



Episode 482 — Mr. Mishaël Lopes Cardozo | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 482 with Mr. Mishaël Lopes Cardozo. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, show host and whistlekick founder. Everything we're doing in whistlekick is in support of traditional martial arts no matter where they come from, no matter what they are. If you want to know about everything we have going on, hop over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), that's our digital hub. It's also the easiest way to find our products. Now, the code `PODCAST15`, that's going to save you 15% off everything. Everything for the show is on a different website, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). The show comes out twice a week. The entire purpose behind everything we do is to connect, educate and entertain traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to show your appreciation, if you want to help us out, there's a lot of ways you can do that. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media, tell a friend, grab a book from Amazon, leave a review on Google or Facebook or Amazon or anywhere that makes sense or support the Patreon, [Patreon.com/whistlekick](https://Patreon.com/whistlekick), it's the place to go. You can support us monthly with as little as \$2 and for \$5, you get a new podcast episode, for \$10 you get a video version of that episode and there's blog posts and other stuff going up all the time. Bottomline, if you like this show, you're probably going to like what we're putting up there. Over the years, we've been really fortunate to get to talk to people who have spent time, not only training but on screen. Our guest today found historical fencing and then found himself on set at some of the biggest TV shows that have ever been done. Shows that I know this community loves and I'm not going



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to ruin it by telling you what those shows are. We had a wonderful conversation and I'm sure you're going to enjoy hearing it so here we go, Mr. Lopes Cardozo, welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Hi! Appreciate being here.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Thanks for coming on. Thanks for your willingness. We might have some folks listening who might know you by name. I bet that we have even more folks who know you by face and I'm sure we're going to get into all that stuff. People are probably, some people are probably scratching their head going what? Who is this? What are you talking about?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Who's that guy? I'm the bald guy with the plaited beard.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a great way to describe it. I've got a number of pictures in front of me that came in and some of them are really intimidating. Do people shy away from you on the street?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Oh, it happens but yeah. I feel a lot of different looks so if I go out anonymously then I'll just let my beard, I just let it lose, change a little bit of my clothing, put on my flat cap and sometimes even my glasses and I just look like a professor but my normal look is basically, yeah, some people would say distinctive kind of Viking look. Shorn head shape, big plaited beard and yeah, I always have, apparently this stare that I always hear so I always try to smile a little bit more and yeah, the first impression sometimes, I heard a lot of ok, grumpy guy with this stare. Avoid this guy always. You're going to get into trouble but yeah, I always say when people say oh, you look so grumpy, I always say like my face feels more comfortable this way. Yeah, but I'm not so bad. I'm a very chill guy but yeah, I have this look and it's also a look that, in a sense, partially helps me support myself and my livelihood.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you remember the first time you were recognized?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

You mean on the street?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah.



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**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Well, it's funny because, you know that old movie from year 2000 from The Technoviking? Does that ring a bell at all?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

No, it doesn't, sorry.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Doesn't? If people now hear the Technoviking, if loads of people will remember the Technoviking, it's actually the most watched, I think, YouTube movie on a whole of YouTube and there was this guy who was basically a German dude who was dancing and he looked like a Viking and he's gotten some problems and some guy filmed that and that became like, he became the Technoviking. It was a huge, huge thing. It was just a small videoclip of a guy dancing but it was pretty cool. You should check it out later and people always think that I'm the Technoviking and that has been going on so in the beginning, people recognize me while I'm not the guy so they mistake me for the wrong person and it still happens until a point that I actually thought, ok, I had a t-shirt that says in the back, No, I'm not the Technoviking. I've got 4 shirts over because I got so tired of it and started to hate this guy and then, later on, I got people start connecting with me for trance parties, sci-trance parties and looking for Technoviking lookalike because this was over 20 years ago and in the end, I say, no, get away from me! Later on, I said, can't beat them, just join them so in the end, I became sort of the Technoviking because I started basically doing the videoclip, doing the dance moves on the big stage for 20,000 people so that was the first time actually that I got recognized but for the wrong, not for me, but looking like somebody and for Game of Thrones, as an actor, I think that's already 2014 when it really started, I think. But before that, here in Holland, most people already knew me because I've been in the newspapers a lot with my historical fencing stuff. I mean, my club and doing demonstrations and lectures and seminars so people already kind of knew about the movie career that I started, after 5 years ago, 6 years ago, that increased a little in Holland with recognizability or what you call that in English.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How did you get into movies? Let me paraphrase that. We've had a number of folks from film, from television come on the show but there isn't one path that these people ended up doing film and TV. They all end up there in a different way so I'm curious, what was your way?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

My way is a bet. So, if I still make it as the next big action hero in the silver screen, then everybody will know in the end, he just got there because he took a bet. Which bet are we talking about? I do a lot of lectures about visualization and about visualizing that's what you want in life and visualizing is materializing and then I do a lot of lectures on it and also, internationally now and it's pretty cool but for



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a lot of people this is just a lot of mumbo jumbo. It's a lot of stuff written on it like a book of secrets that's something that I've never read in my life but you have all these kind of books that's all about the visualization process and how you basically get done in your life and for me, that never really, I never did anything with it. I just did what I need to do in my life but I realized, after I was a professional musician, I was a professional artist, I wanted to become one of the best swordfighters in the world which is like a childhood dream. I don't know why, maybe because of the old movies, Willow and even Star Wars or whatever. I always had a dream, I want to be a good swordfighter and I want to be able to ride horses and I would be cooler if I could make my money with it. Even if you want to be a professional musician, it's like everybody who's a musician would like to make his money with it and if you're an artist, you want to sell your art and make money with it but it's often, really huge problem because you have talent but you also, unfortunately, for creative people, they often don't have a good business sense so it is pretty difficult to really sustain yourself and to pay rent and live off of something that is your hobby, for instance. So you end up with a 9 to 5 job and have, for instance, the skillset on the side and for me, I also had a big company and I did a lot of different stuff and then, I realized, when people are struggling, so a lot of people struggling that had real talent for something like musicians and painters, they still would really like to make step from doing their 9 to 5 job and then go professional with their hobbies but then, have no idea how to make that transition and I encounter a lot of people that are kind of dealing with that and being unhappy with their job or reasonably happy with their job but just unhappy with the fact that they have a lot of creativity but they were burned out if they come home and then you still have to go to your, you have to paint, you have to make this and so, I started kind of advising on this thought process and I realized, ok, I actually have already changed my stars around 5 times and been able to make my money with whatever I set my mind on and I just assumed that everybody is able to do that and I realized that not everybody is able to do that so I started kind of helping other people out achieving their dreams as a coach. Back to basic, where we were starting off, my students told me, ok, you're doing all these lectures and all these stuff online and the visualization but what are you still doing, I mean, is there something that you want to do like something, I mean, we want you to prove to us that what you're preaching, can you also walk the talk? They didn't believe in it because we had this discussion in their locker room with some young guys and they wanted to do certain things and one guy was dreaming really big what he wants to achieve and everybody was burning him down like you will never be able to do that and I overheard the conversation and I said well, you can do whatever the hell you want in your life. You only have one life. Whatever you want, set your mind to it, you will be able to achieve it and this should not be rhetorical kind of comment that everybody just can say or you just accept it as the truth or you just say it's completely bull but at the end, they came up with a challenge for me and that challenge was, I said ok, give me a challenge and I will prove to you the visualization process that I've been using all my life is working and that was the bet and they said ok, we want you to become a movie star and I said, ok, that's going to be something else and of course, I've been performing all the swordfight shows and all that stuff but that's not technically, the same and I didn't have an agent, I didn't have no acting experience so I told them, ok let me think about this thing, then. A week later, I came back to them with a bet with 150 students, 10 bucks each and I said ok, I'm going to



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be a movie star and they all laughed and I said wait, you guys want the impossible to prove to me about the impossible thing and you guys said so now, we're going to make a bet and they said, ok cool and we bet the 10 bucks each so that's 150 students, \$1500 or €1500, bam! In my pocket if I would pull it off and I would lose nothing if I would fail but I would then prove that my visualization process works. So, that was fun so I, in the end said ok, give us a time schedule and what you're going to achieve. I said that's good. In 2 years, I'm going to be either be in Vikings, Game of Thrones or Star Wars and they laughed and they said no freaking way you're going to be able to pull that off and that's what I did and I lost the bet because it took me 2 years and 4 months but I got 2 out of 3.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Wow!

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Story!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are so many places that we can take that. Here's where I want to go first though. Most people who are going to set a goal, I'm going to be in movies, that whole thing, they're not going to pick such large well-known franchises. They'll try to get in to something smaller, they're going to aim for just barely over the goal line and you did not do that.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Yeah, that's what everybody does.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You set your, this is the cliché of aim for the stars, if you miss, you'll at least hit the moon.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

It is, I've been doing business all my life and it's just pitch high and stick to your price. That's basically, that's the golden rule and the other golden rule is no fear of loss and if you can master those both which is very difficult and also understand that you will never, ever be able to really sell a product, you will only be able to sell yourself and with yourself, you can sell your product, then you are already further than most people in the comprehension of how business works but also relationship too. This sounds maybe very floaty or spiritual but, let's say, quantum mechanics, let's say, in the quantum world, everything is possible. There's no mass, there is only energy. Protons, electrons, neutrons, they don't have any really, any mass. There's more nothingness than there actually is something so thinking about that, you can determine a lot of stuff yourself and I believe that you have, in the sense, a radiance that really like a circle of energy you radiate and at the end, people come into your life and yeah, doesn't



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resonate or resonates for a small but and they kind of move out of your life but in the end, when you really know what you want, you start collecting more people around you with the same energy and the circle becomes bigger and you feel in that circle, everybody is a part of that circle is starting to evolve exactly on the same time. Cool, it's happening in everybody's lives at the same time. There's this causality or how you call it, it's just weird stuff but there are actually patterns and I'm not a religious guy but maybe, in a sense, I'm a spiritual guy. I don't even know if I'm really a spiritual guy. I'm more like a physics guy. Let's say I'm more leaning towards physics and quantum physics but I believe in that world that in your mindset, a lot of stuff is possible and yeah, I have just go and discuss with the bet trying to prove that it actually works and it's possible that you actually have to aim high and a lot of people, they aim low because it's the same as the guy, for instance. You're in a bar and you see this very, very pretty girl and in your mind, that is the girl you want to approach but you have fear. You have fear of loss, fear of maybe whatever. You're going to make stories in your head and that's what everybody does in every situation. You encounter something, somebody, you're going to make stories in your head and these stories don't benefit no one especially not the person thinking them because they're never really positive in the end. So, you see a mediocre pretty girl, in your opinion, and then, it's going to be safe to approach that girl but they're both girls and you just created a story and you think, ok, I'm not worth, subconsciously, that beautiful woman but for somebody else, that other woman might be the pretty girl so it's just in your head that you just make stories and you have fear that is completely based on nothing and if you translated, for instance, the situation to, let's say, martial arts, if you would take, I got an Oriental friend, a Chinese guy and he's a kung fu dude and he's very skilled but if he sees one of our bouncers at the door in a discotheque like this huge guy who would be working out like a massive, you guys don't do kilograms but ok, big dude, 120 kg, I don't know how many pounds that is...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

275.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

So this friend of mine, is very thin. He weighs half but when he sees these bouncers, he automatically drops his guard and think ok, these guys are slow, they cannot generate a lot of low frequency impact. I'm going to be faster than those guys so he already feels light. He feels like something, I can take this guy easily while we, as Europeans, see this huge guy and we think, ohmygod, I don't want to get in a fight with this guy because he's going to just f- me up so I'm not going to go there. it's completely the other way around. When we see, for instance, a really scrawny little guy bouncing at a discotheque, at least, me or probably an American would be saying, you expect a huge guy and it's like a really small guy standing there really skinny, you think man, what's he going to do? I'm going to take him out like that but my Chinese friend, when you look at that guy, oh my god, that guy is small. He's very agile, he's going to be fast so I have to be really on my guard but it's all bull. It is just your perception and you creating stories in your head which are based on nothing and 9 out of 10 times, they're based just out of irrational fear and combination of what might happen and that's why people don't take really big leaps



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or important decisions or they will go and play, go for safe so even if they step out of their comfort zone, they're still going to play safe so yeah, if you ask me, do you want to be a movie star? What am I going to say? I'm going to a show somewhere as an extra in some soap series in Holland? No, screw that. Of course, I'm going to think big and just visualize that and that took me a year, also to visualize everyday 15 minutes under the shower, just visualizing Steven Spielberg just wiping his own ass on the toilet with toilet paper and he's running out and needs to go to the store and behind his shopping trolley, throwing in his toilet paper, dialing his 10 friends because, in the end, these are just people and if you would sit with somebody like that or you sit with Jerry Bruckheimer or you sit with one of these big shots, would you lose yourself? Would you be able to see this person who is just a person or you going to put him on a pedestal and you kind of disappear or how would your mindset be because in the end, you're just creating stories. The problem is these guys are not up there on some floating clouds with all their millions in the bank and their kind of gods where you can never be or you can never go. These guys need to go also to the toilet and they also have their friends and they go to parties and they have their problems with their wives and they're exactly like us. They're just maybe a little further down the line with certain trajectory but once you really understand that and you take these people, that's what I do with the visualization process, taking from the pedestal and also raising yourself saying ok, I could be one of those guys and really start believing that which takes really time and acceptance and you think ohmygod, I'm never going to be able to pull that off but once you start kind of believing in your own pool because you're not there yet, then the universe will start figuring out a way to achieve it and you don't even have to know how you're going to do it, it's just going to happen and that's been going on all my life, more as an automatic system and that's why I now kind of coach other people to help them on their path to do things and I'm still not where I want to be because I started this trajectory 6 years ago and I'm absolutely not yet where I want to be but what I did in 5 years, I think I did more than most people did in 20 and so, I like shortcuts, I like things to go fast. I've only one life to live and I did a lot of different things and just like a computer game, I know I got so many days and then, I'm going to croak and I just want to get maximum out of it and work with maximum efficiency so yeah, that's basically what my mindset it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Where did this mindset come from? Did you figure this out? Was this taught to you?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

No. That is just, I guess, I don't know. I had nobody to coach me. I had to go through trial by error and of course, I'm 47. I'm already getting there, an old dude so maybe, wisdom, certain insights, algorithms, you start figuring out certain patterns and of course, I had also people in my life. All that kind of, they talk about certain things and then you hear something there and you start making correlations and I also have a friend who's an acting coach and I learned a lot from him, for instance, about acting but also about focus, mindset and all of those stuff and stuff that I had been doing already all my life but he, I was really able to explain on a whiteboard with a pen, with a non-permanent marker, exactly, for



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instance, the processes that go on in your head with certain situations. For me, that was really fascinating because then, you would see everybody has the same issues and there are solutions or methods to basically be more efficient in achieving your goals.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, you mention sword fighting and you have students and this is part of the persona that you have that is appealing in these movies. How did you get there? You talked about being a young kid and wanting to be a professional swordfighter but you did it so you've followed that path but at some point, somebody had to teach you how. How did you find sword work?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

That's also, that's even maybe a weirder story and so, I had this dream already as a kid that I would like to be able to be a swordfighter and knowing, being knowledgeable about working with a sword but there was nothing like historical martial arts around, of course and you're of course, being fed with Hollywood crap concerning Eastern martial arts. I don't want to say crap but I mean crap, generally, you get bombarded with Asian martial arts which was very, very cool especially in the '80s and so, I automatically was drawn to Eastern martial arts and starting to do that and really enjoyed that and I have been doing that for a really long time but what I wanted to do is actually learn how to swordfight like a medieval knight but when you look at movies, for instance, when I say crap, I don't mean that Asian martial arts, I mean, actually, generally, like the fight choreography, the way I look at things now. Fight choreography versus realism and all this kind of stuff but you had Asian martial arts but you had medieval movies but if you look at any movies, even now, still today, if you look at Asian martial arts, you see 300 flick-flacks or whatever you call it in English like very athletic dexterity moves that they can toss these throwing stars like 500 in a second and with a blow dart, they can hit your left testicle in a 3 kilometer distance and if you look at medieval movies, you see clumsy knights in shining armor almost collapsing under the weight and just hacking away at each other and the strongest arm in the end will be victorious. That's how Hollywood basically kind of screwed up the perception of Western martial arts and you cannot blame them because there was not much knowledge anymore because of these manuscripts that were written between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century kind of all went into private collections and museums. Actually, in 17<sup>th</sup> century, nobody actually really knew how people are fighting in medieval times because of these manuscripts written by these masters, they were not really accessible anymore and it's only now, I don't know if you know this, but they're trying to revive western martial arts or historical European martial arts already 3 times. In the 1800s, there were people doing transcriptions in the fencing clubs, they tried to bring that back historical fencing. In 1900s, they did it but in both times, it just failed so even the people in the fencing clubs were apparently didn't catch on and the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave which is actually now so due to the internet and being able, easily accessible transcriptions of medieval manuscripts, PDFs that are online, books that are being published. We now have basically reconstructed whole mechanics of the German and it's a German tradition so if HEMA are listening and you do Italian Fury Marozzo and stuff, the Italian stuff has a little bit more, there's more interpretation possible. The





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German tradition is very, very clear that's why I like the German tradition more because it's just very, very, very specific and all the German fencers there are basically in the same page. You might have little difference in interpretation but in the end, we basically know, let's say for 97% we could say really accuracy is we are kind of right on the money so like we were fencing in medieval times. It's been now, the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, kind of survived now. It caught on at the right moment, also with the people and the movies that are coming out and now, also the movies, the movie industry is taking it up and understanding. Ok, maybe we should keep the stuntmen to do the stunts and start really using historical fencers to oversee historical stuff that is happening because, at the moment, I think it's still, unfortunately, the case now is that stuntmen are doing all the sword work and either they come, they have some experience in Asian martial arts or they're just stunt guys, very handy with moving swords around but it's not historical fencing. Historical fencing has a very specific visual flavor to it. It's very distinctive and it's really different, for instance, than, let's say, the classical bushido, for instance, with the katana. The biomechanics are completely different. You might think a sword is a sword but that's actually not the case because a katana is a single-edged weapon and basically, the saber and what's like a sidearm for a samurai which were actually archers and a long sword is a double-edged weapon which is about 25 centimeters longer than a katana and weighs exactly the same so you have more length but in the classical bushido, you have 9 strikes with a katana but you have 28 biomechanic different strikes with a longsword due to these double edges which are basically used and that means, just biomechanically looks different and technically, is also executed differently and it deserves a place in the movie industry.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Absolutely and I think when we look at shows like Game of Thrones and others that are investing in accuracy, historical accuracy, people are responding to that whether or not they realize that it's important, I think it impacts the overall experience that we have when we watch these things.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I don't know. With Game of Thrones is an example where, I think, the show would have really, the highest budget spent and the worst sword fighting ever.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Oh really? Well, ok, I guess I took it for granted that if you were involved...

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

No, I was acting in that. People always think that I did the choreography and stuff but I was just an actor in the TV show. I did try to advice on the historical stuff but, and I tried to get me also on board but it's like the fight choreography, for instance, was done by, I don't know his name. For HEMA guys, as a historical perspective, I mean it's spectacular, I mean, it's nice to see if you have no knowledge of



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historical fencing then it's totally fine. I don't mean it in an offensive way but it wouldn't be the same as you are a tennis player, right? And you really love tennis. That is your sport and then there's a movie in which tennis plays kind of a key role and everything you see is just wrong then in the end, what you're going to do? You're going to watch or it's time to grab your beer every time the swordfight starts and you kind of get annoyed by it. I don't get annoyed because I know the movie industry works and I respect the fight choreographers and also, especially their attempt to kind of reconstruct historical martial arts but if you don't have enough knowledge of it, it's just like driving a racecar with not having any driving license. Maybe in the end, you were able to park that vehicle somewhere in the parking lot, you're not going to do crazy stuff so that's basically it and yeah, and that could be easily confused. I had also interviews. Ok, so you are the guy that knows, you're arrogant because you think you know better? It's not like that. It's just we are historical fencers, that's what we do so when we look at a movie which is historical, then we would like to see historical fencing. That is not happening so it's logic that the community, in the sense, is a little bit frustrated with the fact that we do not see the historical fencing background on the silver screen at the moment and yeah, I totally agree. The difference between me and them is I don't get annoyed because I know how the movie industry works but whatever I can do to help or to advice, that's what I'm doing now more is to, at least, make directors and the production companies aware that there is a lot of knowledge about historical fencing and that it's often, much cooler the content of historical manuscripts than a fight choreographer can just conjure up and improvise on the spot. There's a lot of stuff. You can take literally from the manuscript which would be amazing or would be cool to do in the movie but it's not done.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you think that's going to change?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

How soon?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

When I'm going to make sure it's going to change! I'm working on my own movie right now that is a contemporary movie.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Can you tell us about it?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**



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Yeah, a little bit. It's basically about drugs, bikes and swords and it's going to be cool. Not necessarily in that order.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That sounds like a pretty good plot. I'm in!

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

It's just an average lifestyle in Holland so that's basically it. It's my life. Drugs, swords and rock and roll!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When did the swords start?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

My love for swords, you mean?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

When did you start learning swords? It seems like it could have been at the very beginning.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I think that is your initial question.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Where did I learn that stuff? The thing is I had no idea where to go to. I was doing Asian martial arts and one morning, I had an epiphany, I was just thinking is there any knowledge out there how our own ancestors were fighting on the medieval battlefield and the trial by combats, Sifu trials with how basically these feuds were settled. I was wondering basically if there is a manuscript that maybe survived or something like that, I just went on the internet and I stumbled, like most people, I think, on the Hakka, Big Ten, was with John Clements which later became MEDIARMA and John Clements, I think, was the first guy to actually write a book on historical fencing and there was a really small community in the united states were already busy with it and just really, it was tiny stuff happening already and there were sources and that, for me, was like wow, we got historical sources that basically described the fencing theory and how they were basically conducted and how the biomechanically and technically swords were used in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century so I started studying that and very soon after, I realized, ok, I need to make a transition because the reality is that's what I always wanted and I was doing Asian martial arts because there was nothing else. I was not aware of anything that's going on so I kind of



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travelled around and I was doing reenactment also for fun but I had no idea what the hell I was doing, reenacting, just dressing up in your armor and all these battles and stuff and just kicking other people which was a lot of fun and I did a lot of shows and these shows were getting popular and I was already making some money with that on the side when I was around 20, 22 and yeah, I stumbled on this manuscript and then I just started reading and stealing and how is this guy doing that and then, apparently, I had like a talent for it so after, I think, 4 years, 3 and a half, around that when I was driving around, my skills were, I think I was already ahead of most people and I had nowhere to go and I was just getting my hands on these manuscripts and transcribing and analyzing and trying to figure some stuff out and really un-learning what I had learned from Asian martial arts because biomechanically, we're all the same. We got 2 legs, 2 arms, we lock and arm lock is arm lock and arm bar is arm bar and a kick is a kick and a throw is a throw but there were really significant differences which were some way illogical. I mean, stuff from an Asian martial arts perspective very logical, suddenly because illogical in European tradition and I was confused in the beginning and I started realizing that this is really a different language we're speaking and if I want to make a transition, I have to unlearn that and I have to start learning this because in the end, it's not the blood of samurai flowing through my veins. That's the reality of things. I'm from Holland and I'm closest to the German border and that used to be, of course, the Roman, it was just the Holy Roman Emperor, this was just one big chunk so I'm closer to the German tradition of course and even now, if I read historical manuals, the original manuals, I can read it fluently because medieval German is really close to contemporary Dutch. I cannot read medieval Dutch, it is impossible but I can read fluent, medieval German which is also kind of funny so how language is developed so yeah, I just had a knack for it and also, this epiphany when you're training and trying to figure out because I had a partner, Kenneth Smulders, which I started training with and we were training 3 times, 4 times a week, just the historical manuals and really trying to invent the wheel by ourselves 9 or 10 times because we were already pretty high level and in the end, everybody was just shrugging shoulders like we have no freaking clue and we also went like we have no freaking clue so in the end, we were just, all over the world, we had these groups that were researching and trying to kind of reconstruct historical martial arts and sometimes, you're just busy and you think, ok, according to what I call the black hole mechanics, you can see one plate in the manuscript with some text and the next one but yeah, what happens in between because it's like two-dimensional pictures so how is there is no masters. That is the problem with Western martial arts, maybe, versus, let's say, historical martial arts and Japanese martial arts. At least, that's the argument people sometimes use like ok, Japanese martial arts, they have heritage and it's being sensei is training his students and we still have masters and the student becomes the master but yeah, that is true that we don't have masters because they all croaked 500 years ago so that is, maybe, on one hand, a problem; on the other hand, we have the historical sources which are very, very clear and we're, therefore, close to the source whereas Japanese martial arts, it becomes, in the end, slightly diluted like wine because you just pour in water because how do you know that what you're training now, let's say you're doing Katori Shintō-ryū, one of the oldest Japanese swordfight forms, if what you are training now in the dojo is exactly what samurais were doing. I mean, I remember doing Katori Shintō-ryū and I asked my sensei, I said can I have a look at the



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historical sources and are there any transcriptions of it? No. Why not? Just because there are none. Ok, so how do I know what you are teaching me is actually how samurais are fighting? Well, this is how my teacher taught me and this is how I'm teaching you and this is the tradition. Ok, well, that's not very satisfying but ok. So I kept on going and in the end, I was just walking around swinging a bokken, wooden stick around doing katas and yeah, you had these people with First Dan and even higher and very pretentious, they thought they were swordfighters and the descendants of most of the samurai but they never sparred, they never really pressure tested themselves. I mean, they pull their katana out just like I did out of your saya, you have an aluminum training sword. Maybe you're lucky you have a steel one and maybe you do some tatami cutting but that's it. Probably, we know, the samurai they were fighting and they were sparring and they were training and they were kicking each other. How else are you going to be able to prepare for combat? Otherwise, just a false sense of security just doing katas in the dojo. I'm sorry, it's not going to make you a swordfighter. I mean, let's define sword fighter in the tradition of historical fencing, either in Japan or in Europe. What it means, you go in combat, you got a guy in front of you with a sword and he's going to try to kick at you and you get to try to kick at him and you got to try to, let's rephrase that, you try not to get hit. That's actually the main, it's the art of defense, the art of offense but you understand what I mean and in historical European martial arts now and that's the only sport and the Japanese guys are now actually following that up because now there are blacksmiths creating special steel weapons also like katanas for sparring. We are doing tournaments with steel and with steel faders and we have been doing it for quite some time and that is still different than, let's say, if you're doing for instance, kendo where you have to screen the target before you hit it and there are all these rules and you cannot hit lower targets like legs and stuff. You're not allowed to wrestle. There's all these kind of formats and algorithms where you have to stick to and with historical fencing tournaments, you just go in the ring and depending a little bit on the rule sets, let's say my events, there are no rules so you just go in and you stick to the historical fencing principles and whatever you want to do is cool. You want to kick, you want to get in there and grapple, you want to do a [45:21] what they call it in German, locks, kicks, throws, use your sword, the eye-wounder, the 3 miracles, cutting, slicing and stabbing, it's all good as long as you don't get hit. If you get hit, the other guy scores points. It's good but it's a full-contact fight so, and that's what I like. It's like the theoretical part which I also found in Asian martial arts with a sword. We have the test cutting which you also find with Asian martial arts but sparring, for instance, I could not find that unless I was doing kendo which I also did for a while but in the end became very boring for me because I was missing a lot of reality based things. I cannot hit somebody in the legs, you cannot get in there and grapple and hit the back of the sword and stuff like that so I wanted to have a feel of really going completely, 100% old school so I found my spot, basically, in historical European martial arts and also, because it's also my legacy. It's where I come from and it's what I do so I have more vibe with a medieval knight than a samurai. That's just me personally. That's why I, in the end, started my own club after 4 years. I think in 2002, I don't know how long I was training but in 2002, I started my own club and yeah, I started another club and in the end, I had several clubs throughout the Netherlands. I sold 2 and I have 5 left and in 2008, I started



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travelling internationally and teach also at international events and then I kind of got into the advising for movies and then, I kind of got in front of the camera. It's kind of history.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It seems like this path that you've been on, really started, at least, the momentum started from this dissatisfaction with your Asian training. This question of is this what the samurai did and is this even going to work? It sounded that that really didn't fit for you.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Yeah, there was one thing and not the other. It was of course, just the curiosity. If there was anything preserved but you might be right, actually, now I'm thinking about it but yeah, I always had, when I was a young kid, if I do something, I would like to have it real. You know what I mean? I am a very practical guy in the sense but also when I teach, people know me for a very practical approach. Even in the historical manuscripts, if you look at their work and stuff like that and I see people doing dagger techniques and I say ok, well this is exactly what it says in historical sources but you have to look at it in a context and when people start saying, for instance, even about my martial arts, ok, would you do this in a real life situation and then, this person might say who is actually a HEMA-ist like yeah, actually, this is a historical technique and this would also work in this contemporary age then I would be the one that would say maybe you need small reality check because you have to look at that technique in a specific context, in a specific time era, with a specific weapon and if you do it like this, in a contemporary situation, it might not going to play out exactly like you think it's going to go and it's because also, in my martial arts, we have a lot of arm chair researchers that really are very passionate about their arts but never had really any real life conflicts or really ever encountered violence and stuff like that and in my case, I come from different background. I mean, I did a lot of stuff when I was younger and I was also a bouncer so there's a whole history of things I did before I became a historical swordsman and there was a time where I was confronted with a lot of violence in Amsterdam and that taught me many things and that experience, I also take back again in my teaching so even in my historical martial arts, it's divided more into practical approach and more the armchair research. I like to have things real and for sure that was lacking when I was doing Asian martial arts and I still go to events and sometimes, I teach and I went to this mixed martial arts events and I did a demonstration there with my longswords and my team and people were just laughing. There were all these Asian martial artists that saw us coming in with medieval weapons and they're like, this was already a while ago. We're talking about 2004, 2005 and this was about doing demonstrations and we got 2<sup>nd</sup> prize with our demo against a bunch of guys that were flying through the air and doing all these really acrobatic stuff but I remember also, we had all these sword fighters, Japanese swordfighters, from all these different martial arts that were doing demonstrations there and in the end, I told them, let's go on the ring and do some sparring and they said I would like to spar but I'm a 5<sup>th</sup> Dan Shinkendo and Aiki-jūjutsu but I don't have steel sword. I only have aluminum sword and I said, how much did you pay for that aluminum sword? 1300 bucks. I'm like what? I said I have a steel katana at the back of my van so aluminum can cut a lantern pole in that thing



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but it's kind of not sharp but it's still really good and you can use that. You can use a fencing mask and I always took these events as an opportunity to kind of pressure test myself against other people and that was always fun but then I realized, just by being in the ring and fighting tournaments and winning medals, you get more, at least, of a reality check. I'm not saying the reality check because fighting with sharp steel without any protection will still, of course, psychologically, be different but it's at least as close as you can get now in the contemporary age with very light gear in the ring and we have also, you can get hurt. I broke my fingers a lot of time, my ribs, my collarbone and impact. You guys don't do kilograms but an average strike with a longsword for an adult is like 1300 kilograms per centimeter easily. I would say, an African lion bites about 550 max and an average sword is at least more than twice as much so it creates even with protection a lot of impact so it's good pressure testing and if you're going to match yourself with people that have no practical experience, except just doing kata and going to the dojo and understanding technique and of course, you'll lose. At least you'll lose a sparring bout. Practical experience really doing it is still the best training, I think.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I agree. Now, with all the work that you've done with books and transcription and research, have you written anything of your own?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I have to say that nope. That's the thing everybody asks me, when I'm going to write something? Of course, I had been writing some stuff on my computer but it's just, it is a work in progress so I'm working on something. Cannot say what but it's my best take on things but I'm busy with a biography but I'm busy with a book but I'm a perfectionist so I had no idea when that is going to be ready. I'm going to need help with that but yeah, I think it would be good. I always thought it would be so rad if I write anything with so many people out there writing stuff so, I hope it's going to be waiting for Cardozo to write something but I did hear it left and right that I should do it so I took an attempt and I'm writing something but I've never written anything. I'm going to write for an article for a new concept. It's like a couple of HEMA guys going to be publishing some articles so I'm going to be on board with that so that's going to be my first time that I'm going to publish my take and my view on certain things.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I would imagine that the community is really interested on what your take is on things.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I'm the biomechanics guy and the biomechanics, we have a lot of issues, still to overcome in our sports so lets say a quick example, what is something I'm working on lately is just basic biomechanics and how to move your sword. We know all the techniques from the manuscripts but how do you really move your sword from location alpha to location bravo and how is this mathematically and biomechanically



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working with kinetic energy with your weapon and centrifugal forces, the finger gripping pressure, for instance, rotation, the axes where everything goes through. The reality is that in any sport, and I mean, you should correct me if I'm wrong, people are kind of, there's one way of doing things so let's say, most would go stick with kind of the same thing, you might develop slightly your own style and there's a way of hitting that pole and now, you're a racetrack driver, there's a way to cut that corner, there are mathematical equations and moments and you have to give back. Everybody's doing the same but this one is going to be better at it but, for instance, an [57:35] strike from above, right above to like below, if you take HEMA guys, they will all be doing it different and I think there is always one way more efficient, more faster where you have more control, stopping power than the other which is biomechanically more sensible than the other but in our community, you cannot really say my way is better than your way then you're arrogant so you cannot do that so everybody's kind of hiding behind, this is your interpretation and this is my interpretation but from my martial perspective and from my military perspective and if you're like medieval knight, you're like special operation unit of your time era, you should be able to take out at least 10 farmers by yourself just by the skills that you have that those farmers do not have. They have their own little subculture but every manuscript specifically says in the beginning, you have the responsibility in the manuscript, if you have it in your hand, don't let it fall in the hands of the commoner or the peasant because they are worthless. That is really how nobility is looking at the normal folk which is really patronizing but yeah, that's what's in the manuscript but apparently, they were trying to protect this Scientia, this science so you were like the special operations unit but if you were special operations unit of the time era, you have to think about a lot of stuff. you have to think about economics, you have to think about energy preservation, you have to think a lot of stuff so you have to be very efficient as a fighter so in the contemporary time where we practice historical martial arts, I think there's not enough emphasis on basically really trying the most economical way of doing things and that's what I'm really focusing on.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now, what about the future? You've talked about setting goals and achieving things and I have no doubt that there are big things on the horizon that you're looking at so I'm wondering if you're willing to share those. You mentioned the movie but is there anything else on there?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

There's a couple of things but unfortunately, I cannot disclose a lot but yeah, my goals are high and my goal, what I have in mind, is basically, even though it still sounds completely ridiculous to myself but I mean, you have to endorse it. You have to just keep repeating and you start believing that it's going to happen so I should not draw a line anywhere but yeah, what I'm visualizing now, is just become new American action here. That's it. I want to bring something to the silver screen, specific face in the time of the Viking era where the Vikings are now very popular. I just want to bring a new character to the silver screen with a specific skillset that not many people have and yeah, basically, where the dagger kind of cuts on both sides. On one hand, I like to act. I'd been a musician, I'd been an artist, just for music and





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light, everything comes together so I really enjoyed the whole process of moviemaking. On the other hand, I really want to promote my art so just like Stephen Seagal put his aikido on the silver screen and Jean Claude Van Damme put his kickboxing on the silver screen, I want to put European historical martial arts to the silver screen but I would really like to do it by not making historical movies if that makes any sense because then, in the end, I think from a marketing, and I'm also a business guy, from a marketing perspective, that is the wrong approach because it's not going to sync with the youth and the potential practitioners and stuff because that is just, if you're making a historical period movie, it's going to be just a long time ago and a galaxy far, far away and that's basically it. I want to make contemporary movies where you see the unarmed combat styles like wrestling, dagger work that they used in medieval times and sword works even if it just relate to improvised weapon as an artist, I don't care but it has to be contemporary. I mean, there's also a reason why I love wooden swords in contemporary movies because it's a movie. You can do whatever the hell you want. I'm also working on my movie and yeah, that's what I said. It's drugs, bikes and swords and the story is pretty cool but I cannot disclose it because of legal stuff.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Sure, I understand. I'm looking forward to it. If people want to find you online, website, social media, where would they go?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

My website, let's start with that, it's [amek.org](http://amek.org). That is my company and the website is also in English so there you can find a lot of stuff and if you go to [swordfighting.eu](http://swordfighting.eu), that would lead, because I got a lot of these URLs that would lead to my sports club in Holland, Dutch, I guess, but you got Google Translate for these things but I think [amek.org](http://amek.org), so Amek with a K. That is basically my company name and for the rest, just go on google and punch in my first name, Mishaël and even if you forget the two dots on the E, you will probably, there's only two. Mishaël Morgan, that's an actress, and is my name which I probably use, also a female name but there is also one of them.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Awesome!

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I'm also on Facebook and, what is it? The other one.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Instagram?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**



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Instagram.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Of course, we'll link all these stuff on the show notes to make it easier for people.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

You guys should like it because I just started on the Instagram and I really need more followers so back me, guys, back me! Otherwise, I have to come to your house with my longsword.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

There are some people, as threatening as that would be, they might still enjoy it.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

Could be, could be.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Who gets beat up by a sword? Who gets attacked by a sword these days? Not very many people. It would be a great story.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

That would be a great story. Well, I had a great story actually. I was at a parking lot, there was this bum and he was sleeping there in a sleeping bag and I was going to give the guy a couple of bucks and he was in a sleeping bag and I was talking to a girl and we both had our car parked there and this guy was screaming from his sleeping bag because we had the cars running and he was really impolite so I thought, ok, you just screwed it up. I'm not going to give you a couple of bucks now and in the end, I said goodbye to the friend of mine and she left the car and I opened the door of my vehicle to go and I checked the sleeping bag and the sleeping bag was suddenly empty and there was nobody else, nowhere in the garage. The guy just disappeared and then I suddenly heard hey, and I turned around and there was this guy and he was like 5 meters away from me and he had his stick in his hand, I mean like short broomstick or whatever it was and he was just standing there and I'm like ok, and there is just this Highlander, you know Highlander the movie? You remember that swordfight in the parking garage so that was the thing, I just came from my club and I had a whole bag of waisters which is basically just training weapons in my car right next to my seat so I looked at this guy and he was just setting his thing on the ground and I just went in with my hand and I actually remembered switching, I first thought I'm going to take the wooden one and I thought, nylon. Nylon is going to be better. It's going to be nice, low frequency impact so I took out the thing and I just looked at him and I also stepped on the ground and I said lets go, motherf-- and then, he started running. I mean, he just ran but that was my only



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opportunity, for once, to have my Highlander swordfight in a parking garage but the guy just ran off. A total bummer but it was cool.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You will have to put that in your movie.

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

A-ha! There are cooler stuff in my movie. I have cooler stuff!

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I have no doubt. Well, we close up in a similar way each time. I ask each of the guests what final words, what nugget of wisdom would you want to leave everyone with today so that's my question to you, how do you want to send us out?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

You ask me the question and then, I respond or I just go and something?

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You just go. How do you want to end our conversation today for the listeners?

**Mishaël Lopes Cardozo:**

I would say, really, if you have a good idea, if you have skill, if you have talent, then just go for it! Just do it! Have no fear to fail. The worst cancer in the world is regret so just do it and everything is possible. It's just processes in your head and don't take from no one and don't listen to all the naysayers in your life. Just do it! It is possible. Visualize it and do it. No fear and if you have fear, park it but be stronger than the fear. Remember, you need to want it more than you fear it and then, only then, you will get what you want.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Talk about a fun ride. I had a great time on this episode. When you have a guest that doesn't hold back when they share who they are and what they are they just put forth everything that they've got, like I suspect that he trains and does everything else in life, you got a great episode and that's what we have today so, thank you so much, Sir. I appreciate your time, I appreciate you coming on and I look forward to seeing wonderful things from you in the future. If you want more, go to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com), that's where you will find photos and videos, links, social media and more from everything we talked about today as well as other stuff that we didn't even talk about today. If you're down to support us and the work that we're doing, you have a few options. You can use the code PODCAST15 to save 15% off at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) or you can leave a review, buy a book, help with



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