



*January – 2018*

What is Your Game Plan for 2018?

In the 1980s I worked for the USDA Farmers Home Administration and was blessed with working for Bob Gust as my supervisor. Bob was awarded with the National USDA Farm Loan Manager of the year award in 1990 and recognized as one of the best lenders in the nation. When working for Bob, he talked about being a loan officer or a farmer and that lending and farming were just being like the manager of a professional baseball team. Bob loved baseball and studied many managers and how they manage each season.

Each season in baseball is different, just as it is in farming. Managing a baseball team or a farm requires skill, mental preparation, and lots of physical demands being met at the right time. Success requires planning, endless hours of thought, and mental preparation for the demanding moments, and developing many paths to success to overcome the obstacles that can come in any season. Players can get injured, players may not perform as expected, and the other team may bring a better prepared game plan.

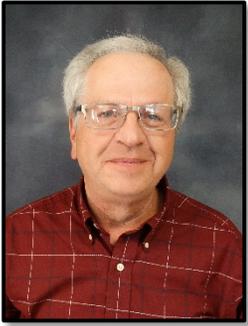
What about your game plan for this farming season? How are you approaching the season? Each new growing season offers the opportunity to start new with a renewed spirit and approach. Success needs to be planned for just as in baseball. Good seed, equipment ready to operate when needed, timely application of fertilizer, weed control, and harvest really impact the seasons' outcomes. A thought-out marketing plan, and the right players in the right positions, is also important in the team you put together on your farm operation and in your focus on success.

Too often coaches, team managers, and many players get distracted about what the game is all about. Distractions become the attractions, and eventually the focus is not on the game. Getting focused on owning the most tractors, having the biggest combine, getting the highest prices for your grain, having the biggest tires on the pickup in the county, or other distractions can cost the success of a farm operation. What are your goals? How do you manage success on your farm operation?

Do you have the right players on your team? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats on your team? Is your agronomist ready to move the farm forward? Is the marketing plan focused on keeping the farm operation in business? Is additional help needed to keep equipment in good condition? Is marketing a weak link in the farm operation? Is your farm shop used for more than picnics and card parties? Can a better crop mix offer greater opportunities for the farm operation? Is over investment in equipment dragging down success?

Good baseball club managers are constantly adjusting as the season moves forward. The goals for success have been laid out. Can the farm operation adjust on the go? Some seasons bring heavy rainfall and create the demand for additional nitrogen. Other seasons bring early frosts. Good team managers continue to focus on the goal and look for options to create the opportunity for success.

It is important to keep your focus on success. Don't let the peanuts, popcorn, or hotdogs distract from winning the game. What are the opportunities that allow for success even during a challenging season? How can the resources you have be used for maximum results? Dwelling on what you are not able to control will distract from your keeping an eye on the ball. Manage your team and your tools and your talent to make the most of each season. Yes, some seasons will find greater success than others. Some seasons teach more than others. Some seasons the harvest will be more bountiful than others. Is your team ready for this season? Are you ready to bring a plan to the game and call the plays as the season moves forward?



### ***About the Author – Bob Panzer***

Bob comes to Pifer's with 40 years of professional ag experience. Bob spent the past 18 years in agricultural lending with farm credit, an ag supply coop credit company and with the USDA FSA. Bob also served 20 years as a County Extension Agent and Ag teacher/FFA Advisor. Bob and his wife Teri have owned and operated farms in Wisconsin since 1987.