

Beat: Vips

U.S. baseball legend Tony Gwynn dead at 54

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USPA News - Legendary American baseball hall of famer Tony Gwynn passed away early Monday morning at Pomerado Hospital in Poway, California, surrounded by family, Major League Baseball (MLB) said. Gwynn, who was 54, had been battling salivary gland cancer for years.

Gwynn was a batting champion whose .338 career batting average over 20 seasons is the highest since Ted Williams retired from the Red Sox with a .344 average in 1960. Gwynn played for the San Diego Padres for all twenty seasons before retiring in 2001. Since then he had been the head baseball coach for San Diego State University, where he starred in both baseball and basketball as a collegian, and a part-time analyst on Padres telecasts. Gwynn is considered by many as the greatest player in Padres history and one of the best hitters the game of baseball has ever known. In a statement on Monday, MLB Commissioner Bud Selig said Gwynn's "all-around excellence on the field was surpassed by his exuberant personality and genial disposition in life." Gwynn was "synonymous with San Diego Padres baseball" and led his team to their "greatest heights," including two National League pennants, Selig said. Gwynn's long battle with cancer began in 2009 when a malignant tumor was removed from his right cheek, but twice the cancer returned. In 2010 he was diagnosed with cancer of a salivary gland and had both lymph nodes removed. In early 2012 he underwent another round of surgery to replace the nerve that the tumor was wrapped around with one from his shoulder. In the later part of 2012, he began radiation treatment once more in an attempt to shrink the tumor. Gwynn credited his cancer to the dipping tobacco habit that he had formed while playing rookie ball in Walla Walla in the 1980s. He had been on medical leave from his head coach position at San Diego State University since March but had signed a one-year extension last week. "Mr. Padre" and "Captain Video" won eight National League batting titles -- the second-most in MLB history and equal to the number won by Honus Wagner -- and collected 3,141 hits in his career, 19th all time. He was an 18-time All Star and received recognition for both his offensive and defensive skills, including seven Silver Slugger awards and five Golden Glove award. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2007 in his first year of eligibility along with Orioles star Cal Ripken in front of an estimated 75,000 people in Cooperstown, New York. Gwynn was passionate about the city of San Diego and his alma mater, San Diego State University, where he starred and coached. "His commitment to the children of San Diego made him a deserving recipient of our game's highest off-field honor, the Roberto Clemente Award, in 1999," said Selig. "For more than 30 years, Tony Gwynn was a source of universal goodwill in the National Pastime, and he will be deeply missed by the many people he touched," the commissioner added. "On behalf of all of our Clubs, I extend my deepest condolences to Tony's wife Alicia, their son Tony Jr. of the Phillies, their daughter Anisha, the Padres franchise, his fans in San Diego and his many admirers throughout baseball."

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UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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