



Episode 534 — Mr. Matt Stait | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Welcome, you are listening to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio episode 534 with today's guest, Mr. Matt Stait. I'm Jeremy Lesniak host for the show, founder here at whistlekick where everything we do is in support of the traditional martial arts. If you want to know more about what we do, what that means, go to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com), that's our online home. It's also the easiest place to find the way that we monetize all this, we sell some stuff. We've got a store over there and if you're willing to support us by making a purchase, you can use the code `PODCAST15` it's going to save you 15% off everything we've got there. Now the show itself Martial Arts Radio gets its own website, [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). We like to keep our names simple. This show comes out twice each week and the goal of the show is pretty specific. We're looking to connect, educate, and entertain traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to show your appreciation for what we do, as whistlekick as the show, you've got a lot of ways you can help us out. Here are a few of them, you could make a purchase as I mentioned, you could share an episode maybe on your Facebook page. You could follow us on social media, our handles are `@whistlekick` everywhere. You could tell a friend about us, I bet you've got some people you train with who probably don't know about us yet. Help them out. You could also pick up one of our books on Amazon, you could leave a review on your podcast app, or you could support the Patreon, [Patreon P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com./whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick) that's the place to go for that. You can support us monthly with as little as \$2 and at each tier, we give you more exclusive content. We put stuff on Patreon, we do not put anywhere else if you're willing to help us out with a few bucks. We're willing to give you even more good



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stuff. The root of all the guests we bring on Martial Arts Radio, it's traditional martial arts. Our guests have some tie, almost all of them have trained in some form of traditional martial arts. And today's guest is no exception. We have a great conversation about not only where he started and where he's at, but his perspective, his unique view on the world. And it's a view that I suspect is going to resonate quite a bit with this audience. We talked about a lot of great things and instead of ruining any of them, as you know, I hate to do in the intros I'll just let it unfold for you as you listen. So enjoy. Hey there, Matt, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, thanks for having me on.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey, it's a pleasure to have you on and you're coming from afar aren't you? You're, we've got a good body of water in between us, don't we?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, sorry, I'm based in the I based in the UK in in Wales, so for anyone that knows what that is, it basically rains a lot but it's very beautiful.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Right but you don't correct me if I'm wrong, you don't have a Welsh accent.

**Matt Stait:**

No, that's right no I've spent most of my life living in England so but I'm but I was born in Wales and I've made I find my way home.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay, do you consider yourself Welsh because you may be our first Welsh cast?

**Matt Stait:**

Oh, when the rugbys on and when I'm badly singing when I'm cooking that, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I love it. I love it. Well, thanks for being here. Thanks for doing this and we're here to talk about you. We're here to hear your stories and the things that you've seen and done as a martial artist. And, let's start in the most important and sometimes the most exciting place, the beginning. You know, what's, what's your martial arts origin story?

**Matt Stait:**



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Well, I don't tend to dwell on it too much these days because it's sort of already out there in the world, but essentially, I didn't have the best start in life. It was quite a difficult upbringing. There was violence in the home and all around, we moved around a lot. My father committed suicide. So so yeah, so not a great start. But um, but throughout all of that, I was very, very keen on martial arts. Back in those days, there was very few things. There was a few series on the television, there was obviously Bruce Lee was coming to the fore. There was some bits in the wrestling so people got in fist and wrestlers like that but but there wasn't anything like there is no but those glimpses of that gave me this appetite if you will to want to figure it out, understand it, and learn it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now we, we don't have to dig you know you you laid some things out there right there stuff that's kind of heavy and maybe we'll get into some of it as we go. But what I'm hearing is almost a contrast, you know, violence, pain, challenge. And then on the other side of it, these martial arts figures who tend to campaign against that to to represent you know, we can call it light and dark I guess if we if we want to be that fundamental about it. Is that how you see it?

**Matt Stait:**

Well uhm, I suppose if I was going to break it down to its essence when you when you look at martial arts movies, when you look at you know, heroes in the story, they they they don't seem to have any fear and they beat all the bad guys. And when you're a, when you're a young person that is in fear constantly from the world around you with no real way out of it, then that's a very enticing proposition. And so and so yeah, so that was something I looked at. I mean, I was a big fan at the time of Tarzan and Spiderman and a few, you know, sort of heroes like that. But the truth was, I was very aware that, you know, I wasn't gonna get adopted by a band of gorillas or bitten by a radioactive spider. So my best my best chance if you like, was actually martial arts. And so the the theory was that one day I would become sort of invincible and frightened of nothing and, and I would be the hero in the movie. Unfortunately, that didn't entirely come to pass, but, but it started me off.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

So you start off with the admiration for training and when did you cross that threshold? When did you actually start?

**Matt Stait:**

Oh, I had a few false starts as a as a youngster. So we tried one or two things that didn't entirely work. Hey, I mean, I did I did actually write a book in and around all of these kinds of stories because I tried. I had a little go at Judo because like with a lot of people when you're that age in this in this sort of early 80s, late 70s, there, there wasn't really a lot about, so boxing in judo was were two of the ones that were about so I tried judo. And that didn't entirely work out in my favor, because we ended up buying a secondhand gi uniform, because that was that was all that my mom could afford at the time. Now



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unfortunately, it came with an orange belt. And and I was I wasn't in the white belt by train for a couple of weeks at this point. And unfortunately, I couldn't figure out how to do the jacket up without it. So I wore the belt and got shaved to that for it and ended up ended up being so embarrassed that I left and never went back.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

That's a painful experience. That's...

**Matt Stait:**

But it's it's interesting because yeah, obviously now I'm looking at it from the other side of the coin and it's one of those where I I fully fully understand that his take on that, the instructor at the time, his take on that was that I hadn't earned that grade or rank and I shouldn't be wearing it. However, as I said, true innocence and not understanding I didn't I didn't realize the concept of that and I and I genuinely couldn't figure out how to keep the jacket close without it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Because there isn't a way. Yeah, there's there's no way on a judo gi.

**Matt Stait:**

That, but that's right. I mean, it's one of those isn't it where you're you're sort of met with this back in those days as well. They were also ferocious looking I mean, when you're you know, when you're a small sort of kid looking up to the the sort of black belt instructors and Sensei, they were they were also darrin ferocious. Uhm and and then at the time that the persona was, not somebody that you could you ask questions for. It was all very much, you know, don't say anything and sail over there and wait til you're told sort of thing. So that was the, that was the vibe.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah. And now, it's pretty common of the time. I mean, I can't speak to training in the UK at that time. But, you know, I started training here in the US in the early 80s. And it was very much okay. If we're gonna teach kids, we're gonna pretend they're small adults and hold them to standards that maybe weren't always appropriate for kids.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. But that was the, you know, sort of that was the time and that was what was there so that was my if you like, one of my first forays into real martial arts, which didn't entirely go to plan but but I you know, I've I touched back into that later on. I mean, I've got a great love for Japanese arts overall. And I, I did sort of find my way back into some of these things in later life. And so I've got a lot more a lot. You know, that my first entrance isn't the only thing that I look back on.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And where did you go from there? So it all start with judo, what was next?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah well then I, then I went in some boxing and tried that. And that again was a was was an interesting thing, learned an awful lot. So boxing here it's very grassroots, it's very working class, and so you've got the what they call the spit and sawdust places so lots of old posters on the wall, very cramped. So ended up doing some of that and again it was one of those where I was I was a bit upset because nobody was kicking anybody. It didn't really like it did on the television and and to top it all, people used to shout at me and make me run at like six o'clock in the morning which was totally against my nature. So that that that was something that that I wasn't very very keen on. I loved the training the physicality of it, but I didn't like the the road work and all of that and then I actually did I actually did about as a child and I remember that really vividly because again, back then the world was a different place. And so I remember it was in a working mens' club and all around were, were sort of middle-aged middle, sort of rather portly gentleman all smoking cigars. And there was a huge amount of cigarette smoke in the room. And it was, it was pretty sorted. And now and I do remember them shouting at the little kids and they were shouting, you know, not particularly helpful things. Yeah. So things like, you know, [0:10:23 - 0:10:24], damage him, and you know, hit him again and all that kind of stuff, which is a when you've got children competing, it wasn't a very nice atmosphere. But as I said, that was a long time ago, the world's different now.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

It is, all right so, Judo is not your thing. Boxing is not resonating the way that maybe you'd hoped it would. And where do you go from there?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, well, as I say that was as a child. So I mean, I've got a great love for both of those arts and so that's not it's it's, it was just my first experience. But essentially, nobody was kicking anybody and I've seen that on television and thinking that's, you know, that's kind of where I want to be. I want to do that. Obviously, Bruce Lee was was center stage at the time and that was kind of where I wanted to sort of be and what I wanted to emulate. So unfortunately, I took a backseat then for a little while because life sort of took over. And, and then I now I find karate really which was my home for a very long time. That was that was a very lucky, lucky introduction because I had no idea of the quality that I'd found and the and the level of teaching that I was exposed to. I just sort of stumbled across it. And, and yeah, it turns out that that it was a it was a fantastic foundation. It was a fantastic place to learn and, and I and I've got nothing but respect for these guys, you know, for what they gave me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Did you know that karate was gonna work for you when you when you started did it, was the addition of the kicks, what you needed?

**Matt Stait:**

Only was the whole thing I mean, straightaway and again it's one of those where to this day that particular memory of walking through those doors is is very, very clear in my mind and, and it was and I described it as like a like actually stepping into a movie set. It was I was greeted at the door by by a green belt called Chris, a big big guy with a bald head and he was sweating. He was in the middle of a training session. And then he was the guy that opened the door to me and then actually became my Senpai for quite some time after that a really lovely guy. And I was ushered in and they were rows of, of karateka on the mats, performing techniques. So they were running through some of the punches. And obviously, they're all dressed in their gis. The the the training hall itself, the dojo was a traditional dojo. It had a very certain smell to it that anybody's trained in the environment will remember. And all of those things came together and it was just it was just like stepping into that movie. It was like it was actually suddenly real for me. So that was that was instantly, there was this affinity with it that that I didn't necessarily find before.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

You mentioned the quality of instruction that then it requires some, some hindsight to tell tell us a bit about your instructor in the environment?

**Matt Stait:**

Well, as I said, it's one of those where I had no idea really of the quality that I was sort of, in and around initially. It was one of those where I was very fortunate that that one of my instructors, he actually gained his first black belt the year that I was born now, now that was quite some time ago. So so there was an awful lot of knowledge there and they've been training for a very long time and, and, and they were in a very, very good level. And it's the foundations, I think that's really critical and something that I can't really stress enough the value that that is that is brought to me because obviously I've gone on and I've done many, many other things over many years. But that's foundation. That base that lead that that, that very, very solid understanding of principles of body mechanics and everything else that they gifted to me, it has allowed everything else to sit on top of it so, so yeah, forever grateful for that.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And you open the door we're, we're going on to other things so karate and where where you headed from there?

**Matt Stait:**

Well, then it sort of became a bit a bit of a mismatch journey then. So I went off into other things so we various various other things like, sort of full contact kickboxing sort of went into that, did some grappling



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stuff. I mean, this was this was before sort of MMA was really a big thing. And I also started working in security and that was probably the biggest change in the way that I looked at the world because I started working as a as a bank's in security doing various things where it wasn't any longer theory-based. It was very much there was a consequence to an action. So no longer was it well, this might work and we can theorize, we can chat about it in the pub, we can discuss it. It was it was a very, very clear. This either does or it doesn't because if it does you go home safe if it doesn't, somebody gets hurt. It really was that clear cut.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We've had a number of guests on who have spent some time working security. And for quite a few of them, it was a pivotal time. It was either they realized that what they were doing was working and they kind of honed in on more specifically, certain aspects of what they were doing. And for others, they found wow, this is not at all what I would have expected. I feel like quite a bit of my time has been wasted. How did that step into security, change your perspective or reinforce it?

**Matt Stait:**

Well it's interesting because it did it did flag up an awful lot of questions. Which of course, it worked. And I had to I had to really revisit myself and what I believed up to that point because again, it's it's usually quite a revelation when people actually step out of a training competition environment into something like that. Because well it is it's different, the environment's different, the landscape is different, the everything's different. So so yeah, I have to really have some conversations with myself and some of the things that I needed to look at was the way that I trained. That became really an issue because it became apparent that the training has to suit the environment. So when you're in a position where you have to deal with with multiple people, weapons, you know, communication, all kinds of things in and around all that. Then you have to you have to train accordingly. So that was something I had to look at. And then I had to start questioning really. And I did question a lot whether the martial arts I've been learning up to that point was actually effective. And what I've sort of come to the conclusion on that is that the truth is it was. It wasn't so much the technique but the platform. So the way that I explain that now in my teaching is I say to somebody that when you think about the environment that you're in, it's not competition range, the rules aren't there, the mindset is different. And so the platform that you use has to reflect that so if I'm in a competition, then I'll be in a competition style, mental state, and fighting stance. If I'm gonna do say two steps sparring, or [0:17:48] or something like that, again, that will reflect that. But if I'm in a situation where you know it's it's, it's an outside environment and the consequences are pretty far reaching, then my mindset is gonna be different, my approach is gonna be different. And, and so all of those things had to be factored in. So yeah, long story short, I, I wrestled with that for a while, and I thought, well, it can't. I, you know, I've clearly admit that I'm not the best person in the world physically. And so I'm not saying because I can't make it work, somebody else can't. And that was something I wrestled with originally. Because I did I did for a while think, oh, this is all rubbish. This is all pointless. What on earth have I done, wasted my time.



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And it took a while for me to sort of get around the fact that actually the, the concepts were good, the techniques were good, the understanding of it was good, what was what was not good was the platform and that's what had to change. And once I sort of realized that, then everything sort of fitted into place a lot better for me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I can see that and I, I can relate to that a bit too. I would imagine through some of this as you're you're having some of these epiphany You're probably doing some some additional training, maybe some training on your own, maybe some other people involved in security. Most of us know I mean, all of us know what a formal karate or judo or boxing class might look like. But what did your training and your or maybe research the right word as you as you start unpacking some of this stuff? What did that look like as you're going through this time?

**Matt Stait:**

Oh, an awful lot of that was was trial by combat for want of a better word. So I, you know, I test out a load of different clubs, a lot of different styles, I would actively go and participate and, and more often than not get absolutely battered where my ego would take very severe bruising, but it was, but it was all all relative and all and it had it had a point to it because like I said, as a foundation, it was fantastic, but but nothing has all of the answers. And so then it was an exploratory journey then with regards to I mean, I I delve heavily into Krav Maga and Kapap Israeli military systems. I delved into MMA and catch wrestling and Jiu Jitsu and all kinds of other things as well, obviously before contact stuff I got more into as well. So so I went off on these adventures for want of a better word and tried different things because I wanted to test the parameters of what I knew, plug the gaps as well was really, really important. Because the gaps were there, there was a lot of things I didn't know about, not just physically but when it comes to confrontation, as I'm sure you're aware, there's a lot more to it than just a physical action or your punch or a kick. And so all that had to be understood as well. So it was a real, real sort of journey of learning and as I said, for the most part, my ego got pushed around quite a lot at that point. I can't remember going to, I went to an Olympic wrestling class for a few months. Now, I don't know if anybody knows anything about Olympic wrestling, but these guys are just absolute monsters, and just just incredibly strong, incredibly powerful stamina like you wouldn't believe. I mean, the warm ups would kill me. And then they just be grinning at me and then throw me around for an hour. And I'm not a small guy, you know? That's the but it was. It was it was a great opportunity for me to be able to say, look, I don't know everything. I'm here to learn. And, and when I went to places with that attitude, everyone was really open and friendly. I mean, I didn't they didn't take it easy on me, but they did it with a smile.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**





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Yeah, I have done a bit of training with wrestlers. And I have to say, in terms of overall, just broad-based physical ability, I would say they are second only to gymnasts, mind blowing, the strength and control and endurance that they have.

**Matt Stait:**

Absolutely agreed yeah, that's that's the that that was that was it the stamina, the speed, that the strength, all of those things all rolled into one package and and yeah as a you know as a as an art form as a martial art as a sport however you want to call it, it's definitely up there in the top.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Now I forgot the word you use. Did you refer them as gaps some some things that you were working through things that you had to identify and resolve. Can you give some examples?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, certainly. So an obvious example would be back then would be the the [0:33:37 - 0:33:38] would be having an understanding of grappling on the floor. So I mean, you can, you can look at it and be and be a little bit sort of argumentative and combative and say, well, now all of a sudden, everybody's find these hidden meanings in their carter and things and the [0:22:57] was there all along. So some people have taken that tag and other people have gone and said, "Well, actually, what we've done is we've, we've figured out that we're perhaps lacking a little bit in that part of our development. So let's look elsewhere to plug those gaps." And, and so yeah, so it was one of those where I, I was an early adopter, if you like, we're not early adopters, we've gone on for a long time. But, but very early on, I realized that, that I had to add other things into what I already did to fill those gaps. And so that's where then the wrestling, the catch, that kind of stuff came more to the fore because I wanted to understand the ground game a bit more, and also stand up grappling as well, you know, throws takedowns, all that kind of stuff. And then another another very clear gap that came to me very early on was the actual understanding of the physiology of what happens, the human brain and communication and the very real effects that that has on a person during conflict. And again, that was something that we've never really gone gone over. Up until that point I had to start really looking for it. There was two, two main points that really stand out that the show these and highlight these points. One was my very first karate competition as a green belt. My hands were shaking that much. My Sensei had to do my belt up for me. I couldn't even do my own belt up that I'd been doing for all that time I'd been training, but because I was so ramped up, and I thought I was afraid I thought I was a coward. I thought I you know, I must be I must be a coward because my hands are shaking. And it turns out that wasn't the case at all. That was just part of the deal, but I didn't know that then. And so that was something that stays in my mind. And then secondly was a guy called Jeff Thompson, who I'm sure most of your listeners may have heard of. He's the guy over here in the UK that just absolutely rewrote the martial arts scene in there. In the early 90s, with with his not just realistic approach, but the way that he explained it, so it became understandable to the masses.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I'm not familiar with that name. Could you tell us a little bit about him and a bit more the impact he had on you?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah. Jeff Jeff Thompson was was was a practicing martial artist. And he was a Shotokan instructor, I believe for a long time as well. But he started working the doors in a place called Coventry many many years ago. And he related those stories in a book called "Watch My Back", which was a hugely influential book in the very early 90s when it came out. But he was one of the first people to start talking about things like in the fight or flight in a way that people understood adrenaline, how that affected you the realities of what you actually can and can't do with regards to technique, fine motor movement, all that sort of thing. And so it was the first time that I heard these things articulated in a way that made sense. But also it wasn't, there wasn't any cover up. There wasn't any pretense that that wasn't in the world. He was very, very honest and said, "Look, I'm, I'm scared when these things happen, I am scared." And so that was a real eye opener. And then also on top of that, he's he's a guy that was working in a factory at the time and, you know, wrote a best-selling book and has now written well, many, many, many. He's had films made, he's traveled the world. He's an extraordinary individual impacted me in a lot of ways, including my own writing and things so yeah. If people haven't heard of him, he you know, may have been the early 90s when he first came out, but trust me it's still as relative today as ever was.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

To check out find that book maybe maybe, find him.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, absolutely. I recommend entirely.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah as you're going through in and filling in these gaps in my mind, it's, I see martial arts as kind of like a puzzle, you know, we add these pieces from all these different aspects of our training, these different styles, these different answers as we asked the questions. Do you remember a moment when you started to feel like okay, I've started to put this stuff together. Maybe that was a security detail and something went wrong, but they went right for you, or maybe a moment in training. Was there's something that happened that you said, I'm starting to get it.

**Matt Stait:**

Well, I'm oddly enough. My past that I that I mentioned earlier on actually came to the fore in this because firstly, I'm a physical guy, so the physicality of it actually came easy. I thoroughly enjoyed the hard work. I thoroughly enjoyed being pushed to what I was capable of. And I and I learned quickly, so I had an aptitude if you like for, for martial arts. So that was really, really in my favor and something that



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I'm very grateful for, to be honest. But then on top of that, it turned out that when I started working in security and started having to look at all of these things. What it translated to was, I'd actually been training since a very young age, because violence and all the things associated with that, you know, reactions under stress, fear management, communication, and how that works under aggressing, and all the rest of it, all of those things, it turns out that I've actually spent my entire childhood in and around and learning. So I actually had this headstart over and above. And again, when I started getting into sort of full contact competition and stuff that that sort of came to the fore again, because some people were afraid of getting hit, some people were afraid and find that difficult and, and there was that, that sort of hold back, the hanging back if you like. Whereas I didn't have any of that because I gone through it many many years ago. So it actually turned out to be a blessing in a strange way.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

And where did you go from there? You know, we haven't really been putting timestamps on these things. But you know, we're starting to see names starting we're seeing the evolution of you as a martial artist. Where's the next step coming?

**Matt Stait:**

But yeah, well, that was I suppose that that the security of moving into that was a very big milestone. And then obviously, that led me down the the route of all the different styles, including, as I say, the Krav Maga, Kapap back in the early days when that was very new in the country, and it's still very raw. So we're not talking about the sort of bloated behemoth that it's become now, which is a huge marketing thing. And, and there are some really, really high quality guys, but then there are others that are, shall we say, less than, less than could...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Pardon me for saying but it sounds like you have some strong opinions on that. You don't have to go there, but it sounds like...

**Matt Stait:**

I've got strong opinions on those things.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Good, good.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, I think I mean, if I'm gonna be honest on that, I would say that you know, any organization where it takes a fortnight to become an instructor, maybe you have to look at the level of instruction and let's just leave that there.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think that is a fair assessment.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, but there are you know, that's not to take away there are some really, really genuinely very, very talented people within the Krav Maga world. And fortunately, there's also, you know, the other end of the spectrum as well. So it's just being it's just being careful and knowing what you're looking for really. So. So yeah, so anyway, so when I first started into that, it was it was very new in the world. It was very new here. And it was still the essence of what Krav Maga and Kapap used to stand for. So, so it was really sort of relevant to some of the things that I was doing. And then I actually got into the security training itself. So I ended up training to deliver physical intervention, training in conflict management to the security industry and our our medical services and so on and so forth like that. So. So that added another level again, on top of what I was already doing, which was really, really interesting because the first thing I had to do is was actually gained some teaching qualifications. And most instructors, myself included, originally, we just learned parrot fashion. And when we became instructors, ourselves, we would just teach as our instructor taught, we wouldn't necessarily understand why we did that. And so that became that became a really interesting point of study for me, because there were all those little light bulb moments going off like oh, okay, now that's why we do it that way. I never really understood. And then on top of that, there was obviously all the legal elements of that and the law and how that related and, and so on and so forth. And that again, is such an important element towards anybody that teaches kind of anything related to self defense or street oriented stuff because I see an awful lot of that where you've got an instructor teaching somebody how to rip somebody, throw a poke their eye up, their nose, and then break off their arms and legs, all in one fantastic remove technique. But then there's no mention of the legal consequences of that which will be you will go to prison for 15 years and your family will be left alone with nobody to put food on the table. And so there's, that became again another very big elements in in my understanding of martial arts and self defense.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We've talked to people just about anybody listening is gonna hear what you just said about, okay, we've got to consider the legal ramifications. They're gonna nod their head, they're going to say yes, I understand that. But how did we get there? How did we go from martial arts is you know, a personal growth and self defense modality to okay when it comes to the self defense stuff, it's gonna be zero to 60. And if somebody tries to take your wallet, we need to murder them. Coz' I don't have the answer to that, I don't know how we got there.

**Matt Stait:**

Well, if I'm gonna be absolutely honest, then I'm gonna say that we all love to be the hero in our own story. So if you want to actually learn effective self-defense, and this is me, just just being me, by the way, so...



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Yeah please. This is your episode, you can you be as much you as you want. I'm here to guide. If somebody doesn't like it, they can turn this off.

**Matt Stait:**

Okay, so, with that being said, I don't have all the answers, but my particular theory is, we all like to be the hero in our own story. And so, if we wanted to learn real sort of skills, then we do that through failure for the for the most part. And so we fail repeatedly to learn how to get it right. Now when most of us learn martial arts, myself included, we we actually repeat a pretend success. And so if you think about, you know, pair work, partner work, two step sparring, all of that sort of stuff, it's what we're actually doing is repeating a prescribed set of motions that leads to our, that leads to our pretend victory at the end of it, and we feel good about ourselves, we have a shower, we go home, and life goes on. If we were actually really looking to push ourselves to the point where we were mentally and emotionally, and physically capable of dealing with, you know, the actual horror of real violence, then we would have to put ourselves through stuff that really really isn't comfortable and most people don't want to do myself included. So so that's kind of really where some of that sits in the world. For me anyway, that's what I personally think that because, you know, essentially martial arts instructors were we're in this day and age, we're offering a service and we have to cater to our students, stroke clients, however you want to call them. But the end of the day is, you know, the person that signed the check is the person that gets to choose. And so there has to be that balance between, if you like authentic and real training, weighed up against what an individual is actually willing to go through. So to put again, to put that into perspective, I, I used to live in a very, very rough part of an inner city, very working class, a lot of high crime, a lot of drugs, and there was a very good chance that if you wander down the streets, there would be an issue. And that's how I live my life for a lot of years in that environment. And I run a school over there where, where it was very much like that with the training very rough and ready because that's what people needed. And that's the life that people had. Whereas now I live in a lovely little market town. As I've already mentioned, in Wales, it's very laid back. There's very, very low crime and the essence of why people train is different for the most part. Now it's more of a hobby. It's more of a lifestyle choice. They want a bit of fitness, they want a bit of friendship, they want that community. And so they don't actually want the, the higher end skills that come through the more difficult training. So it's so yes, it's all relative. I mean, but that's the beauty of martial arts, isn't it? There's not one size fits all. It's, it's, there's something for everybody. I mean, that's what makes it great.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Very, very well said. I'm gonna go back to the the instruction, teaching people in a non martial way the the security stuff.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I think most of us are familiar with, you know, even if there isn't a formalized curriculum in the school that you train in, you could, you could probably jot one down. You could sit down and say, okay, we do, you know, we do this stuff. We do that stuff. And here's the rough progression. And I'm sure I've never done any security training. I put on a security t-shirt a few times in college, and stood in front of things, but that was the extent of my security background so I know negative nothing. What would we see that would be really different? What would be the biggest differences we'd see in what you would teach me as a martial artist versus what you would teach me as someone learning security?

**Matt Stait:**

Well I suppose the easiest and quickest answer to that especially here in the UK is the emphasis is actually on the other person. So, if we look at a say two step sparring, attacker-defender situation, you know, the defender attacks and sorry the attacker attacks and the defender dispatches them in how many movements are prescribed. But that normally ends up with the attacker being you know, being dispatched, shall we say. When we're looking with security training, then essentially the the, the coin is flipped because the essence is in how to try and keep that person as safe as possible under those situations, so there's an emphasis on health situation. So when you start looking at things like position, asphyxiation, that kind of stuff, things that as an example of that, so Judo, BJJ guys, grapplers they work with this sort of thing all day long every day in their training. But I used to get an awful lot of guys from that kind of background coming to the training, and not understanding what that means. And so when you start looking at position asphyxiation, all that kind of things, then then you start having, again, there's a legal responsibility on the back of that, and all those things are related. So when it becomes a job of work, when it becomes something that you are paid to do and represent a company or corporation, whatever that may be, then as such, you have both legal and moral responsibilities in and around that. So the training is more about keeping the other person safe, as well as being able to to physically deal with the situation.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Do you give us an example of what in altercation might look like with that mindset of keeping the other person safe?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, again, it depends on really what you're tasked to do. So as an example, there were, if I was working in a nightclub environment, and my role was to deal with troublemakers and escort them out of the building, then breaking up fights, that sort of thing, then the idea of that would be as a team, so normally there would be more than just myself, we would look to separate the people fighting and then escorted from the premises in the safest way possible. Now, in the old days, that would usually involve a headlock or choke of some description and just dragging them out that way. But obviously, that's a dangerous sort of way to do things. There's no denying how effective it is, which is why people did it for



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so long. But it's also has a danger attached to it. So nowadays, we learn restraints, we learn controls, we learn things that are that are less likely to cause long-term injury. So that's, that's a very sort of a quick way of looking at that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What might you substitute for that, that headlock or choke hold? Talking about, you know, risk manipulation or...

**Matt Stait:**

I'm gonna be utterly honest, which I like to do. The truth is, there's really not that much to, you know, to take over from it. Because if I'm being absolutely honest, if you've got a 19, 20 year old, a 20 stoned guy that's, you know, full of cocaine or meth or whatever the heck it is, that's absolutely raging. There's really only two things you could do at that point if he doesn't want to be compliant. So you either knock him out or choke him out. That's the reality of it, otherwise, he's gonna hurt you and people around you. And the thing is, if you're trained to stand but this is my personal belief, if you're trained and you know what you're doing, you can safely bring that person to a point of just before they lose consciousness fully where they become compliant and you can actually then deal with them in a safer manner. If I have to strike somebody, especially somebody that size, I've got to use an awful lot of impact. And there's a very real risk of very serious injury both to myself and them. So if you think about me punching somebody along the jaw line to actually create a, you know, enough, enough of a concussive blow to knock somebody out, then there's a good chance I'm going to break my hand, I'm going to break their jaw, there's going to be teeth missing. You know, that's, that's a lot of damage. So I actually think the truth of the matter is, is there really isn't anything that's gonna replace a choke when it comes to actual usability, but there are things that we can do, especially if there's more than one of us that are a bit safer and kinder, but unfortunately, almost all physical intervention techniques that are that are trained like this through corporations and companies, almost all of them stop at a point where they are not actually that effective against a much larger non-compliance opponent. And that's obviously where we see a lot of these problems in the news these days.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We're gonna nod to those and not unpack them because we, one don't have the time and two, I just don't want to go there.

**Matt Stait:**

No, I think yeah, yeah, I think I think that the truth of that is there there's, there's, it's far too big a conversation for us to have in the timeframe that we have. And also, I don't have enough knowledge of all of these situations to actually give any input of any real worth. So uhm...

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Imagine that someone who's willing to withhold their opinion, because they don't have all the information. It's like a revolutionary concept in 2020.

**Matt Stait:**

Yes, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Moving moving on, moving on, we may have just offended some people and I'm okay with that. Moving on. So I suspect we've come pretty close to modern era to the now with what your training and your focus looks like. Am I am I right?

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah. Well, so. Well, I yeah, I basically. I mean, what what what went on from that was I started to look into other things outside of martial arts, but using if you like, the techniques of martial arts, so I started writing and I have wrote a book that I told myself was no good for a few years and then went back and finished it and it became an Amazon bestseller and was very widely well-received. And so then I've written a number, a number of others. So I've got I've done some online courses I started, I started moving into a wider world if you'd like with that. And so I do sort of several things on a on a grander scale. Including helping others to, you know, progress, whatever it is they, they wish to do with their life using the tenants of martial arts if you like, which, which as we know, it's the life skills that they get taught within martial arts are very far reaching and expand well well beyond what we do in a game of sports.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

If you could take what you understand now, what you know now of your training. And you could go back and talk to younger you, you know, at any point whether that's judo, boxing, karate somewhere along this path, and you had a chance to train with younger you for let's say, an hour. What stuff would you work with yourself on?

**Matt Stait:**

Oh, that's a, that's a really good question to be honest. If I only had an hour, that's actually a really tough one, because there's not a huge amount with regards to physical technique or anything that you could teach in an hour. I think I'd probably i'd probably be more inclined to talk about sort of mindset, goal-setting, and all those kind of things. Because one of the things that I do regret, which is odd, because for a very long time in my life, this was all I ever did. I mean, literally every waking hour, I wasn't at work, I was training or reading about training or doing things to do with training. It was it was all consuming, but I will actually tell myself to train more. There's, as I as I approach 50 now, in the next few months, my body just obviously can't tolerate what it could at 25. And so there are so many things I would have





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liked to have explored more there just wasn't enough hours in the day or time in the world, you know. So yeah, I think I would tell myself to travel more, train more, try new things more.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I suspect to try new things more is probably the heart of it. I mean, that's what I'm hearing from you is that you know, you started out and I wonder I wonder if your concept of martial arts you mentioned Bruce Lee, and it doesn't take much time with Bruce Lee's films or books or anything, to see the variety, to see the the, the scope of what he incorporated in his choreography. I wonder if that left to mark that, you know, it took however many years for you to realize that you needed that variety as well, to be happy.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, yeah. Well, though, I would say that with a very, very strong caveat, which is, I firmly believe that there needs to be a foundation art. So again, some people may disagree with this, but I honestly believe that somebody should spend a long time in one particular art, master that to a level of of good competency, before they're moving into other things. A, because it will make the other things much easier to understand, because we only work in certain ways and the mechanics of that translate whatever style, you know, so, so the fundamentals remain the same. And you can spot that as well, which is really, really interesting because you can have a system from China, or a system from Indonesia, or a system from England, whatever. But the core fundamentals if they're good, they will apply across the board. So you can see all of that. It also gives you the discipline, so on and so forth. So I would say absolutely explore more, try more, but on the understanding that you have a core art, that is where your feet are firmly planted for those foundations. And one of the things that I think is missing a lot in modern day training, and again, other people might see this differently is that there's an awful lot of people just flitting from one thing to another and not really getting a deep understanding of any of it.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I've observed through through travels and training and in a number of schools that no matter where you start, if you get that, those fundamentals that foundational training of a while and how long that is is entirely subjective, but that seems to become the root language. It's the way you express your body from which everything else relates. Meaning, you know, I started with karate. I trained in Taekwondo now, but I'm still a karate guy doing Taekwondo and anybody who spends time watching me knows this guy didn't start with Taekwondo.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's interesting, isn't it, they get sort of, it gets you get you get some that set into but the mechanics of the mechanics and the movement, the body movement, that all remains the same in the sense that we've only got two arms and two legs, each one for the most part, and, and we only move in certain ways. So the the truth of how we move as human beings is fundamental, regardless of



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style. It's the, the style is just the way that's interpreted in the same way that you know, language has a different sound, but fundamentally is built is built in the same way. So one of the things that used to really interest me was one of my, one of my instructors and absolutely wonderful man called [0:49:01 - 0:49:02] who's who's who's had a very long, long history in the martial arts in the UK. One of the guys that made a massive impact on my particular journey, and he would say that he didn't need a 10 hour grading for somebody, he could literally tell within a few minutes, you know, where they were there sort of level of knowledge was, by the way that they moved. And, and I don't know why it's one of those where I, I always respected that as a level of knowledge that I could only sort of aspire to, and I'm still far from there yet, but he was adamant that you know, he could tell within a few minutes by the way, somebody moved and you know what, that I see more and more of that now as I get older myself and I understand a little bit more about the world. And so yeah, it's really interesting that somebody with a good foundation in what art I think will have a much, much easier time understanding other arts because the fundamentals remain the same.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

I wholeheartedly agree. You mentioned a book, or maybe it was books. But let's talk about that.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, yeah, there's I've got a I've got a number of books out. So the first one was, it was called "Modern Samurai", which basically is, is not the fact that I think I'm a feudal medal evil worrier from the, from the Far East. But it's basically it's based on my journey through the security industry and how well that looks. So that was, that was my first one that became an Amazon bestseller, which I'm grateful to say. And that did really well. So that prompted me to write some more. So then I wrote my journey up the mountain, which was that was more about my martial arts kind of stuff. But again, a memoirs kind of thing with lots of lots of stories in there. Lots of interesting sort of tales of a bit like today, really lots of sort of sort of ramblings off in different kinds of directions, but all built around my journey itself. So then I did a more teaching one called "Child Safe", which is one of the series around children's self protection, that sort of thing. And I've just recently released one a few months ago with a co-author called Kai Morgan, which is, which was called "Online Martial Arts: Evolution or Extinction", which is very relevant in the current situation. We released the book, we wrote it and released it just before the situation panned out the way that it did. But it's incredibly relative, you know, relevant for now.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Can you give us a bit of the premise and in that, obviously, I don't want you to ruin the book but...

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, yes.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**



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Get excited about the book.

**Matt Stait:**

Well, essentially, I started reporting online courses and teaching through the medium of the screen a number of years ago, and it was just an add on to what I was already doing and just another way to reach the world. And so it was it was it was useful like that. But then obviously, the question then is, as we all move, move forward with technologies, how is that gonna impact training itself? How is that gonna impact our art? So as an example of that, if you look at MMA, MMA is basically built around what the television audience wants and can see. And so the whole rule base, the whole sports, art of MMA is based around that. If you look at say, variations of Taekwondo as an example, and you look at Olympic Taekwondo and the various elements of that, and then you look at well, what's the style represent now? Well, it represents a rule-based system that is designed for the audience to enjoy. So you could say that that's been, you know, manipulated through the years to suit that. So there's lots of different factors and now what we're seeing is is people changing their syllabus is, people changing the way they grade to fit to fit the situation at the moment. Because it's, it's necessary. Because we all want to survive, we all want our art to survive, we all want to, you know, come out of this at the other end and still be able to train teach and everything else. But to do that, we've got to, we've got to literally squeeze whatever it is we do into a shape that that fits the situation of the moment, that may not be what it looked like before. So as an example of that, in the UK, at the moment, we're not allowed to [0:53:28]. And if for anybody who's ever done any kind of traditional system, then they will understand the ramifications of that and what that means and, and the fact that, you know, historically, it's been something where a lot of attention has been given to, you know, correct breathing and all the rest of it. And now all of a sudden, we have to take that out of the equation entirely. And we're in a world where now we can't not only can we not teach it, we have to penalize anybody that tries to do it. So so basically it's an exploration of, of how that may look moving forward. So it's, yeah it's an interesting book. I mean, I thoroughly enjoyed writing it and Kai Morgan, my co-author, she's a, she's an academic as well and has an awful lot to do with the science, the educational side of it and, and has a very deep understanding from that point of view. So, so it was really it was a really good exploration in the subject.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

What if people want to find those books? Are they all on Amazon? Just search for...

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, just yeah, go straight to Amazon and you'll find them all there.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Okay, great. And what else? What else do you have going on that's consuming your time martial arts wise.

**Matt Stait:**



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Well, at the moment, my physical gym remain shut due to the current situation. So I'm working in the background to try and get ready to reopen that and get that sorted out. I do, I work with other instructors, helping them to grow and to uh, to improve their business. All that sort of thing. And one of the things that I've managed to do recently, which may or may, may or may not interest people, depending on the point of view is, I find myself TikTok famous.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

We've got a link to your account then.

**Matt Stait:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Did you send us the link? I don't remember that in the form.

**Matt Stait:**

I think I may have done yeah. So I'm there is basically Modern Samurai MA, for anyone that wants to have a look. I have a following of over a quarter of a million people. I get regular views of about 2 million a week. And I gained at around a 1000 followers per day. So so yeah, I've kind of taken off on that platform a little bit, which is, which is great fun, because I know that obviously it's in the news a lot at the moment where you guys are and that's a that's a that's an interesting conversation in itself when you start looking at it as the how much is political. But there you go. But the point is the platform itself, regardless of whatever issues being discussed, it's actually at its core, it's actually a lot of fun to be part of and to do which is I suppose the attraction for a lot of people. So, so what I've what I've had to do is an interesting skill, which is basically learn to condense my teachings into 15 second segments, which is actually quite a challenging thing, but quite fun.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

But when we're done I'm gonna add you to my TikTok account start following you to go along with the multitude of dog accounts. That's what I've got going on with TikTok and I don't think I've ever posted I just the end of the day or middle of a bad day I'll sit down and just look at all the ridiculous dogs do ridiculous dog things and it tears me up. I mean, how can how can you not. It's a it is a fun platform for sure. Other than TikTok and Amazon Books, you know, where where would we find you online?

**Matt Stait:**

All the usual suspects so you can find me on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, all those sorts of things. So Matt Stait S-T-A-I-T, that's, that's the way to find me on those. Or you can just look at anything really under the Modern Samurai banner because again, that's the name of my gym. That's the name of my book. That's the name of one of my businesses. So you should also be able to find me that way.



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**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Is there a fun story for that name? That's a that's a great name. It makes me think maybe you watched The Last Samurai and you wholly rejected Tom Cruise as The Last Samurai and said, no, we'll keep it going.

**Matt Stait:**

Oh, well, no, actually, I actually named my gym because I've had my gym for for a good few years now. So it was actually long before that that movie came out. So no, I, again, like a lot of people when they're trying to figure out a name for something I threw a few things around and played with concepts and ideas and at the time as I was doing the security and training in various elements, the I love the idea of a Samurai. Again, that's that's me being the hero in my journey, as we talked about earlier, the romanticized version of that, I mean, the truth is, I probably would make a terrible Samurai being absolutely honest. However, the version, the romanticized version of it, I really like the idea of the ethos of it, the perceived values that the Samurai had all of those things lent really well to, you know, to my sort of way of thinking. And then when I actually looked at if Samurai existed in the world today, you know, how would they approach their training because they were, they were more than just warriors. And so, it was very much a case of well if I pull that into the modern day, then that's kind of what I'm trying to achieve I've although be a badly you know, I like to write I like to I like art, I like to draw, I draw extensively. I like to I like to make music, so it's more than just punching people in the face. And so so the Modern Samurai it just sort of it seems to work for me.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

This has been fun. This has been really good stuff, and we'll have to have you back. But it's time to end this one. So we always ask the guests, you know, how do you want to close out your episode? What what final thoughts do you have for the people listening?

**Matt Stait:**

I would say keep training, enjoy it, make the most of it. Because one day when you're old and fat like me, you'll look back on it. And I wish you'd done more.

**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Like I said in the intro, good stuff, different stuff, and perspective, that I think it's pretty darn useful stuff that I think we can all spend some more time contemplating as not just martial artists, but as people. So thank you, Sir. I appreciate your time. Thanks for coming on the show. And hope to talk again. If you want to go a little bit deeper on what we've talked about, or today's guest go to [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). You'll find links and all kinds of other stuff for this in every other episode. Eventually, we end up with transcripts for each episode. Those don't happen at the time of release. But they do happen and we've been going back and transcribing all the old episodes too. So, if you know someone who maybe prefers to read versus listen, that's an option. Check it out [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com). And if you're



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