

Keep the Bigger Picture in Mind

On Aug. 6, 1999, a Major League Baseball player stepped up to home plate in Montreal and made another out – the 5,113th of his professional career.

That's a lot of trips to the batter's box without a hit. If a player made all those outs consecutively, and he averaged four at-bats per game, he would play eight seasons (1,278 games straight) without ever reaching first base.

Was the player discouraged that night? No. You see, earlier in the same game, in his first plate appearance, that player reached a milestone that only a few people in the history of baseball have ever achieved. He had made his 3,000th hit. That player was Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres.

During that game, Gwynn got on base with hits four times in five tries. But that wasn't the norm for him. Usually, he failed to get a hit two times out of every three attempts.

Those results may not sound very encouraging, but if you know baseball, you recognize that Gwynn's ability to succeed consistently only one time in three tries made him the greatest hitter of his generation. And Gwynn recognized that to get his hits, he had to make a lot of outs.

Gwynn played 20 seasons (1998 – 2001) in Major League Baseball for the Padres. The left-handed-hitting Gwynn won eight batting titles in his career and was considered one of the best and most consistent hitters in the history of baseball. He never hit below .309 in any full season and was a 15-time All-Star, recognized for his skills both on offense and defense, with seven Silver Slugger Awards and five Gold Glove Awards. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2007, his first year of eligibility. Gwynn died of salivary gland cancer in 2014 at the age of 54.



His story is instructive for us in Life Care and Century Park. Do we all have failures of one kind or another in life? Absolutely. One of the greatest problems people have with failure is that they are too quick to judge isolated situations in their lives and label them as failures. Instead, we need to keep the bigger picture in mind.

Someone like Tony Gwynn didn't look at an out that he made and think of failure. He saw it within the context of the bigger picture. His perspective led to perseverance. His perseverance brought longevity. And his longevity gave him opportunities for success.

Endurance produces character, and character produces hope (Romans 5:4 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter