

## Missing the Plate

In the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, the U.S. women's softball team lost only one game, and it was a game they should have won. Here's why:

In the fifth inning, with the score tied 0-0, U.S. player Dani Tyler clubbed a home run over the fence. She took her home run trot around the bases, and when she reached home, amid the excitement, congratulations and high-fives from her teammates, she failed to tag home plate. When she reached the dugout, the opposing team of Australians tagged home, and the umpire at first base agreed that she had stepped right over the plate.

Tyler had to return to third base, where she was stranded. The score remained 0-0 until the end of regulation play.

The U.S. scored a run in the top half of the tenth inning. Then in the bottom of the inning, one strike away from defeat, an Australian player hit a two-run homer to win the game for Australia. The loss was an emotional blow to the American team, and especially to Dani Tyler. "I just can't believe I missed it," she said after the game. "I didn't know anything about it until I was in the dugout."

How easy it is to feel that if we have started well, the job is done. We knock the ball over the fence and assume the rest will take care of itself.

Not so! How we finish is crucial.

--Beecher Hunter