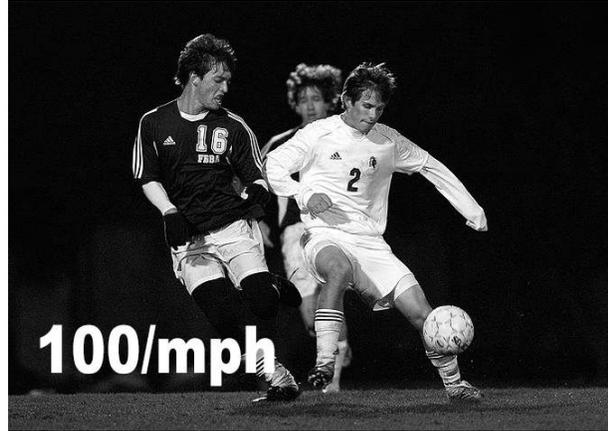


*“The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today.” H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*

## **Practicing at 100 Miles Per Hour**

As a teenage athlete, practice sessions are an extremely important part of your sporting experience. Practice sessions play the most important role in your development because they exist with the express aim of making you a better player.

Additionally, practice is probably what you will spend most of your time out on the court or field doing, with actual games only being once or twice a week. While you may not necessarily enjoy the constant execution of drills, which sometimes don't resemble the playing of the game you would prefer to be doing, it gives you the foundation necessary for you to be a competent player.



It is this repetition that programs your body to execute the movements needed for your sport; timing your jump to execute a spike, making the cut for a post route with the right timing and angle for your quarterback to throw on time and on target, or taking a one-time shot at a goal when the ball or puck is passed to you and positioning your body to keep that shot on frame. However, it's not just enough to repeat these movements and actions over and over, but to do them with real purpose.

## **Play Like You Are Competing**



In a game, there is an intensity and urgency that exists because you are in competition against an opponent. The basic truth for individual and team sports is that your goal is to get the best of the person you are matched up against. In order to have a chance at doing this, it is important that you are performing at your best, efficiently executing skills and making the correct judgements at the correct times. This consists of a mix between speed of movement and speed of thought.

To be able to execute actions and thoughts successfully on a repeated basis, in the intense and stress inducing environment that is an actual competitive game, you must be comfortable doing skills, making movements, and thinking at the same speed as you need to in a game. It is the consistency of execution that separates good players from great players, and one thing the great players do is practice hard every time, as if they are playing a game. They understand that you need to practice at 100 miles per hour if you want to play at 100 miles per hour.

The high intensity at which the great players perform every single time they are on the field or court of play makes everything second nature to them. It is one of the reasons why Kobe Bryant is revered in basketball circles, with the word of mouth reports and eyewitness accounts of the intensity of his work done in individual workouts and practice sessions. He knew this intensity every time he picked up a ball would become second nature, driving him to achieve the greatness he sought in the sport.

## Working Out Alone

While your intensity is important in formal practice sessions with your teammates and coaches, it is also an easier environment for you to achieve the needed 100 miles per hour. The true test of how much you want to improve, and how serious you are about achieving that improvement, will be displayed when you are doing workouts alone or with friends.



In these moments, it can be very tempting to take things down a notch. You may shoot a few jumpers while holding a conversation with your friend, which is fine if your goal is just to put up a few shots and kill some time while hanging out. However, if your intention is a real workout, you must be laser focused, with the same level of concentration and intensity that you would need to bring out in a game. In this scenario, every jab step, crossover, jump stop, and any other move you execute while working out alone needs to be done at full speed if you really want to make yourself better.

## Having a Plan and Goal



It can be difficult to summon the necessary discipline to do this on a regular basis, especially when nobody is watching, but discipline is an essential skill if you want to be successful at anything. It is important to begin practicing that as well and you will soon see it pay off when you need it the most.

If you do work out alone or with friends, it is important for you to have a well thought out workout plan that you will be executing. For example, a tennis player who goes to the court alone should not just line up the ball machine and hit random shots for a few hours. Instead, it would be much more effective and useful to make and execute a list of game-like shots which you can use to gauge your progress. An example of these would be:

- 100 cross-court back hands to the baseline
- 100 cross-court forehands to mid court
- 100 serves

Another means to ensuring that you execute at a high level at all times is to set goals. Any goal you set should constantly be in the back of your mind when you are working to improve your game. This is true

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for both in practice sessions or individual workouts. [Setting goals](#) for yourself should motivate you to do things at 110%, knowing that just one day without the right level of intensity could be the difference between you reaching your target or not.