

屢敗屢戰

lǚ3 bai4 lǚ3 zhan4

The Olympics has just concluded. The Legislative Council elections are coming up. Americans will soon choose a new president. These events are seemingly unrelated, but in essence, they are all some kind of competition.

By definition, competitions produce winners. There are, of course, those who lose, but they are not “losers” in the derogatory sense of the word, unless they fail to “屢敗屢戰” (*lǚ3 bai4 lǚ3 zhan4*) spirit.

“屢” (*lǚ3*) is “repeatedly,” “敗” (*bai4*) is “to be defeated,” “to lose,” and “戰” (*zhan4*) “a battle,” “to fight.” Literally, “屢敗屢戰” (*lǚ3 bai4 lǚ3 zhan4*) is “repeatedly defeated, repeatedly fight.” It means to continue to fight despite being defeated repeatedly.

The idiom describes a strong fighting spirit that is not extinguished by multiple defeats. It is not only applicable to actual fighting, but all endeavors in life

Idiom by Lon Yan

too. “屢敗屢戰” (*lǚ3 bai4 lǚ3 zhan4*) is determination and perseverance.

By swapping the positions of the characters “敗” (*bai4*) and “戰” (*zhan4*), it becomes “屢戰屢敗” (*lǚ3 zhan4 lǚ3 bai4*) – to keep fighting and keep losing.

“屢戰屢敗” (*lǚ3 zhan4 lǚ3 bai4*) just describes the fact of repeated failures. What matters, however, is what people do about it.

Someone who “屢戰屢敗” (*lǚ3 zhan4 lǚ3 bai4*) but “屢敗屢戰” (*lǚ3 bai4 lǚ3 zhan4*) might not end up winning, but one who stops fighting after one defeat will certainly not taste victory.

Terms containing the character “戰” (*zhan4*) include:

戰士 (*zhan4 shi4*) – a soldier; a warrior

戰勝 (*zhan4 sheng4*) – to win a war; to overcome; to defeat

戰敗 (*zhan4 bai4*) – to be defeated

戰利品 (*zhan4 li4 pin3*) – spoils of war