



The Art of Hitting

Tony Gwynn, Roger Vaughan

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Interesting that Ted Williams, possessor of the best batting average of the '40s and '50s, would pen the foreword to an exegesis by Gwynn, who has sported the best average since. Both Williams and Gwynn have their roots around San Diego, both have shelves of batting crowns, and both have been articulate, dogged students, and advocates of, their demanding craft. Interesting, too, that Williams would title his own acknowledged classic on the subject, *The Science of Hitting*, while Gwynn, who's relied less on power and more on cunning, and admits to having studied Williams like a graduate student preparing for orals, would focus more on the *art*. Interesting, too, the conversation that takes place between them here on what to do with the inside pitch; art and science don't easily agree.

Part memoir (when Gwynn got his first big-league hit against the Phillies in 1982, Pete Rose, playing first that night, congratulated him and then counseled, "Just don't try to catch me in one night") and part sound, conversationally proffered advice, Gwynn's liberally illustrated *Art* mirrors his persona: thoughtful, personable, and approachable. He breaks hitting down into its essential components--grip, stance, swing, and follow-through--but also builds on them intellectually and psychologically in his constant search for an edge. His analyses of pitchers--Greg Maddux, Randy Johnson, and Nolan Ryan among them--invite you into the chess match of the hitter-hurler confrontation. But it's his admission that he's "gladly taken less money to be where I'm happy"--with the Padres--rather than just take the money, change uniforms, and run, that may be his best hitting tip of all: a mind free of angst and greed can better concentrate on cut fastballs and dipping sliders. --*Jeff Silverman*

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