

Columns

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The Granny and the GOAT

Ellen C. Wells



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Editor's Note: *If you have never watched The Great British Baking Show and have any interest in watching it, well, SPOILER ALERT! I reveal the winner of the 2014 season below!*

What do a Great British Baking Show-winning grandmother and Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (aka the Greatest of All Time, or “the GOAT”) have in common? The obvious answer is that both are champions. But there’s more to it. Let me explain.

Take amateur baker Nancy Birtwhistle who, who at the age of 60 won the popular British television contest in 2014, making her the show’s oldest winner at that time. A grandmother of eight, all eager to taste her bakes, “Fancy Nancy” was praised by judge and famed British baker

Mary Berry for her consistency and her level head. Those two characteristics had her walking off with the coveted champion cake stand.

Tom Brady is, without question, the greatest quarterback to have ever played in the National Football League. Tom has just won his record-breaking fifth Super Bowl and fourth Super Bowl MVP. Tom breaks football records with every game he plays and performs better and better each year, despite being the ripe old age of 39—a grandfather in NFL terms. In a sport where the highest hopes are pinned on the first handful of guys picked in the draft, Brady saw 198 other young men chosen by professional teams before the Patriots chose him in the sixth round. Conventional thinking would have Brady being a second-string QB for his professional life. Instead, Top-of-His-Game Tom shows is no sign of slowing down.

What Tom and “Fancy Nancy” have in common is age and experience. Being 39 in the NFL is rare for starting quarterbacks. Tom stays in tip-top shape by following pretty unorthodox training and dietary regimes—no dairy, sugar, white flour and so on, plus a rigorous mental training plan. The more time Tom has on the playing field and the more he keeps his brain at its sharpest, the more experiences he has to learn. At the start of each play on the field, Tom has access to a treasure trove of experiences that is much deeper than any of the league’s other top quarterbacks.

What about Nancy, then? She retired from a full-time job at the age of 53, and was free to spend her time doing the thing she loves. A baker all her life, she had the time to actually explore the intricacies of baking. And with such a big family, there is always someone to bake for. She traveled, she ate, she tested. She had a wealth of baking experience to call upon. And as a granny, Nancy has learned to keep calm and carry on, as the British do.

Author Malcom Gladwell in his book *Outliers* suggests that the people we consider highly successful—Bill Gates and the Beatles, for example—aren't more talented or smarter than the rest of us. They are regular Janes and Joes like the rest of us. What they have done, however, is amassed experience. Whether it was because they spent lots of time as teens tinkering with early-age computers or had hard-nosed managers who made them play gigs that lasted eight hours, it was the amount of time spent doing what they do—and enjoying it, really learning from it—that made them excel.

As we move into the busy spring sales season, think for a moment of all the hours you've amassed doing what you do. And you're still learning. You still have that passion for plants, or maybe it's the passion for helping customers. You have either gotten to the GOAT status in your niche or are well on your way. What you do and how you do it in the coming weeks could be what propels your customer to begin her first hours on her own path to greatness. Think of that gift you are giving someone. Isn't it the greatest? **GP**