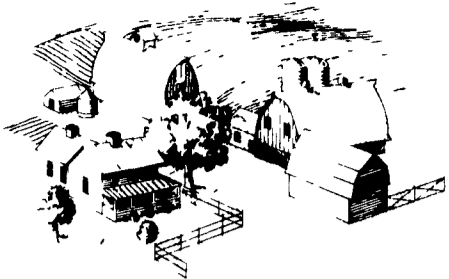


# FARM MANAGEMENT



**FASTBALLS, POP-UPS, SACRIFICE FLIES**

**AND FARMING**  
**Alan W. Strock**  
 Farm Management  
 Extension Agent

the daily grind of chores and forget the big picture of why they are really farming. Almost all successful business people have set lofty goals at the start of their career and never lose sight of that goal or mission.

Did you ever think about how successful farming is like successful baseball?

The successful farmer and the successful baseball player, team, and/or manager have many things in common.

Now that the baseball season is in full swing and the Philadelphia Phillies are making mincemeat of the rest of the National League, it's a good time to discuss these similarities.

Since a baseball team has nine players on the field, nine ways that baseball and farming are similar follows.

**Eye On The Ball**

First: Keep your eye on the ball. Farmers must always keep their eye on their mission, goals, and objectives of their farm. The mission may be to provide a high standard of living and comfortable retirement for the farm family, or to enjoy being one's own boss, or enjoy the outdoor, rural family living environment that provides ample time for recreation, spiritual, and personal growth for all involved.

Farmers often get caught up in

**Be Strong Up The Middle**

Second: To win, you must be strong up the middle. The "middle" for today's farmer is his/her financial management ability, the financial health of the business, and the high but cost-effective productivity of the farm's crops and livestock. If the farm employs additional labor, the manager must also be a strong capable labor manager. How the farmer manages his assets is more important than the amount of effort that he or she puts into the business.

**Expect The Heater!**

Third: Always be ready for a curve, but expect a fastball. Farmers need to make cash flow projections using their own five- or 10-year averages, but must always allow for the farmer's version of the curveball, a drought, a flood, a wet spring, or low commodity prices. Farmers need to be flexible in their financial planning, their building plans, and their cropping and feeding programs.

**Cover All Bases**

Fourth: Cover all the bases. As baseball has four infielders and a

catcher to cover all the bases, farmers should at least annually complete a balance sheet, a profit and loss statement, and a whole farm analysis. Budgets and cash flows for all the farm enterprises should be completed.

Farmers should know if their breeding replacement program is profitable and if their various crop enterprises are profitable. Also educate to your weaknesses and hire consultants to complement and to cover the bases you don't want to or can't. Have a network of consultants that includes extension agents and specialists, veterinarians, DHIA supervisor, feed salesman, artificial inseminator, mechanics and machinery salesmen, crop experts, legal advisors, bankers, accountants, and other successful farmers.

**Back Up The Play**

Fifth: Back up the play. As baseball players must move from their fielding position to back up a base in expectation of an overthrow, farmers must make contingency plans for when the unexpected happens.

Farmers need insurance to cover the prospective losses they can't self-insure. Consider crop insurance especially if you live in a

droughty area. Keep two to six months of personal family living expenses in cash or near cash investments in case of a disability, other tragedy, or extremely low commodity prices.

**Poor Defenses Lose**

Sixth: A poor defense costs wins. Farmers must have plans to defend against disease, poor production, and financial disasters.

Defend the misuse of your time. Proper time management rather than money is the key ingredient to farm, family, and marketing success.

**Sacrifices Are Required!**

Seventh: Sometime sacrifice bunts and flies are needed to score. Farmers at times need to sacrifice money and their personal time to be successful. Sometimes farm improvements and additions are needed worse than house improvements or additions.

To keep the next generation interested in the farm, the older generation must allow the younger one to make mistakes even though it may cost some money. Don't be afraid to try new innovations even if failure is a real possibility. Sacrifice some ground to do on-the-farm research and development

experiments as well as variety trials.

**Be A Team Player And Leader**

Eighth: Be a team player. The most successful farmers are active in their community, church, farm organizations, and/or social groups, and/or have a hobby or some other avenue of release from the strain and routine of farming. They realize they need to farm to live, not live to farm.

Many successful farmers are industry leaders in cooperatives and/or other farm organizations, and are the real decision makers on many of the managing boards because of their progressive thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

**Avoid Expensive Free Agents**

Ninth: Expensive free agents don't necessarily bring championships. Expensive feed and forage additives, storage facilities, bulls, cows, sows, and boars don't necessarily yield higher profits. All expenses, whether operating expenses or capital assets, must yield a positive return.

So, in closing, as the great Yogi Berra once said, "When you get to the fork in the road, take it!"

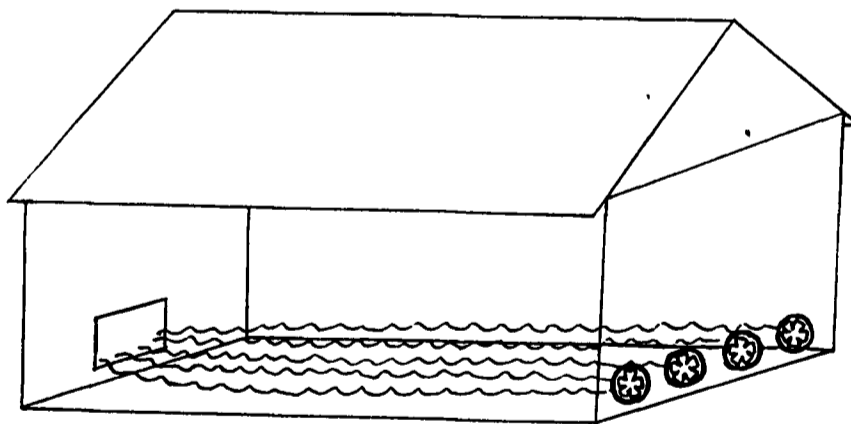
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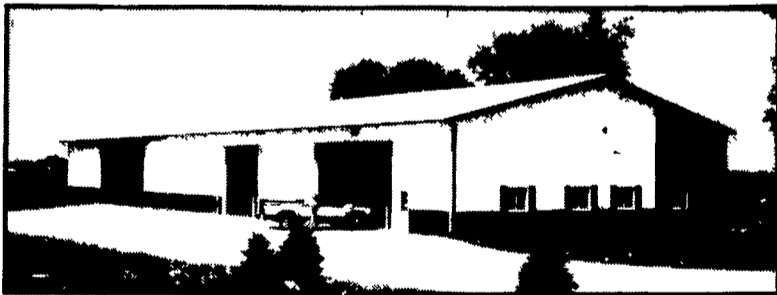
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