

Misstep at Home Plate

When the United States women's national softball team won the gold medal in Atlanta's 1996 Olympic Games, they lost only one game, but from that loss came a remarkable story about perseverance.

In the fifth inning against Australia, Danielle Tyler hit a home run over the centerfield fence. The American third baseman floated around the bases with a rush of adrenaline.

When she was greeted by a swarm of well-wishing teammates at home plate, she let the excitement distract her focus, and she did not touch the base. When all the yelling subsided, the Australian team quietly appealed to the umpire, who dramatically called Tyler out.



Rather than scoring a run, Tyler's blast over the fence netted her team an out. As it ended up, had the lady slugger stepped on home plate, her team would have won 1-0. Instead, after seven innings of regulation play, the game was tied 0-0. In extra innings, Australia emerged with a 2-1 win, and the U.S. team took its only loss of the Olympics.



That incident fueled Tyler's and the team's resolve, and they didn't lose again, capturing the gold medal.

That disaster on the diamond reminds us of a valuable lesson in life; it's important to finish well. It's not enough to hit a ball into the seats – you have to touch all of the bases as well.

Whether you are talking about a day, a project, survey preparedness, admission of a resident or life, it's critical that we finish well. To excel for a while is no guarantee of success.

The Apostle Paul alluded to this principle when he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

We are not athletes competing for gold, but we are about the business God has called us to do – extending love and service to those entrusted to us.

Let us use the opportunities of every day to finish well the tasks that have been bestowed on us. Perseverance matters.

– Beecher Hunter