



## Overcoming “the Agony of Defeat”

With the winter Olympics beginning, the name **Vinko Bogataj** comes to mind. Anyone remember him?



Vinko was a ski-jumper from Yugoslavia who, while competing in the 1970 World Ski-Flying Championship in Obertsdorf, West Germany, fell off the takeoff ramp and landed on his head. A film crew from *The Wide World of Sports* was recording the event when Bogataj crashed. When the popular show aired in the United States, host Jim McKay narrated those famous words, “The thrill of victory,” and he used Bogataj’s failed jump to perfectly illustrate “the agony of defeat.” Millions of Americans saw Bogataj’s failure over and over again, every time *The Wide World of Sports* aired.

Bogataj was hospitalized but recovered and returned to competition. He later became a ski instructor and then a coach. He’s married and has two daughters. Today, he’s turned his hobby of painting into a successful venture with exhibits around the world.

Years after his famous fall, Bogataj was interviewed—unaware of his celebrity in the United States—and was surprised that his failed jump had been played thousands of times on American television. At the 20th anniversary of *The Wide World of Sports*, he was invited to attend and received the loudest ovation of any athlete at the gala.

Bogataj reminds us that failure doesn’t have to be final. Nor does it need to be fatal. As William Brown once wrote, “Failure is an event, never a person.” I was reminded of that truth this week while reading Mark’s account of Peter’s denial of Jesus. Jesus told the apostles on the eve of his arrest and trial, “You will all fall away.” *continued on page 3*

