

## What 100 Really Means

*"I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times."*

That's a quote from the legendary martial artist Bruce Lee, on the power of repetition and perfection. It's a quote that makes sense when adapted to any sport or discipline, but it's an especially powerful idea for practitioners of l'art du déplacement. All around the world, we line up with one another to try fifty repetitions of this or a hundred repetitions of that, hoping to build the endurance, coordination, and reflexive familiarity with our movement that only comes with drilling, drilling, and more drilling.

Yet as we crank the numbers ever higher, hoping to add that extra inch to our wallclimbs or that extra lightness to our landings, we often lose sight of the fact that each and every attempt *truly matters*. In a set of three, sure ... we'll make each one count. But if we're doing a hundred, a little mistake here or there is no big deal, right?

That's a difficult statement to argue with, if you're thinking in terms of one set of one hundred repetitions. After all, if you make ten mistakes during your set, it's not as though you didn't do the other ninety, and it's hard not to feel proud of yourself when you wake up sore the next day.

But that's the pride of a weightlifter, a marathoner, a press-up champion—the kind of athlete whose success is measured by sheer volume—and it misses the whole point of l'art du déplacement.

The key thing to remember is that, when it all boils down to a full-speed run, *you only get one chance*. Whether you like to imagine daring rescues and life-or-death dilemmas, or you're simply out for a game of tag with your friends, ultimately there will come a moment where you either pass the obstacle or you don't. You can say you were tired, that the sun was in your eyes, or that you made it ninety times the day before, but in the end, if you failed, you failed.

And *that* is why it's wrong to drill with sets in mind. In practice as in performance, each movement is unique, isolated in space and time, with its own rightness or wrongness that can't be overwritten by the one after it. You aren't setting out to do one set of one hundred, you're setting out to do *one hundred sets of one*, in a row, and that's a very different thing indeed.

Different because it requires each and every attempt to be conscious and deliberate—this is your first, last, and only chance to get it right *this time*, just as one day you might have only one chance to save a baby, capture the flag, or *not* look like a newbie in front of your personal hero.

Different because it cuts out the allure of relativism—there's no better-or-worse-than-last-time, only *perfect* or *not good enough*. It's a harsh standard that will leave you humble, but that humility is the key to washing away bad habits.

Different because it results in a re-evaluation of your technique at every level of exhaustion—there's no fumbling around for ten times until you get it right, there's only “How can I pull this off when I'm *exactly this tired?*”

And different because it forces you to get in the habit of really training your body properly, getting your muscles to learn the movement so that it becomes second nature, freeing your mind to focus on the obstacles ahead. Many practitioners play the reset game, in which a mistake on #99 sets you back to zero, but most seem to misunderstand the point. It's not simply a way to work in more training—more calories burned, more muscle contractions—and it's not about making up for your mistakes with extra effort. It's a philosophy that ensures that, when you walk away at the end of the day, the only thing your body can remember is *one hundred correct executions of the movement*. No bad habits, no slip-ups, just an unbroken string of what you actually wanted to learn.

Because that's how our bodies work—they learn what we teach them. Tell your body that it's okay to fail ten percent of the time, and it will. Tell your body that there's no such thing as perfect, that its level of performance can change after you've worked up a sweat, and it will believe you. But if you tell your body that the *only* acceptable landing is a silent one, and that you won't walk away from a practice session until it knows what that feels like from toes to forehead, then when there's no room for error and no time to think, it will pull through for you, because that will be all that it knows how to do. It's like Bruce Lee and his 10,000 kicks—the man who does a hundred kongs and lets them all be different has mastered nothing. But the man who's done the same good kong one hundred times is a force to be reckoned with.