

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1071 Are You Swinging for Singles or Homeruns?

In baseball, some hitters try to hit the ball as hard and as far as they can. Others are content with making solid contact with the pitch, in the hope of just getting on base and maybe having the next batter keep things going. I'm Jerry Roberts, and let's talk about the philosophy behind both approaches to the game, next, on The Extra Point.

I played baseball as a kid and at ages 13-14, I had the power to hit homeruns, but there were no fences at the park we played at. To get a homer, you had to race around the bases and beat the throw to the plate. You might say running wasn't my key strength in those days.

Knowing that, I tailored my swing to hit line drives to the outfield. I was okay with putting runs across the plate with an occasional double, and mostly singles. Our team got a lot of hits, but not so many homeruns. We won a championship that way.

I was reminded of all this a few days ago when I saw a note promoting an appearance on a podcast by Fatburger CEO Andy Wiederhorn. In the promo, Wiederhorn asked the question: "Do You Hit Singles or Swing for the Fences?"

Wiederhorn made his first restaurant acquisition in 2003 with Fatburger when the brand had only 40 restaurants. Since then, his company has acquired numerous brand outlets and has 2,300 restaurants in some 40 countries.

I'm looking at those numbers, realizing this is a billion-dollar business he's operating, and I'm thinking he's hit a bunch of homeruns.

Then, I see Wiederhorn's next comment, "You cannot expect to hit a grand slam without first mastering the basics of getting on base. My view of being successful is always to try to hit singles and doubles. Don't try to hit homeruns. They will come your way when the time is right."

Then, I recalled something my mom used to say about being a waitress. She was the favorite waitress, or server in today's terms, for scores of customers. Her sections were always jammed, and yet she said she focused on one customer at a time. It was as if each one was her only customer.

She didn't think about her tips. I'd count them for her when she got home. It was all about one customer at a time, making their visit as satisfying and memorable as possible, each and every time.

That's what Wiederhorn is saying. At all of his restaurants, it's about doing the fundamentals extremely well, and that's about swinging for singles. Then, collectively, each outlet adds up all those singles — those happy customers who keep coming back — and his team has scored a lot of runs.

It's funny how the basic principles of success rarely change much.

The Los Angeles Dodgers are again favored to win the World Series this year, and they've got a tremendous lineup, made up of guys who hit a lot of homeruns. Yet, their manager, Dave Roberts, always says that they're undoubtedly at their best when they're just making contact with the ball, getting on base, and trusting the next man up to do the same.

How about you? Do you feel the need to swing for the fences every time up, knowing that leads to striking out more often?

(Con't.)

Or, do you focus on connecting with the ball more regularly, trusting that your teammates will do the same, and you'll win more games that way?

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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