



Episode 110 — Mr. Simon Scher | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone, it's episode 110 of whistlekick martial arts radio. The only place to hear the best stories from the best martial artists like today's guest, Mr. Simon Scher. At whistlekick, we make the world's best sparring gear and here on martial arts radio, we bring you the best martial arts podcast. I'd like to personally welcome you. I'm Jeremy Lesniak and I'm whistlekick's founder but I'm also very fortunate to be your host for martial arts radio. Thank you to the returning listeners and hello and welcome to those of you listening for the first time. If you're new to the show or you're just not familiar with what we make, check out our sparring helmets. Comfortable, durable, tons of ventilation and much softer and flexible than our competition but they're just as protective and, in some cases, more so. You can find our sparring gear which is the heart of what we offer at whistlekick.com or on Amazon. If you want the show notes including links and photos, you can find those at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. If you're not on the newsletter list, sign up now. We send out exclusive content and it's the only place to find out about upcoming guests for the show. Sometimes, we mail out a coupon. Just today, we add in an exclusive download for anyone who joins the newsletter list. A brand new podcast episode you'll never see in your feed because it's only for email subscribers. Our top 10 tips for martial artists, full of fresh content you've never heard on this show before. Sign up for the newsletter list at whistlekick.com or whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We have a new review today. This one's coming from iTunes and it's a 5-star review from Toblakai23. It's titled good pod for any practitioner and it says, I study bagwa and although there is not too much the Chinese rats, I still enjoy this podcast very much. I do have one critique though, Jeremy, try not to leave too much dead air between questions and answers. Keep up the good work! Thank you so much for that review. Thank you for your support and the 5 stars and you're right. There often is some dead air in between but guess what, there's a reason that we do that. Personally, I don't like when shows edit a lot. I think it's hard to get a sense for the flow and yeah, if we have longtime silence, 10 seconds, 30 seconds, we absolutely will cut that out because we don't want you to listen to dead air but we found, early on, that the more we edited, the less the show flowed and so we'd rather be completely authentic and transparent as much as we can the way that came out. As to the Chinese practitioners, we've been trying to get more on. We've been trying to stay with some diversity but honestly, a lot of our shows, guests come from past guests and people seem to be, I don't want to say insular, but taekwondo people tend to know taekwondo people and so, if you, Toblakai or anybody else out there has a great suggestion for a Chinese practitioner that we can add to the list that we've had on, please let us know. We are not exclusive. I love when we get guest suggestions from the audience so when one of our listeners suggested Mr. Simon Scher as a guest, it really didn't take long for us to realize that we've been missing out for not inviting this impressive man on the show earlier. Once I saw he was only a few hours away from HQ, we met up and I brought him to a Superfoot seminar and we've since collaborated on a project that seems on the final stages. You'll be able to find links to it once it's done over at the show notes and honestly, by the time this episode airs, it's hopefully going to be done. Mr. Scher is well-known for his prolific social media including photos and videos of him kicking everything in sight. He's a kind and thoughtful man with a great sense of humor and I really enjoyed



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getting to know him. Enjoy this episode and when you're done, check out some of his videos. Let's welcome him to the show. Mr. Scher, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Simon Scher:

Thanks for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely, thank you for being here. This is a lot of fun and you're a little bit closer geographically to me than a lot of the guests that we've had. I've had people from all over the world and, certainly all over the country, but you're about 2 and a half hours away so we almost could have done it in person.

Simon Scher:

Lucky me! I'll drive up tomorrow or we'll fight or something.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, hey! That will be good times. In what other pursuit is that a complement? I will come fight you tomorrow. I mean, anywhere else, if you said that to someone, will quit it.

Simon Scher:

Come up, lets fight!

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, right. We are a strange lot, we martial artists.

Simon Scher:

It takes a special kind.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does, it does and at least a little bit of crazy, I think.

Simon Scher:

Something I've always enjoyed embracing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good! So, that could be a wonderful start into our first question about how you got into this crazy space. How did you get started in the martial arts?

Simon Scher:



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Not as crazy as one would hope. I wasn't challenged by bullies to turn them in or anything like that or order them to stop being bullied. No old Japanese man found me in a plank shed, I'm referring to Karate Kid.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely, I get it and if any of the listeners don't, there's your homework.

Simon Scher:

But no, when I was about 6 years old, a friend of mine from school was training with this instructor in Tampa, Florida and he was very good and the mother couldn't stop raving to my mother about how great he was with kids, how great it was for kids, for development and all that so my mom took me in and I did my first class when I was about 6 years old in his first school and I didn't leave until I had to go to college.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, when you started, obviously, it wasn't a lot of your own impulse to go.

Simon Scher:

Yeah, my parents made me go for a while and looking back, I'm ever so grateful.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, so of course, at some point it transitioned. It went from you being pushed to you wanting to go because you still do it. When was that? While you were still a kid?

Simon Scher:

I was about 9 or 10 years old. I always wanted to be a superhero. I had a drawer full of gadgets that I collected. I saw the movie 3 Ninjas around that time and I would make my own nunchucks out of bamboo in my backyard and collect those little packets that say you're not supposed to eat them, silica gel in case I need to go on a secret ninja mission and martial arts definitely plays into the whole adolescent superhero kind of fantasy thing, spy whatever and I was definitely big on that. I guess, I was a huge nerd. I still pretty much am. It's a good thing, though, but I started taking martial arts and it kind of tied all into that and I got really into it both for that and for its own sake. When I hit blue belt, I got something called Blue belt Blues and I took a couple of months off and it kind of helped me realize how much I wanted to do it, how much I wanted to be there so I went back and it came to a choice between Boy Scouts and martial arts and I was a first class boy scout just getting ready for eagle so I had the choice of giving all my time to taekwondo or really putting in the focus and energy for Eagle Scout. The choice is obvious. I stopped going to Boy Scouts and went taekwondo full time. I would start training at 5 in the morning. My instructor would pick me up before the sun came out. Me and his daughter would go



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to his school and train for a couple of hours and then he'll bring me home. My mom would have breakfast and I'll go to school and after school, I'd go to taekwondo and train and I was getting towards black belt so my instructor let me help teach so I'd help teach 3 or 4 classes then I'd take a class and I'd go home and go to sleep and fortunately, I didn't have much homework so it all worked out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's fantastic. It's interesting that you bring up the conflict with Boy Scouts and becoming an Eagle Scout because I've seen that decision go both ways.

Simon Scher:

It has. Soccer too. Soccer is the worst, for a martial arts instructor.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, because soccer just kind of pops up out of nowhere and these days it's summer league and spring league and fall league and indoor winter league if you're up in the North East.

Simon Scher:

I've lost numerous students to soccer. It's frustrating. Great sport but, like I said, I used to work for the Red Bulls but I definitely choose martial arts. Way better.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure, of course. It is way better and all the benefits and we won't get into an anti-soccer rant.

Simon Scher:

Nah, soccer's great.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Because it is great.

Simon Scher:

It's got kicking too so...

Jeremy Lesniak:

We can take them if we have to.

Simon Scher:

Totally.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

So, we love stories here on martial arts radio and that's kind of how we talk about the martial arts. We put everything into the box of a story and serve it up to everybody because stories are fun and martial arts stories are even more fun.

Simon Scher:

Martial arts lends itself to parables. Parabolic martial arts, they're very parabolic thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure, without a doubt and I'm just going to guess that you got a whole bunch of stories as long as you've been training and as passionate as you've been about your training but I'm hoping you might pick out one or if it's shorter, maybe a couple and share them with us now.

Simon Scher:

I'm often asked about whether I've been in fights outside of martial arts. That's quite the question my students commonly ask and I'd have to say only one because I'm really nice and friendly and because of martial arts, I'm not confrontational. I don't have a reason to be a punk so you're nice to people even if they're rude to you, they tend to not want to fight you but when I was in middle school, this guy was being a real meaniehead and he pushed me so I slapped me in the face and we both got in trouble and we had to sweep the whole basketball court.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's the fallout from that?

Simon Scher:

The fallout from that was I didn't talk to that guy much again and after middle school, I never saw him again. I guess that wasn't a great story but I find the more skilled you are at martial arts, the less likely you are to get into a fight if you really kind of embody the moral and physical principles of the art and I guess that's the point of that story.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, I think I would agree with that. I think that fighting often comes from both sides needing to prove something. Obviously, there are plenty of exceptions like if you're backed into a corner and someone's punching you in the face. That's either going to turn into a fight or you're going to fall down. There's not really a lot of choice there. It's kind of hard to talk your way out of or you're going to run away from things at that point.

Simon Scher:



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Exactly. I guess some of the best stories might be my biggest injury in martial arts. Let's start with that one. When I was getting my black belt, I had an instructor who was 3rd degree named Cook Stapleton. Very talented martial artist, jumped over cars, he was amazing. He was a 3rd degree and I was a recommended black belt and we were sparring and I was being cool and doing that thing where you kind of leave your lean hand relaxed so you look kind of like a punk boxer or whatever. Your thumb and pinky finger sticking out, Muhammad Ali-style and he did a jump round kick and a good martial artist, I stuck my hand to block it but he was so high that, instead of blocking my forearm, he hit my pinky finger and it snapped sideways and it was pretty agonizing but the best part of that in the story is I went to the emergency room and the doctor was so tired that he didn't set it. He just put a splint on it sideways sticking out of my hand and the next day, I had to go to a real doctor and they took it off and they were appalled. They had to re-set it and put it in there and ever since then, I keep my fist closed, generally, when I'm fighting unless I'm parodying purposefully.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I had a similar incident. Not with my pinky finger but the next one in, my ring finger and not quite sure what I was doing with my hand wrong, I just finished up a sparring match in class and my finger was broken and the doctor at the local hospital chose to just splint it rather than just set it and unfortunately, it went too long and my finger is just a little crooked. No one would notice it unless I showed it.

Simon Scher:

Adds to some character.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, hey, I mean, we are human being, human beings are flawed. My crooked finger just makes me a little bit more human.

Simon Scher:

Exactly. Other than that, my biggest injury, I think, I always stub my toe and I jam it on those annoying puzzle mats. I'm not a fan of those. When I opened my school, I put down the nicer tatami style-looking ones.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I have caught my toes on many a thing as well.

Simon Scher:

Good times.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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We've got a little bit of context of who you are and your sense of humor and kind of the things that maybe you enjoy about martial arts but let's imagine that your friend's mom never really talked to your mom that hey, let's get him into martial arts and you never started training, you never found training. Maybe you were a soccer guy exclusively, soccer was your big thing. How do you think your life would be different now?

Simon Scher:

That is hard to imagine. Martial arts has been, literally every day from age 11 onwards, nonstop. It's hard to imagine anything else being that focus, that center. When I was younger I was diagnosed with ADD and ADHD and dyslexia so the martial arts helped so much getting that under control and giving me the tools to deal with it. I feel like I would have done much more poorly in my education. I went through school and everything. I was happy and confident. I feel like, because the martial arts, I feel like I wouldn't be nearly confident as I am so probably a lot shyer, a lot more hesitant to speak out. I'd be a lot chubbier because I feel like my pursuits may be geared more towards boy scout stuff and I might have stuck with that so I'd be really good at building wooden cars and running them down ramps and making fires without the help of matches but I think like a belly, a bigger belly. I'd be shy. I'd probably be a gamer. I would be way more into videogames and card games. I'd probably be really into magic more. I mean, I've played it but I feel like I'd be even more into it. I'd be like one of those really into gaming guys.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Magic, the gathering, the card games, you mean.

Simon Scher:

Yes, I'll probably be also doing card tricks too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We're getting a completely different persona out of you.

Simon Scher:

I feel like it could shape me, yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Do you ever miss becoming an Eagle Scout? Do you regret that?

Simon Scher:

Only when I'm writing resumés. At first glance, it doesn't sound bad. At first glance, it's like it's posh. It's not that bad. I can actually make fires without matches. I'm not good at it. When I was on my



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honeymoon and we were in Ecuador, I learned from the native tribe how to make it. that's a good story. I was in Ecuador, we stayed with this tribe called the Waorani. They met the first white person 50 years ago and they speared him to death and then, 50 years later, the tribes splits off and the ones that want to stab white people go away and the group that kind of wants to mingle more with "civilization" started and eco lodge so my wife and I stayed there for our honeymoon and they took us to all their native things. We met with the warriors of the tribe, there's this old woman who had been speared when she was a kid because they were really into spearing each other for every reason imaginable and she cured herself by eating river mud and all the men in the tribe were all these big warriors. They would go and they would train with spears and fight each other and so, we went to stay there. I got to learn some of their spear fighting styles and they showed some of their moves and in exchange, I showed them some taekwondo. I did a little class for all the kids and adult in the class. It was a really neat experience.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's incredible. That's unlike anything else we've had here on this show.

Simon Scher:

I have a picture that I can send you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That would be fantastic! We'll get that in the show notes. For anyone that's new, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, we'll get that photo up. Do you still practice any of those spear techniques?

Simon Scher:

A few, yeah. It was very similar to bō staff. There are 2-handed blocks, not a lot of swinging but there was stabbing and blocking and it was pretty cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice, I suppose there are only so many ways that you can swing a stick.

Simon Scher:

I actually purchased a mini spear from there and they actually trained us on how to use their traditional blow guns. One of the main food source of protein that they had in the tribe is monkeys and they hunt them with these 5-foot long blow guns made out of iron palm so I bought one of those, I traded for it, from their chief weapon maker in the tribe and I brought it back with me with a bunch of darts and some frog blood poison. It was cool.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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That's pretty hardcore. So, imagine, let's come back. Let me say that a different way. Let's stop imagining. Let's come back to reality. We're back and the beauty is you have been training all this time. You're no longer a soccer player exclusively. I'd like you to think back over your life and think about a time that maybe was a little challenging, a little bit rough and tell us how your martial arts training or experience or whatever you want to call it help you move through that time.

Simon Scher:

When I was about 16 or 17, I did Outward Bound and we hiked for a month in the Colorado Rockies and I realized, at the top of the 1st ridge where we're going to do an ascent to the peak of this mountain, that I was a little bit afraid of heights and I feel like because of the self-control and perseverance that I developed in martial arts, I was able to kind of suck it up and walk on a teetering ledge up to this narrow stone thing looking down to nothing but clouds miles below and, though I was terrified and I was peeing my pants, I did it. the 2nd peak, I chose not to go up but I did the 1st one and I did overcome that and so, because of that, I was able to live with myself and feel more confident. I definitely got into my martial arts training and the mindset that I got from that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How narrow are we talking here?

Simon Scher:

We're talking about literally a foot and a half in width.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, you're turned sideways.

Simon Scher:

No, I was scooching up on my butt. I wasn't that brave. A few people were walking but not me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow and with nothing below, no safety equipment, not even vision of the ground.

Simon Scher:

I mean, we were roped to each other but I feel if I fell everyone would just come with me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I always wondered about that.

Simon Scher:



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No one was like pitted in there. Nothing was like sticking to the rocks.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's intense.

Simon Scher:

That's some scary stuff. That was a challenging trip especially after I figured out I was a little bit nervous about heights but I feel like if I'm not up 16,000 feet or whatever, I'm okay with building and ledges are not a big deal but yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Fair enough. Alright, so let's bring it back to the ground.

Simon Scher:

I actually have a good kick picture from that trip as well. I was on top of the mountain with my full gear on doing a kick.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Definitely want to see that.

Simon Scher:

I'll send it over.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I have a feeling we may have a whole album of photos on the show notes which is totally fine.

Simon Scher:

They check out my Instagram page, I got it all on there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We'll definitely link to that and all the other stuff that we'll make sure people find you in cyber space and social media.

Simon Scher:

Apart from this.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I'm sure you've had a lot of influential people in your life and you've had already talked about a couple of them. Who would you say has been the most influential person in your martial arts career?

Simon Scher:

My martial arts career, I'll definitely say my first instructor, the guy that got me into this. His name is Garry Dyals, one of the most talented and amazing martial artist I've ever met to this day and I've met a lot of amazing martial artists and I feel like nobody would really know it like he does because he won't just tell you what the technique is and have you do it. He'll point out why it works, how it works and he's always open to debate and discussion about it and he always has the answer so I would definitely say Garry Dyals was my most influential person but like I said, I've met a lot of really great martial artists that have really taught me a lot. I've spent a little over a couple of years training with, I still do actually, Grandmaster Park Jong Soo, one of the pioneers of taekwondo and I've learnt so much from him. He's just so amazing. I go up there and train with him every now and then and I train with Grandmaster Park Jung Tae. He actually taught me how to do kind of the sign wave method of power development for the first time when I was, it was in 2003, it was. I'm sorry, it was 1999. It was 1999. That was an amazing experience. It was actually his last seminar before he died of hepatitis. He was very sick during the seminar and it was the same seminar where Grandmaster Scott McNeely got his 9th Dan. It was so cool. It was a 3-day seminar in Little Rock, Arkansas and I actually met my instructor's mother and she fed us chocolate gravy for breakfast. There's sausages, bacon and buttery rolls covered in chocolate gravy. That was quite an experience.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That sounds interesting.

Simon Scher:

but Grandmaster Park Jong Tae, Grandmaster Scott McNeely, Grandmaster Brad Whitlow was there and I've learned so much from those gentlemen, Grandmaster Whitlow taught me how to use kali sticks for the 1st time. Some outflow drills, amazing stepping drills that I use to this day and studied with Grandmaster Suk Jun Kim in Manhattan and that man is scary hardcore. I once saw him kick a heavy bag and it literally folded in half and clapped. I've been looking for clips of something like that on YouTube and I haven't been able to find it. Kicking the bag so hard and it literally folds in half and claps.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, you've spent some time with some real old school original taekwondo Koreans, more than just one or two. It sounds pretty impressive.

Simon Scher:

It's really interesting, exciting stuff.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and the things that they, I don't necessarily want to say overcame but just from that time period.

Simon Scher:

That's an amazing story. Those guys will show you some amazing martial arts and teach you some really cool stuff and then there's stories that they can tell you about the history of the martial art like it's origin, it's developments. It's mind-blowing. They were there when the Korean military was first founded. They were there during these wars, during these crazy hardships. True stories about growing up without electricity in the middle of nowhere, working every day in the rice paddy and going off, being draft in the military and being sent to Japan and just crazy stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm not quite sure of the order the things are going to come out, the episode will likely come out the week before yours airs so we're talking about this in one point in time and it's going to come out in the future, obviously. I don't know if you've read *The Killing Art*.

Simon Scher:

Alex Gillis.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Alex Gillis, had the chance to talk to Mr. Gillis yesterday.

Simon Scher:

Awesome! I was actually about to mention that book. He collected a lot of these amazing stories.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He did and reading that book, I think he was probably the 1st person where I read the book and then, we reached out to him versus the other way where we had people that we talk to and they've written a book and out of respect to them, I do my best to read all the books in entirety which is a challenge, as you might imagine.

Simon Scher:

So, I assumed you've never interviewed Stephen K. Hayes?

Jeremy Lesniak:

No.

Simon Scher:



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The ninja guy who's got like 50 books on ninjutsu.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's got a lot of books, although, just from that world, just a couple days ago, talked to Ashida Kim, if you know the ninjutsu world at all so he's another prominent figure in that realm but hopefully we'll get Stephen Hayes on at some point. I want to talk to everybody. Let's talk about competition. I know you're quite the kicker so I'm going to...

Simon Scher:

Really?

Jeremy Lesniak:

I've seen the photos. I've seen proof! You're an amazing kicker.

Simon Scher:

I do rock that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good. I think you should own that. I think there is a not-so fine line between confidence and ego and you certainly haven't jumped over yet. At least, not in the context of this show.

Simon Scher:

Don't talk to my wife.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Ok, I won't.

Simon Scher:

You can if you want to anyway, yeah. Competition.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Is it a big part of...

Simon Scher:

It's been a part, yeah. I try and keep a perspective. Some people train for the competition and they spend years doing flashy forms or doing things that judges are going to like as opposed to things that are necessarily, not mutually exclusively, but necessarily martial art viable, like combat viable? So, I'd say I do tournaments and I enjoy competitions and let's say they take up about 10 to 15% of my kind of



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whole martial arts outlook. I think they're a great way to test yourself, to put yourself out there, to challenge your confidence, to get those nerves pumping and do your martial arts despite being nervous, being tense, get someone you've never met in a competition setting. It's a very important tool for conditioning and preparing for your martial arts and your nerves and yourself and your mind. I've been competing since I was yellow belt. My instructor, we used to do family tournaments like a group of schools in the area where I lived in Florida and I have a huge stack of medals from those and eventually, I got into the AAU then I did a bunch of local tournaments with the AAU and did pretty well so then, I went to Regionals and placed 1st there and the Nationals then went to AAU junior Olympics, I got gold and bronze there or something like that. It's been a while. It's hanging on my wall somewhere and ever since I opened my school, I've had to take students to tournaments to kind of give them that experience that I had. My instructor always said, if you're going to go to a tournament, no matter how ready you are, compete! You're there. It's part of your training. Always be ready and even if you haven't been training for a tournament, do it anyway. That's part of your training. whenever I go to a tournament, even if I haven't had time to really prepare for it, I always compete, both for myself and to show my students that mindset. You're always ready no matter how prepared you are and yeah, I've done Mr. B's taekwondo in New Hampshire, White Tiger in Connecticut, I think it is. I go up to Master Torino in upstate New York. Grandmaster Park has been having tournaments every year, the General Choi Cup, I compete in that a lot and I went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and competed in Master Zang's tournament up there. I always tend to place usually 1st in patterns unless there's a huge lineup and I go first and there's 50 people after me and the judges forget who I am but I used to do really well in patterns. Sparring, I usually do pretty well as well. Point and continuous, usually between...I usually place. That's my competition history.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Are you more of a patterns guy? You prefer that side of you?

Simon Scher:

Not necessarily. I'm really good at patterns, especially kicks. I do killer moves, I do chase pretty sharp. I've actually done over 10 years now of ballet. Yeah, I started that in high school and it's really complemented with my martial arts but I actually enjoy the science to the fighting. It's just in competitions, the way, my system, I invented a blocking system. I don't know if invented's the right word but I've codified a blocking system. I call it micro-blocking. I have a tutorial on it on my YouTube channel. Basically, the principle is you move as little as possible to block anything and you make your target area as small as possible so you stand sideways and you keep your blocking on vertical and you use an in out or down motion to block and I very seldom get hit with that system and then you sacrifice a little bit of that defensiveness to counterattack or attack but with mid-leg kicks, you don't need to especially if you keep your hands up when you strike so in tournaments, when you use micro-blocking, even if you block it, not all the judges see that so, I tell my students tournaments aren't fair and you can't take scoring and judging seriously and you can't complain about it because it is what it is so you go



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and you can say you didn't get hit as much as you want but that wouldn't change anything. You just need to take tournaments for what they are and maintain your martial integrity.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think that's a great point and I think a lot of people will avoid tournaments for the sole reason that they aren't fair, right? I think everybody that's competed more than once recognizes that tournaments are almost, exclusively, subjective.

Simon Scher:

I mean, it's the multiple observer phenomenon. You have 4 people looking at you and everyone sees something different. It's funny when you do point sparring and they say judges' score, it's rare to have all the judges scoring the same technique. You may get 3 points, 3 people saying you get 1 point, 1 person saying you get 2 points and those 3 people probably all saw different strikes to different body parts so it's not fair but it's a useful tool in training and that's why I do it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And I think there's some parallel there for life. Life isn't fair but there's a lot of lesson in there and if you're willing to, I think, redefine what success is. When I attend an event, a lot of times, whistlekick will be set up at an event. There's a booth and I'm there and in between sales and talking to people, I try to mingle and mingle with people and say hello. A lot of times I talk to children and I ask them 2 questions. Did you have fun?

Simon Scher:

Important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And what did you learn?

Simon Scher:

Very important.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Because to me, that's what the success of competition is. Did you learn something and did you enjoy the process and if those 2 things are true, I think for most people, how they place can become secondary.

Simon Scher:

Absolutely! Sportsmanship, courtesy, perseverance, self-control; those are huge things that are tested in tournaments. I was in a tournament and I'm fighting this guy named Benny and he was a good fighter. A



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little sloppy but hit really hard and was very determined but his mom was so annoying. She was standing at the edge of the ring and she was shouting...Benny! Kick him in the head, Benny! She was screaming in this annoying accent for Benny to knock this guy's head off and I feel that that's the kind of thing that is wrong with tournaments. That kind of sportsmanship, that kind of focus on martial arts tournaments being like soccer, soccer moms, whatever.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Right, I see that happen once in a while but I think the beauty of that is not the majority. I don't know if I would say that it's rare but it's not the majority and I see a lot of resistance from tournament promoters and the higher ranking officials keeping that at bay, pulling parents aside and saying stop it or you're outta here.

Simon Scher:

I've actually considered hosting a tournament and I try to keep an eye on that kind of stuff and it is often dealt with very well and it's happening less and less at the tournaments that I go to but again, I try to avoid tournaments where that kind of stuff isn't frowned upon.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You've mentioned some pretty great people who you've had an opportunity to train with but if you could add someone to that list, someone that you haven't trained with, whether they're alive or not, who would you want to work out with?

Simon Scher:

That is a good question. I would have to say 3 people, I think, would really be on my list. I would love to kick with Master Wallace, Bill "Superfoot" Wallace. He's just an amazing martial artist and I'm a hefty kicker so I would love to meet a kicker of his prodigiousness. I feel like Chuck Norris is an amazing strategist. I would love to just kind of pick his brains and learn from him about sparring strategy and tactic. He's an amazing martial artist and, of course, Bruce Lee. Just the way that he analyzes and looks at all martial arts as a single entity is just inspiring.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great answers, of course. People that we've had on the show, quite a few times, for anyone that may not have been with us for a while or doesn't check back; we've had Bill Wallace on episode 14. We'll link to that in the show notes as well and he is pretty active on the seminar circuit. As we record this, he is in Las Vegas for the Martial Arts Industry Association Super Show.

Simon Scher:



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I've been meaning to go to one of those and it's high on my to-do list. 3 kids and a school leave little time but there's enough, I'll make it happen. Oh, to add to that list, some really, really longtime dead guys, I would love to, if I spoke Chinese, meet Sun Tzu. If I spoke medieval Japanese, I would love to meet Miyamoto Musashi. Again, some amazing strategists.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, absolutely phenomenal people and if you think about how long their books have been viable. We write a book now and it falls out of favor in 6 months or a year or even 10 years. 20 years would be incredible but their books have been around for hundreds and thousands of years.

Simon Scher:

I actually did my senior thesis in college on Sun Tzu's The Art of War and I did a project where I did a line by line analysis where I...sorry, my computer just stopped...for my senior thesis in college, I did a line by line analysis of Sun Tzu's the Art of War converting kind of what he said about broader military tactics specifically to martial arts strategy and fighting tactics and I boiled that down and I made that kind of the core of the book I published that, looking back on it, I kind of cringe. It's still out there. It's called The Martial Arts Manual. There's one chapter, the core of the book, based on my study of Sun Tzu's the Art of War. I still actually look at that before I go to competitions, before I fight to kind of refresh myself on sparring. It's basically what Sun Tzu said but how it applies to martial artists. It's one of the most helpful things I've ever done for myself in, really, kind of studying the science of fighting.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting. Yeah, I think we all reach a certain point in our training where there's a need to start exploring, to start adding pieces in that you're using your brain power to cultivate rather than what someone is giving to you.

Simon Scher:

I feel that that's the difference between a beginner and an advanced martial artist. A beginner is saying this is what my instructor said. The advanced martial artist says this is what works. This is how this works for me and I've tried it and this is what I've figured out through extensive application.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like that. Very well said.

Simon Scher:

Thank you. I actually wrote an article for Black Belt magazine not long ago, actually it was a couple years ago, about the first paragraph or Sun Tzu's advice on the first chapter of the Art of War. He suggests that a martial artist know 5 things about his enemy or a military general. He has to know the way, the



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weather, the terrain, the leadership and discipline and I changed that for martial arts. The way, the weather, the technique and discipline and so I did an article kind of talking about how important knowing those things about yourself and your opponent are to being victorious in engagement.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Interesting! Is that article live online? Will we be able to link to that?

Simon Scher:

That is a good question. I will find it and send it to you. I know I put a picture of the article up there but I think it's April 2011, Black Belt Magazine and my sidekick article that I wrote for Black Belt Magazine also was just republished by Taekwondo life magazine.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's get links to all your good stuff. It sounds like you've spent a lot of time really thinking about martial arts and translating what you've processed out into words and into videos and it's something not a lot of people have done and I'm sure that there are quite a few people listening that would enjoy digesting what you've put out there and if they wouldn't, I would. Love you guys out there but it doesn't really matter about you right now, I want to read these stuff. I want to see these.

Simon Scher:

I will send it over. That's kind of what inspired me to put together my YouTube channel. A couple years ago, students are going on vacation and stuff and they want to practice while they were away and I wasn't there to teach them and I suggest they visit schools when they travel but you don't always have time to do that but you might have 5 or 10 minutes to review a video on how the kick is done and yeah, talked to other martial artists who wanted to, talked to me about how I got my kicks to look the way they do and what drills I used so I made a video on how to do a side kick and was picked up by Black Belt magazine's Facebook page and it was very popular. It's got like 46,000 hits or something or views and it kind of inspired me and I kind of took off with it and I made videos for front kick, round kick, side kick, hook kick, back kick, twist kick, crescent kick and then I started getting into more technical stuff. I made 5 videos on sparring strategy and sparring application. Like I said, I made one about micro blocking, talking about ideal blocking system and the reason I made another video to kind of complement that one of footwork. Stepping and how to move your feet to gain dominant position. I made video on the best time to attack during a fight. I made one on how to look at your opponent. Do you look at the eyes, look at the belly button, do you look over the opponent's head? I introduced a concept called gazing where you look at your whole opponent at once. Consciously unfocusing your eyes so it's a big project of mine. I'm still working on it. I'm actually about to publish another one right now. I just finished editing it last night. It's a video on, it's similar to Kung Fu [00:44:19] drill where you engage and you flow up and



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around an opponent's attack and you counter attack and they flow up and around yours. I call it [00:44:27] punch but yeah, that's going to be coming out soon.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We'll get links to a bunch of stuff so people can check out the show notes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com.

Simon Scher:

Thanks.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Let's talk about movies. You a martial arts movie guy?

Simon Scher:

I am a martial arts movie guy. I actually keep a library of martial arts movie at my school that students can rent/borrow.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now, you mentioned 3 Ninjas earlier.

Simon Scher:

I love that movie.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A highly-decorated, much beloved library of...it's a fun movie, though?

Simon Scher:

It's a fun movie. Right up there with Surf Ninjas and Beverly Hills Ninja. Thoroughly good fun watches that do serve to inspire the martial artist to take the training to new heights especially the 2nd and 3rd 3 Ninjas movies where Hulk Hogan and that woman with the long fingernails, [00:45:25] that's where it's at right there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Absolutely. We're both kind of making light a little bit but I think it's kind of a good opportunity to remember that there are different martial arts. There are different people doing martial arts for different reasons.

Simon Scher:



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There are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so, to have popular culture that looks at those things differently, I think it's really important.

Simon Scher:

I agree wholeheartedly. I think martial arts comedies are great. Jackie Chan's a serious martial artist and his martial arts are great and a lot of his movies are comedic or funny and they're slapstick as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sometimes, yeah.

Simon Scher:

A lot of times, yeah. They're still great movies, there's still great martial arts and comedy is great. I think martial arts and comedy should go together more often. There'd be a lot fewer ego jerks in the world because everyone can take martial arts with a grain of salt and laugh at themselves like, what's that, Ameridote.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Enter the Dojo, Master Ken.

Simon Scher:

Exactly or Kung Fu Pao, Enter the Fist but as far as kind of straightforward, more serious martial arts movies go, I'd say some of my top picks are Van Damme movies. I loved Bloodsport and Kickbox. Those are just awesome and most of his movies kind of follow the same plotline as those 2 except for Time Cop, I guess. Love interest, revenge, tournament or training with old master; it's a plot of a lot of martial arts movies and it's just great. It works every time. I got to say, I love Only the Strong. That's inspirational.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's a movie that a lot of people haven't seen.

Simon Scher:

It's underrated. It's kind of like, what's the movie of a guy that goes to interstate school and teaches math so all the troubled kids can go to college? South Park referenced to it not too long ago, a couple years ago. It's like the martial arts version of that. He goes in there, takes these trouble inner-city school kids, gives them something to be proud of within themselves, Capoeira, and then they overcome their drug dealer brother who's not the only Capoeira Master in this part of the hood. I love it!



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Jeremy Lesniak:

It was kind of the American introduction to Capoeira. I remember the first time I saw that movie and said I want to do that!

Simon Scher:

Seriously! I started doing the ginga, birenbaum

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah! Capoeira is fun. I've been lucky enough to train for a couple years and had a lot of fun doing it.

Simon Scher:

I actually went to Hampshire College and the cool thing about that is you get to create your own major so for my 2nd year, I focused on Japanese language, culture and history and then, for my final kind of focus, refining of discipline, I studied martial arts and martial arts small law business in America and because of that, for a college credit, I got to take a ton of martial arts class. I took karate, Zen, archery, taichi, aikido...I even took tea ceremony classes and taekwondo and some kendo, some sword fighting style and got some great exposure on a ton of martial arts. Some jiujitsu on my college transcript.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I'm super jealous.

Simon Scher:

It was fun. I loved college. Nice.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How about martial arts movie actors? You mentioned a few but who would you say your favorites are?

Simon Scher:

I'd have to say Van Damme is up there. He's not a great actor but he's fun to watch and you can understand what he says so he works. Chuck Norris is great. I'd have to say, my favorite Chuck Norris movie has to be Side Kicks. The guy from Sea Quest, that was a great movie and he played himself which is just charming so Chuck Norris. Jackie Chan, like I said, he's hilarious. Chris Farley is not really a martial arts actor but I like him. I like the one where he lives down by the river. It's SNL but back to martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're referencing all kinds of stuff. I haven't heard somebody reference Sea Quest and Roy Scheider in a long time.



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Simon Scher:

Yeah, I have problems. Good ones, though.

Jeremy Lesniak:

For sure.

Simon Scher:

So what other martial arts movies? I guess that's a good collection, right?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh yeah, without a doubt. So, let's talk about books. You've mentioned a couple but anybody that's going to go line by line through any portion of Art of War has to be into books. Am I right?

Simon Scher:

I'm a reader, yes. Like I said, the Art Of War, Book Of Five Rings and Machiavelli's The Prince. The ones I have like 4 different copies of different translations that are all very dog-eared that I read a lot and reference quite a bit in my various endeavors but Alex Gillis, like I said, I loved that book. I read that, at least, 2 or 3 times and when people talk about the history of martial arts like what is taekwondo? Where does it come from? I always pull that out and pull out some pictures and I'm like well, here it is! The history and this guy founded it and this is him talking with the north Korean dictator, Kim Jong-Un, here's my teacher and that, that's a great book. Also, Taekwondo And I, General Choi Hong Hi's autobiography. Very enlightening as far as learning about the man behind taekwondo. Read a great biography of Funakoshi a while ago but, I have to say, my favorite kind of martial arts themed book would be the English translation of Musashi by Yoshikawa Eiji and he wrote another book called Taiko. Kind of like the fictional story version, the autobiography of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the 2nd of the 3 unifiers of Japan during the early 1600 unification period. That was an amazing book and it was so entertaining. He writes for the laymen so it's gripping.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You mentioned some books that, not only have we not had mentioned on the show but books I've never even heard of so that's cool. You're adding to my already extensive reading list. We may have to skip a couple weeks of shows so I can catch up. I'm just kidding. Don't worry, I'm not going to do that.

Simon Scher:

I've got one more.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Ok, hit me!

Simon Scher:

Way of the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman.

Jeremy Lesniak:

A book that changed my life.

Simon Scher:

Yes? Oh, good! I'm glad you read that. I figured you had. Me too. That's the reason that I became a vegetarian when I was 13 and it's one of the books that really kept me focused on martial arts. I've read so many times, I've listened to the audiobook in the car all the time. Just the whole Socrates, Dan. I actually met Dan Millman once.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Really? What was he like?

Simon Scher:

Really nice, down to earth guy, a lot shorter than you think. He's a gymnast. I guess you'd expect him to be short but really muscular and really short but really engaging and personable and charismatic. I was down in Florida visiting my parents on a college break and I drove past this small convention center just on the side street like that that you never noticed before and there's a ton of people there and I saw, as I drove by, I saw a sign that said Way of the Peaceful Warrior. I stopped the car, a bunch of people behind me honking, I looked over and it said, speaking today: Dan Millman. It's a seminar so I pulled to the nearest parking lot, ran to the front door, was like 3-quarters of the way through or a quarter of the way through and I go in and the door's partly open and someone out there collecting tickets and I said can I buy tickets right now? I want to come see this! I missed a lunch date that I had with an old friend and I run in and listened to the rest of this talk by Dan Millman. It was just amazing. He did the handstand on the piano on one hand to make a point about mental focus and perseverance and self-discipline and stuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Gets a little bit about martial arts and what seems appropriate for the context of this show but reminds me afterwards, I'll tell you my story about the Way of the Peaceful Warrior and the book and yeah. So, you're active. You're engaged. You're doing this stuff. You're not just kind of floating along, training a couple hours a week. This is, would I be overstepping to say that, martial arts is your life?

Simon Scher:



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Would that be over the line? No. It's my profession, my passion so yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What's keeping you fired up? You've been doing this for a while and you're still really into it. Why?

Simon Scher:

There's still so much to learn and so much that I'm not good at yet. I'm good at a few things. I'm a great kicker. I kick high, I'm flexible. I'm getting better at kind of some of the sparring stuff but there's so much more. I barely scratched the surface on ground fighting. There's a bazillion weapons I have no idea about, just the fact that there's so much out there on this mountain that I'm climbing, so much ground to explore. How is it possible to be bored with that much new information and that much exciting stuff?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome! I hope you continue. I hope you keep going and doing what you're doing and feeding the rest of us some great writing and some great video. I appreciate the effort that you're doing.

Simon Scher:

One of the things that I think has been most complementary to my martial arts is my dance experience, actually. A performing arts high school opened up right after I finished middle school in my town so I was getting ready to go to the regular high school and then I learned about this performing arts high school that opened up and oh, this sounds pretty awesome. All brand new and great facilities, master teachers and all the performing arts from all over the world so you had to audition to get in, kind of like Juilliard type thing so I went and auditioned and I had no background in dance. I shake my booty on the dancefloor every now and then but I used taekwondo. I went in there in my taekwondo pants and a t-shirt and just followed along as they put together ballet barre exercises, Horton modern, Grand Cuttingham, all these dance stuff that I had no exposure to but because of martial arts, I could follow along and my body could translate the idea and what I saw into my own body, into movement and I got in and that was a huge turning point in both my life and my martial arts career because it gave me a whole new perspective looking at martial arts. If you look at martial arts just from the strict application or the way you see other martial artists do it, then you see one thing but when you look at it from an aesthetic point of view, aesthetics and power are very tied into each other and I found looking at martial arts, a front kick, for example, the same way that I look at a [00:56:57] or a round kick in a way that I look at a [00:57:01] the way you apply and move your body into the technique is very different and it can actually generate a lot more power if you look at the aesthetics as well as the mechanics. Kind of like when you're building a really fast airplane. Because of the physics behind it, you have to make it look really cool. It's got to be streamlined, it's sharp and smooth, a lot of points at the front so the aesthetics of a fast airplane are going to be beautiful as well as, by default, workable or vice versa.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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I wonder if there's something inherent in our physiology that recognizes that kind of ties together the effectiveness of quality movement and the beauty of it. I never thought of that until now but you're kind of prompting that in my mind.

Simon Scher:

I think so and I think effectiveness and beauty work both ways. In the beginning of my book, *The Martial Arts Manual*, I talk about kind of the general origin of all martial arts, of fighting in general. Some guy threw a punch and he was like in charge and he was the strongest and then, someone else threw a punch even better and figured out a way to make it harder and more effective and less painful than his own hand so he was in charge and another copied him and so on and so forth until you get the most powerful and the most dynamic and the most effective punch and works for everyone because yes, everyone's body is different but in the gross sense, everyone's body is the same. We have 2 arms, 2 legs, a torso, 2 eyes, a nose, a mouth, nerves in the general same spot so both what is effective is beautiful and what's beautiful is effective and powerful a lot of the time. I mean, there's exceptions but everyone, in general, is made the same.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So, if people want to reach you or learn more about you, of course, we're going to have a bunch of links over on our page but not everyone goes there. If someone wants to get ahold of you or find out more, how can they find you?

Simon Scher:

It's pretty easy if you have the internet. If you got to YouTube, my YouTube channel is [YouTube.com/simonscher](https://www.youtube.com/simonscher). If you type in Simon Scher in Google search, I'll probably be the top 10 or 11 searches. My Instagram is @simonkicks, my twitter is @simonkicker so type in any of those. If you type in Simon Scher or the *Martial Arts Manual* on Google, my book will come up. Northampton Martial Arts is my school and northamptonmartialarts.com is my school website that has links to most of my other stuff on there so yeah and my school phone number will always reach me if anyone's interested in doing some kicking.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice, fantastic! I really appreciate you being here on the show. This has been a lot of fun, a lot of good times so let's go out on a high note. Any parting advice for those listening?

Simon Scher:

In the words of *Galaxy Quest*, another rarely mentioned movie, never give up! Never surrender! I can do better than that.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Can you?

Simon Scher:

I don't know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's pretty good.

Simon Scher:

I can be a little more serious maybe.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Give us a serious one.

Simon Scher:

I'll give you a serious parting advice: remember that martial arts are not a thing of passing interest, a temporal concept. Martial arts are part of who you are, part of the genetic make-up of the human race and to practice martial arts is to truly be the best human that one can be so in the spirit, never give up and always strive to improve and become better than you are.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Thank you for listening to episode 110 of whistlekick martial arts radio and thank you to Mr. Scher. Over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, you can find links to Mr. Scher's social media, links to his book, some of his videos and some photos. If you know someone who would be a great interview for the show, please fill out the form at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com or if you want to shoot us a message with a suggestion for a Thursday show or some other feedback, there's a place to do that too. You can follow us on social media, we're on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram and our username is @whistlekick. If you like the show, be sure you're subscribing or using one of the free apps. They're available for both iOS and Android. For those of you kind enough to leave us a review, remember we randomly check out the different podcast review sites and if we find your review and mention it on the air, be sure to email us for your free pack of whistlekick stuff including a t-shirt and some other great things. Toblukai23, don't forget to reach out to us so we can get you your stuff. Remember the products you can find in whistlekick.com or on Amazon like our helmets? If you're a school owner or a team coach, you should check out wholesale.whistlekick.com for our discounted wholesale program. We'll be back soon but until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!