



Episode 517 – Virtual Competitions | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 517. Today, we're going to talk about virtual martial arts competitions. The good, the bad, and where I see that landscape going. Whom I am? I'm Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host here on the show and the founder of whistlekick and I really, really love traditional martial arts. If you want to see everything that we're doing here at whistlekick, go to whistlekick.com, check out the website, you'll find a lot of stuff over there, including our store and if you use a code PODCAST15 you will save 15% off every single thing we have there. Maybe you're more interested in what goes on with this show, whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. That's where you can find every single episode we've ever done; we do two of them a week and at that website you'll find photos and links and videos as well as transcripts. You can sign up for our newsletter which we send out a few times a month, and it really is the best way to add some context to this show. If you find yourself enjoying the show, listening to the show frequently, you really should check out that website once in a while, we're constantly updating it making sure it's as good as it can be. We do a lot of different things here at whistlekick but they're all under the umbrella of connecting and educating and entertaining traditional martial artists throughout the world. If that resonates for you and you want to support our mission, there are a number of things you can do; you can make a purchase, you can support our Patreon, [PATREON.com/whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick), you could share this another episode, follow us on social media, leave a review, buy a book, there's a ton of stuff. If you go to



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whistlekick.com you'll find a bunch of ways you can help us out and for those of you who have, we appreciate you. Thank you so much.

Virtual competitions these were all but nonexistent a few months ago. Of course, as in recording this if you're listening soon after it's released were still facing the coronavirus pandemic and in person competitions, to my knowledge, are still canceled across the country if not across the world. I've had quite a few weekends back for myself, so to speak, as the competitions that I was scheduled to attend have been postponed and most of them even canceled. It's a really interesting time to be a martial arts competitor and my heart goes out to those promoters who bank on that money to supplement their income every year. Being a martial arts instructor running a school it's not an easy way to make a living and I know quite a few martial arts instructors who poster competition as a way of supplementing that income. SO, I'm sorry. This sucks! Let's talk about virtual competitions. Because I've seen a lot of them pop up some of them are doing really good things some of the less good things. Let's start with the good. I'm seeing improvement. I'm seeing a lot of these competitions look for creative ways to utilize the platform, the submission of video or live video platform to gauge someone's martial arts skill. Of course, most competitions launched with forms, weapons forms, empty hand forms, musical forms, the sort of forms competitions you would expect to see at a standard competition. But what's missing? It's the combat, it's sparring. Whatever flavor of sparring were talking about that's pretty hard to do on your own. In fact, let's be real, it's impossible. But there are still ways to gauge someone's combat readiness. Is it the same thing? Nope. But I'm seeing a number of competitions now that are opening up divisions for combat related things and I love that. I love to see people building on stuff and making it better. For those of you who don't know, in 2016, I jumped in hosted a competition and learned a lot. Wrote a book out of it, and one of the core concepts that came out of my experience with hosting that competition, was iterative progress. The idea the you take something that's already out there and you make it 15% different, ideally better. You're hoping to make it better because if everything you change bombs; you still have a pretty solid event. You try to change too much at once it doesn't really work. I learned that the hard way.

What else is good with virtual competitions the fact that they exist there are a lot of martial artists who really enjoy competing who find it their best martial arts comes as a result of training for and competing in competition. So, to have no competitions for weeks, months, who knows how long is devastating when you consider what really clicks for those martial artists. So, I'm glad that there's an outlet. And I'm seeing a lot of people who normally might not compete because, getting up in front of other people that's really scar. Well, if you can compete from the comfort of your own school or living room, that's a pretty cool thing to do. I'm seeing some competitions that are taking the opportunity to give more feedback. Most virtual competitions don't seem to have the attendance of an in person competition, there certainly less logistical stuff to worry about so it gives the referees the opportunity to offer more critique and feedback to help the competitors improve which, as far as I'm concerned, has been the number one thing lacking in martial arts competition as long as I've been around. So, I love seeing that. And one of the other things that I've seen that's been pretty good is a dramatic reduction in prices for



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some events. So, this one is going to be our transitional statement that takes us from the good to the bad because some competitions are doing a really good job recognizing; you know what we need to bring the price down on this if it's in online competition. But not everyone. I've seen some online competitions that are charging exorbitant fees, way too much! Most online competitions as far as I can tell, do not have nearly the attendance of an in-person competition. There certainly far less logistically to manage, yes, I've hosted plenty of online events, I know what goes into them, I know that they're not trivial, I know that there's stuff that goes in there. But when I see people charging, I'm not even in put out numbers because I don't want anyone to think I'm talking about certain people or certain events because as I'm trying to be general here, but some of these events, it's too much why is it too much because the value that comes back is not there.

Let's talk about value in martial arts competition for a minute. If we consider two martial arts competitions, let's think about in person competitions for minute because most of us have far more experience with those, if one of them cost more money than the other what would you expect of that competition? You would expect a larger higher-quality venue, you would expect higher quality referees, you would expect better announcements, and most importantly better competition. Better money leads to a better event, which leads to better competition. But some of the online competitions I'm seeing really just look to be a cash grab. Let's charge as much as we can and we'll have you know from people in this division we'll call it the world championship and we'll send them a certificate. Okay does that really feel like value? It doesn't to me. Now how we change that?

First off, I think any martial arts competition that is using world championship, world title universe championship, and any of these really grandiose names for a first-time event, that's silly. You can't do that, it's Gross. I'm gonna be really firm on that. There are lots of other flashy names you can give to a competition that don't have to imply that this is some official title that the industry recognizes because there isn't one. There are so many different competition circuits and even among those competition circuits that have been established and have amazing attendance, there is debate as to which is most important and where the best competition is. I've watched these debates. A first-year competition can't be a world title, sorry. How else can you increase the value of an online competition other than making sure that what people pay for so they get? Well it's the creativity one of things I said on the good side. Continue to foster that creativity and give people different things that they can do. There's a lot that can be done with creative movement within the martial arts. One of the neatest divisions I've ever seen and I apologize I forget where I was part of this, I wasn't a part of it but I saw it, it was a competition where there was a DJ and they played a 30-second segment of a random song and the person, the competitor on the floor had to make a perform on the spot utilizing that music. They used popular music so hopefully the competitor knew the song and it was awesome, it was a lot of fun. That would translate online that would work and there are a lot of other things when you look at that, that really could make things more dynamic and exciting and guess what even bring viewers.



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One of the biggest opportunities I think we have with virtual competition, online competition, is the ability to get people involved as spectators. If you've been paying attention to this show for any period of time, you know that I've identified bringing in spectators is one of the most important things we can do for martial arts competitions. It's what changes the financial dynamic of hosting a competition. If the only people putting money in the martial arts are people already in martial arts, I give you \$10 you give it back, the only person that wins out of that is not even a person, the IRS, which for those of you who are outside the US that's our tax body, the Internal Revenue Service.

And I'll leave you with one last thought with online competitions. I hope they don't go away entirely. Some of them will, in fact, most of them will, we'll go back to in person competition. But there's something there, there's something that I really like about online competition that I hope continues. It should be supplemental just as online training is supplemental to in person training, but there are some benefits. There are things you can do with online competition that you can't do with an in-person competition. And the more promoters explore what those things are and leverage those and make them better, the better off the competition is, the better off martial arts is, and that makes the world better. Have you competed in an online competition? I wanna hear from you. I want to know your thoughts. What went well, what didn't go so well, you can leave that feedback in a few ways; you can find us on social media were @whistlekick and there will be a post somewhere where you can leave a comment or my favorite spot for you to leave, is publicly under the post page at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. While you're over there check out the show notes for this and every other episode we've done. Videos, links, whole bunch of stuff, and if you want to support the work that we do, you've got choices. Visit the store at whistlekick.com use the code PODCAST15 to save 15% off or leave a review, buy a book on Amazon, help with our Patreon [PATREON.com/whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick) two bucks and up a month, the more you spend, the more we give you. At the \$25 tier you get access to the first release of the training programs. At \$10 you get exclusive videos, five dollars exclusive audio. And if you see so many out the world with some whistlekick stuff maybe some gear or uniform or shirt make sure you say hello, introduce yourself, because we've got a pretty good community going here, let's grow it. If you have feedback for me, guest suggestions or anything else, email me jeremy@whistlekick.com. Until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.