



Episode 538 - Professor Mark Reding | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello, what's happening and welcome. This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio Episode 538 with today's guest, Professor Mark Reding. I'm Jeremy Lesniak, host for the show, founder here at whistlekick where everything we're doing is in support of the traditional martial arts. What does that mean? If you want to know what that means go to whistlekick.com. I got an email just today from someone saying, I didn't realize all the different stuff you guys are doing. How are you doing all this stuff? And well, it's a combination of an amazing team, and a lot of efficiency, and getting up really early. So go to whistlekick.com, check out everything that we've got there. One of the things you'll see is our store, we've got a store, we sell some stuff, it's one of the ways we keep the lights on. So if you want to help us keep the lights on, make a purchase, use the code `PODCAST15`, that saves you a little bit of money, saves you 15% and lets us know that yep, the podcast leads to some sales. So it's a good thing, helps me justify it to some of the people I have to answer to. Other ways you can help out. You can follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick, you can sign up for the newsletter at any of our websites, you can check out the books that we have available at Amazon, or you can support our Patreon [P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick) dropped a post in there just today talking about upcoming guests. And something that might start happening soon, some behind the scenes stuff. If you really enjoy this show, and you wanna get the most out of it, you can subscribe to the Patreon you can start at two bucks a month. At upper tiers, we give you more exclusive free content. And make sure you're checking out the website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We've got transcripts, photos, videos, links, we've got episodes



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arranged by style, by location, by chronology. There's a lot over there and there's even a place to comment. So if you have feedback on episodes, that's the best place to leave it. Why do we do all this? Why do we make this show? It's to connect, it's to educate, it's to entertain traditional martial artists. And that's why we do different shows, different subjects. We're trying to give you a variety. I had a great conversation with today's guest. Professor Reding has been on one path from day one and we talked about that and it's blowing my mind how early this man knew he was destined to be what he is. And when you take a look at all he's done, all he's doing, it's awesome. We had a great conversation. Such a positive, motivated person. And I think you're gonna come away from this one, fired up. I know I did. So here we go. Professor Reding, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Mark Reding:

Hey, thank you guys for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey of course, thanks for coming on. Thanks for your generosity with your time.

Mark Reding:

Yeah, sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:

People say that all the time, right. It's almost, oh thanks for being so generous with your time. But really, the older I get, the more time I spend in business, the more I realized, like that's really the only currency we have is time.

Mark Reding:

That's true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

We have money which stores time and creates more time and reminds me of a kind of cheesy Justin Timberlake movie from 10 years ago, what was it called In Time? But it's I mean, it's the reality, isn't it? You know, here we are in 2020 and nobody knows how to spend their time anymore. We had the reason and we all got blown up.

Mark Reding:

That's right. I got I had a friend tell me the other day. But this was awesome analogy. He said 2020 is like walking out on the street looking both ways for a car and then getting hit by a plane. That's exactly what it's been like.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

I like it. I like it. It's we need we need more of those we need more memes mocking what we're going through just to deal.

Mark Reding:

Yeah, exactly.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How it's horrendous, it's horrendous. And, you know, I don't I don't know where this is all gonna unfold. But of course when we when we think about training, we're talking about martial arts. Most places still aren't where they want to be and we've got schools that are shut down. It's it's a mess.

Mark Reding:

It's a mess. It really is. Thankfully, you know I live in Texas so it's a it's not as bad as some of my friends that have schools you know throughout the United States. So I'm very fortunate this week. We can get back to work and and we have people still training and doing that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, Texas is big where are you?

Mark Reding:

I'm in, I'm in Denton, Texas which is about 30 to 40 minutes outside of Dallas.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay, alright. Texas feels like its own country...

Mark Reding:

It does.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Been there a couple times.

Mark Reding:

It is it's a huge place man you can go 12 hours in one direction and not even be out of Texas.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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My my my Texas anecdote so, our our product warehouse is in Texas. And the first time I went there, flew into Houston and had to drive down to Rockport, you know, near near Corpus Christi, for people who might be outside of Texas may not know Texas well. I certainly don't know Texas well, and before I left, a friend of mine said, watch for the cactus. What are you talking about? What I don't? And here here I am, three hours into a five hour drive south and I went oh, a cactus I went oh, that's what she's talking about. The flattest, straightest, most boring road I've ever been on in my life.

Mark Reding:

That's crazy.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well, we, we could probably talk about Texas, and the Coronavirus, and pandemics, and business, and a whole bunch other things that I'm sure would be interesting. And maybe we even get to some of that stuff. But I want to rewind the tape, I want to go back. It's a martial art show. You're a martial artist. At some point, you became a martial artist. So what was that zero point for you?

Mark Reding:

Okay, so this is a, this is a crazy story. But um it's one that is all true. So I'm starting at the beginning and let you know...

Jeremy Lesniak:

Crazy stories and these ones are always the crazy.

Mark Reding:

Okay, so here's how it played out. So I, I've never done any sports, I didn't do basketball, baseball, and nothing like that and do school. Now as a kid, my folks put me in. I believe like [06:30] I might I might even played soccer. I don't remember I was so little. But in in the years, like, I remember when I was in junior high going into high school, I never did any sports. And, you know, I just I was never like interested in that. I didn't have any hobbies. And one day, my dad, he came to me and said, "You know what, Mark, we're gonna, I'm gonna do this martial art class." And I said, "Oh yeah that's cool". I was like, 13 at the time. And he said, "You know what, you're gonna go with me." That's that I'm not going to do that, typical 13-year olds, like, "Nah, I'm not gonna do what my parents said, I won't do that." He said, "No, you need to come with me and go this class and just see what you think about." I was like, alright, whatever. So I load up in the car with him. And I go, and I go to this karate class. And just Shorin Ryu Karate, is what he was doing. So I I open up his door, get in the car, we had that way, have a talk on the way, we get to the gym, and we walked in and the very second I walked into those doors, I knew I would do this the rest of my life. I was 13 at that point, I just turned 43 last week and I have in a nutshell, I've run my own business, I opened my own school at 19. I never went to college. I like I said



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the moment I walked in and I saw it, like this is it this is what I'm gonna do. This is what my passion is. And I negging done the class yet. So I finished the class. And I knew, that was it. And to that day since I was 13, now I'm 43, I've never missed a week of training ever. I've flown all over the world. I have done multiple martial arts, I've been that have the privilege of training with the best people in the world and getting to live this this crazy life of now. In February, be 30 years of doing martial arts and I I get the chance to to live this this dream until someone comes in, wakes me up and says hey, you gotta go to go get a real job. So I am I'm super fortunate to say the least.

Jeremy Lesniak:

There are a few things, we're gonna go back and unpack there. Okay. First off, wow. All right. That feeling. Now, I felt that feeling on things I did. You know, I started training when I was too young to remember feelings. So I can't say that I had that. So I can't I can't empathize there. But I had that feeling about other things. You know, you meet certain people and you say, you know, that person is in my life for a reason. They're significant. I'm gonna hold on to them whether it's romantic or not. You you travel to certain places, I think most of us have felt something like that at some point in our lives. Any idea what it was In that moment what you were missing? or looking forward to? Can you can you bring us to that moment and help us understand?

Mark Reding:

You know, it's funny you asked that because my my wife and I talk a lot about this sometimes. And she says she's like, Mark you you've got to realize how rare it is that someone at that age find something. And that's what they did the rest of their life. Most people don't do that. I mean, literally at 13 I found it. At 14 and 15, I would sit in the back of my classes in junior high or read business magazines and martial art magazines trying to figure out how I was gonna open my school. I just knew this is it. And that's all I've ever wanted to do. And what's even crazier is still 30 years later, I'm even more passionate about you wanna walk to the door to begin with, it's um, it's, I don't know if I can pinpoint and to say, I really believe that, you know, you believe in higher powers, whatnot, I do. And I believe that I was put there that day for a reason. And I'm one of those very few people that that gets to look at something at an early age and bout it. You know what's crazy also think about this too is how many people look at this with my students, how many people out there, don't go try martial arts or any other thing, you know, whatever hobby or sport may be and that might be their thing? I have no idea that could be the thing that they were waiting on to walk in the door, I just happen to be so lucky that I was putting that spot, bam, I walked in. And that was what I was supposed to do. I didn't find it at 43 and found it at 13.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's amazing, I have this theory that we all have one thing that we could do better than anybody else. And you can you can probably think of some people who who fit that mold. You know, certain pro athletes or anybody who's ever worked with Bill Wallace knows that means he found his calling.



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Mark Reding:

I work with him as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

He's a he's a great guy, somebody to pull somebody from the martial arts community. But like you said, most people don't try enough things.

Mark Reding:

That's true.

Jeremy Lesniak:

It requires some, what do you want to call it, divine intervention or something else to say, here is your path. Now I want to I want to go back even a little bit before.

Mark Reding:

Yes.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So I have this theory that martial artists are filling a hole. For those of us where martial arts really resonates, and really becomes our life pursuit. There's something that wasn't there prior to training. Any idea what that might be for you?

Mark Reding:

Ah, no, that's a that's a hard question. That's a good question. I, my parents were great people, man that they they raised me very well. I feel like I had lots of opportunities. But if you see that I am missing something, or not, I don't. I don't know those that so much as that. Whenever I, I'd walk into the room, and just the concept of the idea of knowing that, wow, man, I can actually learn a way to defend myself, a way that I can have my mind actively be pursuing something positive, which I think a lot of people miss that when they look at martial arts these days, because nothing that gets in the main, always they're awesome, amazing arts, but people walk in the door, they don't realize that this is a positive, positive influence on so many people around you and yourself. You know, it could be lots of things, you could get into that or not that way. But this is something that the longer you do it, the more you start to see. Wow, man, there's this, this has kept me out of a lot of trouble. You know?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah.

Mark Reding:



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So it is the feeling of that maybe it's just a feeling of belonging, you know, going into something bigger than yourself. And that's another thing I tell my students is this, like, you're part of something bigger than you know, understand that no matter what art you do, I look at I don't look at as specific art. I've never have always I'm a martial artist, you know, so I look at like, the best way to to approach it is to say, look, you know, I walk in here, I get to train this this amazing art. No, you want to make sure that you hate the word give back. I'm not giving back to to that. But I want to make sure that it's respected and that people look at and go, oh, yeah, okay, this is this something as bigger than me. This is bigger than what I could ever accomplish by myself. You know, another way to say it is, you know, I like this. I heard this other day, I wrote at my notes. It said, the reward of doing martial arts is doing martial arts. That's that's exactly what it is. And that's what I think when I step on the mat every single day, I'm like, this is my reward of doing this. I could do the martial arts.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like that. So, it's kind of meta.

Mark Reding:

It is, man.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I can't unpack that a lot. If you go, I'm avoiding going too deep on it, because it's starting to make my brain hurt. But I can I can see there's a lot of depth there.

Mark Reding:

But you know what I'll tell you, I heard that I'll say 'coz I'm 'coz this is great. I like people to I study all the time. But I'm really into music as well. I don't play music, but I like to listen to it in all different genres just like I do martial arts. And actually, Dave Grohl from the Foo Fighters said that he wasn't talking about martial arts. He was talking about drumming, okay, and he was just saying, like, if you want to be really good, you know, he goes, be suck, be okay with sucking, get in a garage. You know, get get your instruments in and suck for a really long time. But be okay that you're doing music and I thought this is the same thing as martial arts that people walk in the door and they want to be black belts, you know they want to do this. But when I try to let students actually listen as like men be okay sucking, you're gonna suck. We all suck when you first start. But that's the fun part of the process because you are doing the martial art. That's the reward of sucking, you get a chance to do something amazing. And all of us can do it. No matter what your skill level, no matter what your color number, how much money you make, no matter how tall you are, whatever, everyone can do martial arts, and that's the reward.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Yeah, yeah there Dave Grohl despite, you know, I'm, I have an appreciation. For Nirvana, I have an appreciation for the Foo Fighters. I like Dave Grohl, I would not call myself a fan. But I wanted to get this quote. And here it is. Musicians should go to a yard sale and buy an old drum set, and get in the garage, and just suck and get their friends to come in. And they'll suck too. And then they'll start playing, and they'll have the best time they've ever had in their lives. And all of a sudden they'll become Nirvana. Because that's exactly what happened with Nirvana, a bunch of guys had some old instruments.

Mark Reding:

That is exactly the interview I watched. I watched him talking about it. And he's right. And I thought about that same thing. I mean, don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to say oh, Dave Grohl's, a huge rock star. I'm not saying that. But but but Dave Grohl had a passion too. He liked to play the drums and being a music. And he never thought he was going to be huge. I never thought I was going to have a school for 24 years. I never thought that I never thought hey, man but no, we're coming into our 25th year anniversary of running this academy. I never ever thought about that. This is my passion it's what I want to do and I was okay, and I start off my mom's garage. When I was like 15, build my own gym there and I ran these flyers. So all these people in the neighborhood to see if someone would let me come teach them and own this one lady. She brought her grandkids that were there for the summer from a different state. They weren't even from my own state. And that's where I started at. And I was like, This is amazing. I didn't care like I was so happy someone wanted me to teach them. And I got a chance to do that. And man, from there to where I'm at over 250 students now is is amazing. I'm I did the same thing as him in a different kind of way, in an artistic way. You know, it's just, it's really cool. Somebody needs to relate to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But what I'm hearing and and I think this is important, whether you, the folks listening, whether your dream is to pursue a martial art school, or to be recognized as one of the best drummers of all time, or to do anything else is to lead with that passion. Because you're in order to get great, you have to suck.

Mark Reding:

You do.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And if you don't enjoy the process, you're not gonna make it past the part of sucking.

Mark Reding:

You are 100% correct. I want to add something to this too. I was talking to a friend of mine the other day on the phone, and he's just starting his school. And I asked him a couple of bits of advice and he goes Mark, what is what is this advice know what everybody wants is one thing, Mark, what is this that you



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can do that helped me be successful? And I said, you know what man in my opinion, what people want is they want your passion. When someone walks in my door, they say they may want a black belt and they said they want to have fight and defend themselves, get in good shape, whatever. And those are all things that are valid and these people want. But in the day, I believe that people want what I feel about this martial art, like why am I so excited about it after 30 years. People are missing that in their lives. You know what everyone can have that. It doesn't matter if you are a world champion, if you are beat everybody at class, if you're not getting beat, if you're getting beat by everybody in class, you can still have passion, no one can take that from you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Why do people go to concert?

Mark Reding:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You can listen to a more accurate, better sounding recording of the same music at home.

Mark Reding:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And you don't have to spend any money, and you don't have to bump into people and spend four hours getting out of the parking garage. But you won't be around the passion.

Mark Reding:

That's right. Energy energy is so so important, man. I mean, you can feel that and and in the martial arts for sure. You know, because it's such a personal thing with someone they are training with.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So that passion is what led you in the back of the classroom at 15 years old to start reading business magazines.

Mark Reding:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What magazines?



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Mark Reding:

Man, I read so many books, I books and magazines. I've read so much on Zig Ziglar, I read a lot of Brian Tracy, I read a lot on Tom Hopkins. I read a lot on Anthony Han or Anthony, Anthony who is that it was in my mind. I read a lot on different just different people that would put in kind of like I'm I'm the type of person that I like to see it in, in kind of laid out in front of me. So I can pick and choose what would work for me. I don't like to take everyone's, you know, ideas, or hey, I want to take that and I'm gonna go off and copy this person, I want to see what they did and then pick and choose what I want out of it and go the next thing. And that's exactly how I did my career in martial arts. I, I have black belts and six different arts that I've trained in and done, and I picked what I want out of each of them. And then I go on to the next thing, which is what you're supposed to do. And I say, next thing, I don't mean quit that. I still practice all the arts on black belt, then but I along the way, I never thought of like, oh my god, bla bla this, bla bla that, I want the information. Show me this information. How can I get that? Where did this come from? What book can you suggest to me that I could read that might I get one little piece of that information that I can apply to what I'm doing. Whether it be my business, whether it be my martial arts or whatnot. So that's kind of where I started with it. And I'm always been an avid note taker. I, I believe in writing down your goals, you know, writing down and I take it a step further. I am I tell you this, this is a little bit of a sidetrack. But I, before I started teaching full time, I had my school, but I was working a couple jobs, because I didn't have enough students to be able to do it full time. So I'd work a few jobs. And I remember one job was about an hour away from where I live and so I took a picture of my current, or the school I was in at that time on the outside of it, and I put that picture on my dashboard. And I look at that picture every day on that drive to work and that drive home, telling myself, hey, this is what you're going to do full time. This is it, this is what's gonna happen. And man, it became a reality. I stopped something, I just thought, oh I'm gonna do this. You know, I wrote notes on it, I have this I'm a very visual person. And I think that martial artists need to see that. That's that's the lost thing I don't see a lot of people taking notes they are always on their phone or video on it now. I mean, writing it down, I still after 25 years of running my business, I work off of a chalkboard that I had when I was 19. When I opened my school, still still does that just literally four weeks ago. That's all it was writing some things on it. Still, I think that's what I think that's a lot of department successes that I've been able to work from that kind of that kind of a format. I don't think a lot of people do that. With that also being said, though, I mean, I'm up here early. Yesterday is at 6am. I left at 8pm yesterday, you know, I work a lot about I love this, this is not work because this is my passion this is what I get to do. I get to share this every single day and I'm fortunate enough that people keep coming back to let me do that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So you started with Shorin Ryu you said?

Mark Reding:



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I started with Shorin Ryu Karate when I was 13.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay and...

Mark Reding:

I got my black belt with that at 18. And I tell you a story about that too.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Please.

Mark Reding:

Hope if you don't mind.

Jeremy Lesniak:

No, no, this is your episode you you, you drive the show, I'm happy to hang back and just you know, yeah, I'm in wants to know, I want to learn about you.

Mark Reding:

I tell you. um I was saying earlier interview, I could think of Anthony as Anthony Robbins, Tony Robbins or whatever, a lot of his stuff, too. I went to one of his seminars too, which was amazing. Super, super informative. But anyway, back to the, you know, get my black belt. My first black belt I got was 18 years old. Okay, it was 1995 that's when I got my first black belt and, and working my way up through the ranks when I was a kid I am, I thought, well, that's what's gonna happen, you know, you're gonna get the black belt, and it's gonna be some magical is gonna happen. I'm going to have all this skill. And I remember getting my black belt, and I went back to my girlfriend's house at that time. I remember sitting on her couch, and I was like, that's it? That's all I got? I mean, what is this? And she was like, Mark, what are you so upset about? I'm not really upset, I'm just kind of let down. She's like, what do you mean? What do you let down for us? I don't know, I just expected something different, you know? And she's like, what are you gonna do? I'm gonna go do some more, and then find another art. I'm gonna keep I'm keep diving keep going deeper and deeper. And I realized what I was feeling at that time was like, like, the old adage says, you know, you, you work you get to this black belt level, you realize that oh, man, you really don't know anything. And that's exactly how I felt. And that's exactly how I feel today after 30 years. I have second degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I'm an eighth degree black belt in Kenpo Karate. I am a first degree black belt in Shorin Ryu. I have instructorships on Thai boxing, I have full instructorship in Jeet Kune Do. I've done a lot of things, but I also feel like I am a beginner 100% and I encourage people to come in and I love how much students are constantly learning and getting better and I want to learn I want people to show me how to do that. I think that's a that's a big thing you know.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

I call it the, the white belt mentality.

Mark Reding:

Absolutely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, for those who forgot what it was like or, you know, maybe you were too young or maybe you've been training the same thing for a long time. To me there is no better feeling in stepping in with nothing but opportunity and no responsibility, no expectations.

Mark Reding:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Because you can just learn so much, you just get to be a sponge. 30 years ago, though, 25 years ago, when you were in your first black belt, it was not common for people to just pick up and shift to a different art. Was that something that came?

Mark Reding:

It wasn't.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Through your instructor, through your Shorin Ryu instructor? Or was that philosophy you'd read about? Where did that come in?

Mark Reding:

I think that's funny you said that, because I think that was really common that time. You gotta, and I tell my students this too, they don't realize and I'm happy, I want to give my students more. It's like, they're like my kids, I want to give them more than I ever had coming up. That's, that's my number one thing whenever they are part of the Academy, but they kind of understand too. You know, 25 years ago, it was kind of looked bad upon to go train in their art, it was definitely look bad upon if you went to a different school. Oh, forget about that man. You're, you're like, no breaking codes by going do that. And I never had that mentality. But my first instructor, he was always welcoming, saying, Mark, you know, go go experiment here and go show this or go learn this and go back and show what you what you learn. So I was I was lucky to have that at the beginning stages. And then honestly, I would say all my instructors looking back on, there's maybe a couple that didn't agree with me [26:30] places. But now after all the



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years have passed. I mean, I think they understand why. And I also think that they do the same thing, though. And that's that, that shows positive growth in the martial art and people don't, don't see how that where that came from. You know, I'm, I've always been an advocate of that. Another thing I want to tell people that are listening on the website, or on the podcast is that some martial artist seems to be more traditional sorry. And I can say that because I have like both traditional arts that I came through that same lineup, but a lot of those people, you know, they when they would teach you, they would have I heard it myself, students or other black belts in the class would say, Mark, you know, why are you wasting your time learning these other arts? You know, just stick with just this because this is the best art. No, like, there's no I'm a seeker of knowledge, man. I don't I have no, no one group of putting my eggs in one basket. And most people think that all I do is just I love to just do it because an amazing art. But that is not the best art in my opinion, I think that there's not a best art. I think that they all have something very special. It'd be like asked me, Mark, which one of your kids is your favorite? Well, it changes day to day. It's the same thing with my martial arts. You know that some days I don't want to just do some days I want to do Filipino martial arts. Some days, I want to come in and work on Kenpo. Some days I want to do Thai boxing. I don't know. It depends on what what I feel like I want to work on that time. Because there's so much behind all those arts, that you could study a lifetime doing that you would never pick it all. If you just pick one and I have five or six that I play around with. So you know that I'm lucky to be able to practice and learn in that art.

Jeremy Lesniak:

As you were saying that there was something that really struck me. You know, we and this is this is so deep. It's so cliché it's in all of the the best worst martial arts movies, these claims that you know, this style is best. Imagine someone saying this is the best hamburger ever...

Mark Reding:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And never having eaten another hamburger.

Mark Reding:

Yeah I agree.

Jeremy Lesniak:

This is the best car. How many cars have you've driven? Well, this is my first car. It's ludicrous.

Mark Reding:

It is, it's insane. You would never do that...



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Jeremy Lesniak:

It's irrelevant.

Mark Reding:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Because that's not the point. And it sounds like, like it was your recognition of that that led you to go broader and try different things. Now you you said something that I really like that you want to give your students more than you had?

Mark Reding:

Absolutely. That's the number one thing.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Talk to me about that. What does that mean to you? How does that manifest?

Mark Reding:

Okay, so, let me let me kind of dial back a little bit and say, like, you know, when I started, I was I started in my mom's garage, okay. And I, I built this you know group of people that I was training. And then my dad made a comment to me one time when I was a kid, I was already a black belt. I was I was graduate I graduated the year I graduated high school. And he made a comment to me he said mark you my job as a parent is to make sure that you are on the path. You need to be, do what you want to do for your life. And he's like, what do you want to do? I said, I'm gonna teach martial arts that's it. And he's like, okay, you know, and he's self employed as well. So he he understood, you know, that kind of mindset. So I didn't get that those parents are like, you're crazy, I can't let you do that. But anyway, he guided me. He's like, look, let me help you get started with this. So he helped me and helped me get a place, get everything set up, and start teaching my classes that job is to run it, but he helped me get this school going. And then to feed this passion. So I came from a garage, and then I went to three different schools. And then I ended up buying my own place 10 years ago, all right, each place I've gone to, I've improved a lot. So I would know it was not the greatest place in the first place. And then we put our touch on, it cleaned it up, make it look better, better, better. Each place, has offered more to the students. Alright, so now I'm currently in the process of building a brand new building that luckily, we have two schools in my town and we're consolidated. A brand new building, building a building from scratch. All right, and it's gonna have all the salient things in there for people that want to come in and train martial arts. And this is this is my thoughts on that. All right, I want to have a facility when you walk in the door. At the same time, you have Filipino martial arts teaching, same time Judo is going on, same time Jiu Jitsu is going on, same time the karate is going on. Same time, people are lifting weights, same time, people are



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training on the train that brass inside, same time people are studying the martial arts in a library, same time, people are doing private lessons. I want all this going on the same time. I want my students, I don't think it's anywhere in the world. I don't think anybody has. I've never seen and I've traveled all over the place. I want my sister walk into a facility like that and go, wow, this is this is a university, this is some place I can come and learn. That is the ultimate gift I can give back to all my students. And I don't think they even see it yet. But it's coming, I'm gonna have that soon. And they'll be able to look at that and go, wow, I had an amazing experience one time with the martial arts, not so much for me, I don't need someone to thank me, I just want them to look back on martial arts and go, man, I went to a martial art school that I was fortunate to be able to experience all these arts as a whole.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That sounds phenomenal you know. Let me know, let me know when it's up and running 'coz I'm gonna move in.

Mark Reding:

Man come on, and that's another thing, we'll have dorm rooms in the place. So my plan is to have it done by the end of next year, in the fall of next year. And but that's it people can travel in and and see and teach a seminar on what they want and have a place to stay at the gym. While they're there over that time. You know, it's kind like a residency. And that's, that, to me is like the ultimate thing I could give back to martial arts from what it's given me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow, powerful.

Mark Reding:

Yeah, that's, that's the point.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I like, what comes up for you emotionally, when you talk about that?

Mark Reding:

Um talk about what the?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Just just this, this idea of investing so much in creating something so unique.

Mark Reding:



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You know, I don't take this the wrong way 'coz I don't I don't mean this at all. But I am, I've worked really hard, really hard. And I've sacrificed quite a few things to be able to get to where I'm at. And I've put martial arts first. And times when I shouldn't have, you know, clearly. It is the only thing I've ever wanted to do, period. So I, when you ask me, like, what that feels like to do something like that is, it is emotional. It's very emotional to me, because I have such a deep love for martial arts. And I want everyone to be able to experience that. And not just that, I want to leave a legacy behind that. There's a place for people to go, to people that can continue to run that, or to continue experience that you know, when I'm when I'm past, you know, because really, it's given me so much. It's given me mindset, it's given me health, it's given me family. You know it has given me so many things that I could never give it back. I could never give back enough to any martial art that I've practiced, that has given me and, and to be able to share that with someone else it get them to have a glimpse of that, man, that's, that's the ultimate gift I think I could I could give to somebody.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I get it well believe me, I get it. I am right on board. Sounds like we are motivated by the same thing.

Mark Reding:

Absolutely. That's awesome.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What is your school look like now? If that's the evolution, you know what what's going on currently?

Mark Reding:

So currently, we have two schools, and they are five minutes apart. And I get a lot of people ask me questions. Why do you have two schools that are five minutes apart when you want to spread them out across town? That wasn't my strategy. And my strategy was, I'm going to have one school that we've had for I've been at this location now for 10 years or so. And I outgrew this place probably eight years ago. Okay, so I've been running at full tilt for a long time. So I went out and rented another spot five minutes away. It's the same size of space. But let's see how quick you'll take before I can get that one completely full. I didn't even open that one. And I had it for two. And I think what works so well is that when people come in the door, I'd say, okay, look, this is the place, you're gonna train here at this location. Once I got that class full, I say, hey, I'm gonna do the same time I put different instructors on other school, five minutes away down the road, this is your class, we're doing the same thing. But I couldn't put everybody there and have the space to do that. So I just made it happen five minutes apart so. And that's been working amazing. I mean, it's great. But now it's time to consolidate is I had to come to a I came to a crossroads, because luckily, I I'm 43 and I saved my money very well. I read all these business books coming up fortunately, I did, I did some good things. And I could just retire if I wanted to, you know, everything is almost paid off. I'm in a really good spot. So it was I had to sit down think about



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I was like Markus, you're 43 you know, you you're not ready to retire, retire when I say retire I mean, come into class and just train and not teach all the time. Having one day for me to teach, have my instructors teach it, just have a good time, no private, it's just, it's really enjoy the idea of not running a business, but just coming in and train. So I thought, you know, it's too young to do that. I can't do that yet. So what do you want to do here and the next logical step, I always like to try to push the boundaries is like, you know, we got to consolidate, we've got to make a bigger space, we've got to make something that is not out there. I want to leave something behind that hasn't been done before. You know, of course, make make sure you understand this is not just me, I want to say I, I have a list of people behind me that are right there that are helping me fortunately, I've been able to run into these people and have these mentors and people along the way that have guided me and give me great suggestions that can help make this reality. And that's, that's the only way you can do it. You can't really do it on your own. But I've built those relationships in the times I've been in the martial arts. You know there's not a thing that's given to me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You said a couple of things. And they're used a couple different phrases that said, roughly the same thing to me that you don't want to put this maybe don't always take the easy, well-traveled path.

Mark Reding:

I never have.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Like carving, okay yeah.

Mark Reding:

Never have, yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Where else does that manifest for you?

Mark Reding:

Um what else does that manifest by taking the hard work?

Jeremy Lesniak:

Anywhere else, you know, um for example, I've spent a total of six months in my professional career working full time for someone else, you know, I've always had my own businesses. That's certainly not the easiest thing to do. When we started whistlekick, you know, when you look at everything that's gone into that certainly wasn't the easiest business that I could have started. Yeah, and so on and so forth.



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You know, I like to carve out my own way. And it sounds like, you do that too. Of course, you're you you did that by starting your own martial arts school. And I think you said 19, and I agree, you are and you're, you're, you're not just you know, 30 years after starting martial arts kind of riding along and enjoying life, you're not even doubling it sounds like tripling down on what you've got going on. Again, not the easiest way to do it. So I'm curious, are there any stories from from life or competition where maybe that didn't go well? Or maybe it did unexpectedly?

Mark Reding:

I don't know. I mean, I can tell you this. I'll tell you this is kind of a unique story that I don't know. Many people have done this, but I am when I wanted to learn Jiu Jitsu and Jeet Kune Do I went to a I went to a seminar in Indiana. Okay, I flew out there. I wasn't old enough to drive a car so I had to rent a car. So I took a cab from Indianapolis airport to Richmond, Indiana. That's about an hour one way, expensive cab ride. Okay, I went out there to the seminar. I was like, okay, this is this is cool. I'm really enjoying this. I like Jiu Jitsu aspect, I like the [39:28 - 29:29] aspect oh I need another instructor. So I met someone out there and that was his name is [39:34 - 39:35] he is one of my it was my first instructor in Jeet Kune Do and then Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. He did both. I was like, this is a nice guy this is where I'm gonna started going. So I started flying to Indiana every three months with my brother and I did that for 14 years. Okay. Was it the easy route? Absolutely not because I had a just a school I could have just open up in my town about 30 minutes away, but I chose to get airplane tickets. Go out there, stay with this guy, learn how to do this, then he was sports enough to say Mark, you know, let's go travel here, let's go do this. I flew all over the world with him and learn how to travel, which is another thing that's a whole another story, learn how to travel in martial arts. But anyway, I did all that. And it was definitely not the easiest route. But it was, I would not take that back for anything, it shaped me to who I am to this day, I've made some amazing friends I still talked to over 20 years, I've known them to train with them, and built these friendships and bonds that you couldn't, you couldn't have ever told me that hey Mark, if you can go back, I'll put you over here you can share with this guy and get you to a higher level or a belt faster, versus what you went through. Because that was an amazing experience hard way but I believe sometimes man some, sometimes those hard routes that you take are not only meant to be, but I also believe that they are the most rewarding.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I get it. Now, everything we've talked about today has been really positive and uplifting and, and maybe not the easiest way forward. But it's been pretty remarkable.

Mark Reding:

It is not that you know you know why it makes it that way is because of passion. That's it. The passion makes everything worthwhile. It makes it worse. That's why I've told you at the beginning it's like that's



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what you want to give your students, whatever art you teach. They want the passion behind what you're teaching them. And they can have that man that you give them unlimited possibilities.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So how about an example of something where it didn't go well, but the passion either made it worthwhile? Or was a great learning experience? Or it wasn't as bad as it could have been?

Mark Reding:

Honestly, I haven't had an experience like that. There's nothing I've...

Jeremy Lesniak:

No no rocky times? No how am I gonna pay the light bill at the dojo this month. Nothing?

Mark Reding:

No, I have, I'm gonna be honest, I, every year I've been open, I've done better than the past year, every year, in 25 years, I've never had a downtime. Fortunately, even during the COVID that's going on, I've been able to have my business for that long. And I have some amazing services to put my side and still paid through that time, was able to keep the doors open, and then we're open back up, more people signed up. So that's, that is another reason that I feel like I have to move forward and make this this this new mecca of a martial art facility for people that I can come in. Because I know it's it's it's means so many things to different people. But um it also goes back to that first day when I walked in at 13. This is what I was put here to do. This is it. I knew that from day one, I still know that and I have had an amazing room. I've had no, I mean, everybody has no, yeah there's good days and bad days. And don't get me wrong. I've had lots of people cancel, and you know how much I have also, that's that's not the big picture. The big picture is, hey, I'm still standing here 24 years later, going on 25 years, and I still have people walking in the door, I still have people sign up, I still have people that are passionate about coming to train here, I still have instructors that want to pass on other people and man, that that's um, that you can't tell me that wasn't I wasn't put here for that. You know what I mean, there was just something put me to do this. And I feel like I need to live it out.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and that seems really clear. To say it another way. You're constantly looking forward, you're looking at improvement, you're focused on the positive.

Mark Reding:

Always.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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You're doing a lot of these things that we're all taught to do and know we're supposed to do and maybe we aren't as good at doing.

Mark Reding:

That's true. That's true. You know, it's it is man life is about learning and you know, you as a martial artists. And we as martial artists are fortunate that we are in an art that we can always learn in, and look outside of that and say, no, what can this do for me? I do a little tangent what martial arts has done for me a two years ago, I started to read a lot about stoicism. Okay, I was like, I want to learn about this. So I started reading all these different books. I was like, this is amazing. You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna fly to Europe and I'm gonna go do a stoicism workshop, in middle of London, that's where I went and talked to my wife. I was like, this is what we're gonna do. She's like, Mark, you were crazy. I was like, yep, you're gonna go with me. So we flew to London. And we did this course on this and stoicism and then I started really studying it and learn it I was like this is this is amazing. This is I can apply this right to my martial art. And looking back on that, man that was one of the best experiences I had for myself with my wife and being able to carry that on and in my teachings and in my beliefs. And you know, that would never have happened without the passion for martial art. No way. I never would have picked up my my phone, buy some tickets and just go to London. You know, that sounds like a cool place to go see, let's go see what they're doing over there.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now you've done some competition. Have you?

Mark Reding:

How I've competed a lot in all throughout my time in all arts not just Jiu Jitsu. I didn't I don't know how much you know about Kenpo Karate, but I I am at an eighth grade black belt in Kenpo karate and I started off actually I started off doing karate competitions and Shorin Ryu that was in my teens but then I went to the [45:45 - 45:46] for a national college championships when I was I was still on my teens around that time. I thought that...

Jeremy Lesniak:

That was the famous one in Long Beach?

Mark Reding:

In Long Beach, that's right yeah. My dad sent me off ther. My brother and we I fought in that. And then, and then I got into Jiu Jitsu. And then I tracked all over the world competing just to have been Japan and Europe, all across the United States fighting, beating, doing seminars, I mean, it's just been, it's been an amazing ride, this has been very fortunate for sure.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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What does competition mean for you?

Mark Reding:

Um I think it's a place that you can go out there and, you know, you can do something that is solely on you. It's whether good or bad, whether win or lose, that's something that you are responsible for. And why you're on the mat. Now that training to that there's two sides, because the training to go to do that you need your team, you need people that are willing to help you because no one could do on their own. But when you actually step on them, that shows you another person, then what the trainings and for the people that have helped you is what helps come out. So it's twofold. I think it teaches you a lot about yourself. I think that I think everyone should experience it, you know, whether they like to compete or not, I think they should go out there and try that for sure. I'm a very competitive person. Naturally. I mean, I, if you look at my business side, I want the best I want to I want to work the hardest for it, I want to be the one that no one's outwork me. The same kind of mindset as a competitor, I would never be someone to say, hey, Mark, why you compete? Oh, just for the experience, I don't do that for the experience, I do it to win, I want to win, you know, I want to I if I win or lose, I walk off of the mat. And I've learned something from that. And I'm like, okay, what can I do to apply this? That's when I go back to my note taking writing the notes down. Okay, let's, what can we tweak? What can we make better? Now? What's something we could take out? You know, that's another thing people need to look at, you know, I personally used to say, you know, hack away all the essential. But that's, that's the same things like, what can you do in what you're constantly improve on each week that you don't really need, you know, and as I've gotten older, the art of hacked away actually hacked away, okay. This is what I need. And I have a stripped down version of what I use every single day and all the arts that I do, but, but the competition side of that is that, that helps build that in a person, you know. I know some people can't compete and elements and things like that, but just being around even if you have a team that you can go to and, and support, watching the people go out there and compete, those people need you just as much as you need them. You know, it's the support alone behind that. It does wonders for your Academy, you know, people bond a lot tighter that way.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I agree. I completely agree. I think well, competition can meet a lot of different things for a lot of different people. I think it's a tool. Going to last as a tool, competition is a tool, training on your own as a tool, reading as a tool listening to this show. That combined in the right. portions, leads you down your path.

Mark Reding:

That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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And sometimes, you know, you ever have you ever had baked goods that left out the eighth of a teaspoon of salt?

Mark Reding:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You know, it's such a small ingredient but you get you get to the finished product and you goin' it doesn't taste right.

Mark Reding:

Right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Some of us, competition is that. It's just like the sprinkling.

Mark Reding:

And that's okay. You know, that's completely okay. Because there's so many avenues you can go down to the martial arts that you can learn from. So it's just it's just one avenue. It's not for everybody, but and it's not sometimes not for everybody all the time. You know, I mean, I haven't competed in the last year and a half. But that's okay. I mean, you're you prior to that year and a half, I was on the road every single month fighting all over the world. So it's not, I don't think it has to be all on or all off. You know, it's just it is what it is. It's an avenue. It's there for you if you like to choose it.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Any good stories from competition or the road?

Mark Reding:

Oh man, a lot of a lot of us...

Jeremy Lesniak:

That you can share.

Mark Reding:

Yeah um, you know, I don't know. I mean, there's always there's always cool things. I could tell you this though. Okay. People that are competitors. I guarantee it. Most of them don't remember the medal they won, or the person they competed against. What they remember is if you say like myself, you can say Mark, are you fighting Brazil? Yeah, I fought in Brazil three times. I can tell you about every single thing



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that happened on those three times I was there. But I can barely remember who I fought. I know. It may sometimes it comes in but it's the experience of getting out there going man. I've been all these different places that I can say I competed there but this is what I got to do. I was there like I always wanted to fight in Rome, I thought was the coolest day like, man. It's like the Romans, you know, go over there, fight over there. And I did that I did that two years ago and I, I did well in the tournament, but I don't talk about that, I talk about what how cool Rome was when I got to see, you know, all the things that were there 2000 years ago. How cool is that? They don't have that in Texas. So it's pretty, pretty awesome to be able to go and experience that and fight like a warrior gladiator at that time you know.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But they let you keep your clothes on, right?

Mark Reding:

They let you keep them on. That's right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Anybody knows their history.

Mark Reding:

That's, right.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Oh, God. Well, this has been great. If if people want to find you online, you know website, social media. I'm sure you perked up more than a few years talk talking about this, this temple of martial arts that you're building, you know, how would how would people connect with you?

Mark Reding:

Okay, so we have a website. It's redingmartialarts.com, and my last name is spelled R-E-D-I-N-G. Okay, so it's redingmartialarts.com and it has both of my locations on there, it has as a little bio, and everything all of our, our scheduled classes. I don't have I don't really do Facebook, I have an Instagram pages RMA Jiu Jitsu, you can go on and check it out from there. We, we have a it's not really Facebook, but you can access it through Facebook, it's a Reddit you just type it Reding martial arts on Facebook. And it'll pull up and I'll show you, you know, what we each week, say what's going on in the classes and pictures and whatnot so like that. But um the best way to really have all my contact information is on our website, and you'll see all the things you need to see there.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Awesome, good stuff. This is where I give you the opportunity to kind of close out, this is your episode, your story. We're talking about you. So what what final words, would you want to leave the listeners with today before we roll out to the outro that I'm gonna record.

Mark Reding:

You know, I mean, it depends on what kind of listener is listening to this stuff here. Most of the people sound like a martial artist. And, you know, I hope that my story you can look at look at and go wow, man, you know, this, this guy took his passion. And he ran with that. And this is what he's done with it. So I think people no matter what it is, and a lot of people in their life, they find their passion towards it in their life. And they always have a really quick excuse to say, oh, I got kids are on man. I can't do that. And it's too late. I'm too old. My advice too is like if you find that look forced enough to find a passion, like I've found and feel so strongly about it. Do something about it. Don't don't wait. Don't think you're too old, too young. You know, I started my school when I was a white belt you know in Jiu Jitsu. And I heard all the way along oh, you're just a white belt, there's a blue belt, [53:49 - 53:51]. They won't talk to you when you get your black belt. I I feel like so many people let that go. And they say, oh, no, I can't do this, I can't do that. You can do that. And I'm proof that you can do it. And I never went to college. This is this is all I've ever set out and wanted to do. And I believe that a lot of people have that passion it's hidden in them. And there's not more shorts, it's something else but act on it. You know why short, turn to go out there and see what happens. And one last thing I'll say on this to my one of my instructors told me this one time, and I constantly remind myself of it. He when I was running my business, I had when I first started, I had to work at other places because I didn't have enough students to be able to do it on my own. And he would call me almost daily, you know, at least a few times a week. And he would say, Mark, you cannot wait for all the lights to turn green. And he is 100% correct on that. And that that's what I would like to leave it with that to whoever's listening, whatever passion or thought you have in mind, do not wait for the light to turn green because they're not going to, you know you're gonna make those decisions.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Back at the intro, I promised you positive and I promised you motivated. And that's how he delivered man. Talk about an upbeat guy who just who seize what the world has available, seize the opportunities. And I wasn't kidding when I said I am, I want to be first in line to travel down to this this wonderful space that he's building. Sounds incredible. I love hearing about these unique and amazing positive, wonderful opportunities, challenges, explorations of business in martial arts that are happening worldwide. We've heard about quite a few of them here on this show. And I hope we get to continue to hear about them. So thank you, Professor Reding. I appreciate coming on the show and look forward to connecting with you in the future. Head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com to find the show notes for this episode while you're there, check out the other episode, sign up for the newsletter, and think about supporting us. Whether that's through our Patreon, or making a purchase at whistlekick.com use the code podcast 15 or, you know, when somebody else know about the show or leaving us a review on



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