least take a look at this. I don't pressure but I just want people to just take a look because how do you know if you don't try?

Jeremy Lesniak:



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Exactly.

Jason Davis:

On the instructor end to this, what we provide for the instructor is we have a board of physical and occupational therapist along with martial arts instructors that have worked with individuals with disabilities for a number of years who will help you either create or modify an adaptive martial arts program. We answer questions through the wonders of technology, we can do a video call with them and help them figure it out so they too experience the owner that is adaptive martial arts because I've been on both sides of it, Jeremy, from the student aspect to the training others with disabilities and both sides for me has been very rewarding and so I want to be able to give that to somebody else.

Jeremy Lesniak:

OK, great and how about social media? Is there anything like that people can follow?

Jason Davis:

Look us up on Facebook, adaptive martial arts association, you'll find us there. They can call me, 802-747-8184 and look forward to hearing from you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome. Well, I really appreciate your time today and you're openness with telling your story. One more thing...

Jason Davis:

I appreciate...go ahead.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I was going to send you out the way that we always do or rather ask you to send us out and that is give us some parting words. If you were to wrap up the episode right here right now, what would you want people to remember?

Jason Davis:

That anything is possible with the proper mindset and with the moniker no can't, no quit, no excuses.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What a great conversation. I love talking to people who are passionate about the things in their lives and I especially love when that passion is martial arts and it extends beyond their training. We talked recently about a martial arts lifestyle and what that means and Mr. Davis is unquestionably living a martial arts lifestyle and trying to spread that to others and he has my full support. His organization has



Episode 466 – Mr. Jason Davis | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

our full support and I hope you will consider supporting it, whatever that means to you. we've got another episode coming, this is the first time ever we have foreshadowed an episode because we already recorded it. The next episode 467 will be with 2 people involved in the adaptive martial arts association talking about things from the martial arts side and from the occupational therapy side. They were fascinating conversations and I know you will get a lot out of them and that's why we're releasing both of those episodes in the same week so check out episode 467 once it comes out or if you're listening to this later, it's probably already out. Thank you, Mr. Davis, for coming on. For sharing this people around you with our community and for everything that you're doing. It's great stuff. Please don't stop. If you want to check out more about this show, the upcoming show, all of the shows, go to histlekickmartialartsradio.com. Find the show notes pages, find the links, find the social media, find everything and learn more about today's guest and everything that's going on. If you want to know more about what's going on with us, whistlekick.com is the place to go. You'll find links to martial journal and our store and our blog and our social media and if you want to support us, I hope that you do. There are a few ways to do it. You can make a purchase. Use the code PODCAST15. You can share this episode or another episode or anything that we do. You can follow us on social media, @whistlekick all over the place and you can leave us a review on Facebook, on Google, on Amazon, anywhere that makes sense. Go and do that and there's one final way you can support us: Patreon, patreon.com/whistlekick and we've got original content for those of you who are willing to step up and support us so thank you for those of you throwing a couple bucks a month at us. Means a lot, means a lot to me personally. If you've got a suggestion for an upcoming guest or a topic, reach out. You can email us, you can fill out the form on the website. Lots of ways you can do that. My email address, jeremy@whistlekick.com. Thank you to everyone who supports and reaches out, sends me your thoughts and tells me your stories because that means the world. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!