

## Starting Parkour at Age 51

Written by Mark Toorock

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Tim Bergling (the Badass, not the DJ) is not your average soon-to-be 52 year old. Tim is a Marine (there is no such thing as "was a Marine" and stays in incredible shape. Yesterday he tried his hand at Parkour in a Primal Fitness Saturday Open session. The open sessions usually consist of a good warm-up, some joint rotations / mobility, practice of one particular skill or concept, and then an obstacle course. Tim wrote a note about his experience and I wanted to share it for a few reasons: 1. You're never too old to start parkour. 2. Everyone starts somewhere, and as a community we support and applaud not based on distance and measurements but rather on the heroic acts of bravery of very ordinary people. I'll add that we currently have a 63 year old man in the beginner class at American Parkour Academy in DC and he is among the most adept in his class! We'll continue to follow Tim through his parkour journey, and do an interview to find out why he has the name "Korey Sarvas" tattooed on his chest. Read more for Tim's full note.

I've always respected my free running brothers (and the occasional sister). When I see some of their moves, I think of a line from a song: "Impossible don't exist." Saturday morning I decided to try out a Parkour class on my own, here in the DC area, at Primal Fitness.

I've rarely been so humbled.

From the moment we started, and the kids (no one was older than 17 on this particular day) took a lap around the block, they smoked me...and they would continue to smoke me, during every drill and warm up...all my weight lifting strength, all my core strength, utterly meaningless...I have no natural balance, simply jumping onto a board, with the intent of landing cleanly on the balls of my feet, took a half hour to get right...I was winded from the start, and gasping for air before the "serious" drills ever got going. Clearly I have a lot of work to do, if I am going to do this seriously...

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One particular obstacle became the bane of my existence...a balance beam, set up high at a 30-degree angle...for the rest of the guys, this was simply the start of an ad-hoc assembly of boxes, beams, and whatnot that they'd have to traverse; for me it was a roadblock. I hadn't realized until recently how strong my fear of falling was, that my fear of heights had so much control over my physical movement.

But as a very wise little brother of mine once said, it's not about the fear, it's about conquering that fear. So even though I knew I'd never catch up on this day to the rest of the guys in terms of their jumping and hurtling over this box or that railing, I knew I'd feel better about myself at least, if I could just conquer that f\*cking balance beam thing. It took more tries than I can count...by the end of the session, I'd climbed it three times successfully. And this is the best part; every time I managed to make it to the top, I got cheers and applause from the guys. Later I worked on drills to climb walls and jump from box to box...my knees held out admirably, but my back has been glitchy ever since. (Not so glitchy I didn't do a full chest/triceps workout at Gold's later in the day. The Beast must be fed, after all.)

I did have one shining moment at Primal Fitness, showing off my Dragon Flag. This is a movement that is literally as easy as breathing for me -- I can hold the position for 3 minutes or so without breaking a sweat -- but none of the free running studs could quite pull off anything close. It made me feel a little bit more worthy to be in their gym.

Will I go back and try again? OF COURSE I WILL. The gym is awesome and urban...the kids are very much like my SoFlo family...I just need to get myself in better shape, not body building shape, but rather the kind of physical shape that includes balance and grace in movement...and less fear.

Rest assured my free running fam: You always had my love for who you are, and my respect for your talent at what you do. That respect increased exponentially Saturday. Free runners are an amazing breed. If I learn to do one tenth of what they do, I will consider myself fortunate indeed.