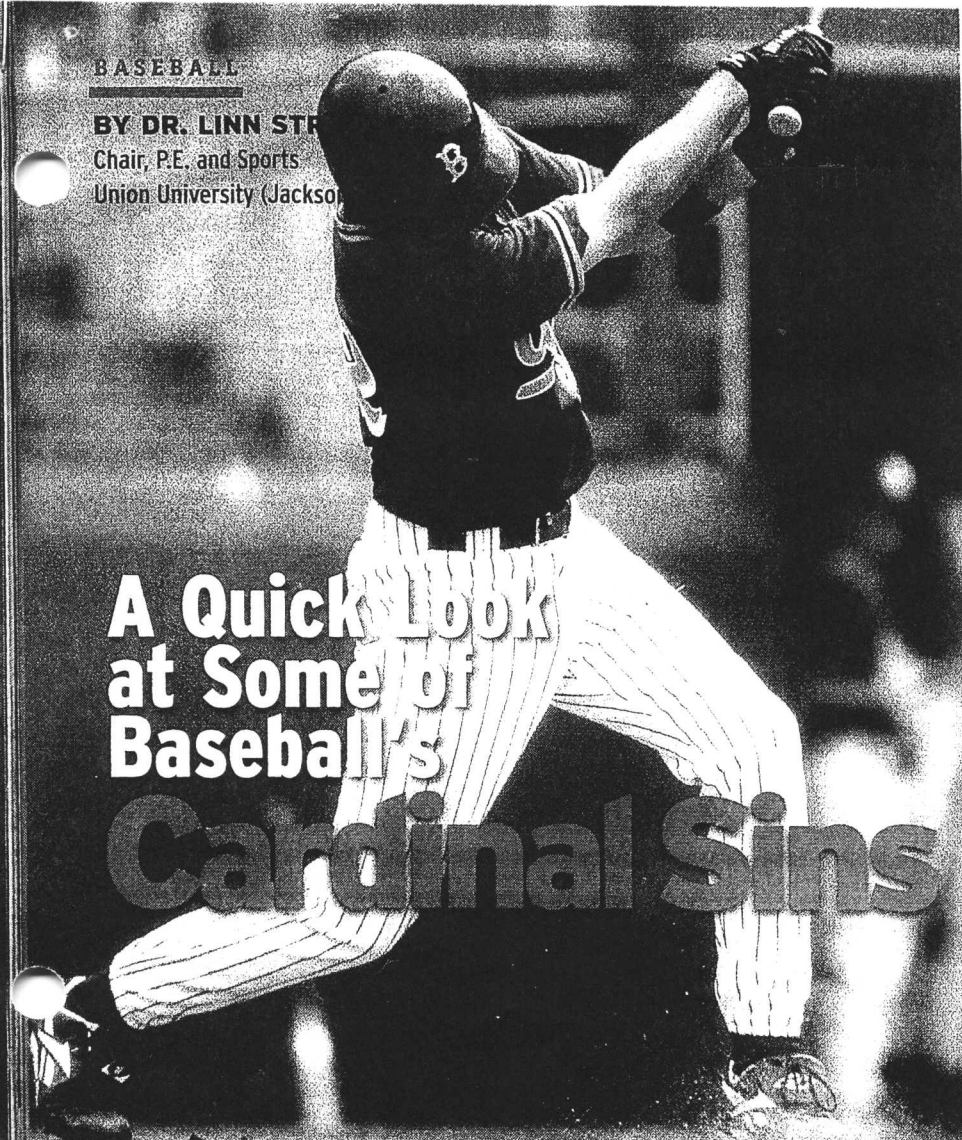


## BASEBALL

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# A Quick Look at Some of Baseball's Cardinal Sins

**A**LL COACHES EXPECT their team to improve as they go along and that the best way to accomplish this is through practice, the maturation of the players, and playing against strong competition.

The way to begin improving immediately is by eliminating costly and preventable mistakes, especially mental ones. I call them "Cardinal Sins" – the acts of omission or commission that prevent the team from playing sound, percentage baseball.

### OFFENSE

**1.** After two quick outs in an inning, the next batter swings at the first pitch. If he makes out on that first pitch, it will force your pitcher and defense to

get back on the field prematurely.

**2.** With less than two strikes on him, the batter swings at a breaking pitch that has fooled him.

**3.** Guess-hitting too frequently. Rule: Look for the fastball and adjust to the off-speed pitch.

**4.** Batter not understanding the difference between hit-and-run and run-and-hit.

**5.** Batter swings at the pitch on a straight steal – a no-no, especially on a first strike or curve ball.

**6.** Runner on second takes off for third on a ground ball to the left side of the infield in front of him.

**7.** Failure to give oneself up on a sacrifice bunt – entire focus should be on laying the ball down.

**8.** Batter fails to move up the runners when the situation calls for it.

**9.** Runner does not take extra base on a normal deep ball to the glove side of the outfielder.

**10.** Runner does not tag up with the proper foot and body position, especially on foul balls with less than two outs.

**11.** Runner fails to understand the concept of going halfway on a fly ball, or of breaking for the plate the moment the fly ball touches the fielder's glove.

**12.** Fundamental batting errors: striding too early, moving hands too early, not keeping the weight back, overstriding, stepping into the bucket, pulling the head out too early.

**13.** Playing for big inning instead of trying to score at every opportunity. For example, foregoing the sacrifice bunt to get the runner into scoring position and playing for the big hit or homerun when you don't have the hitters for this kind of game.

**14.** First and third situation: Runners must guard against the pitcher's fake to third and throw to first. Back runner must not run into a ground-ball tag-out and resulting double play. Front runner must break for home on a ground ball to pitcher or third baseman. Both runners must not fail to tag up or go halfway on a fly ball when the situation dictates it.

**15.** Batter taking a third strike on an 0-2 pitch that was too close to take or the assumption that the pitcher was going to waste a pitch.

### DEFENSE

**16.** Walking the leadoff batter in an inning. Upward of 70% of these walkers will score.

**17.** Walking the opponent's weakest hitter(s).

**18.** Fielder beginning throwing motion before he actually catches the ball – not looking the ball straight into the glove.

**19.** Failure to back up and cover bases according to the demands of the situation.

**20.** Throwing behind the runner as he runs the bases.

**21.** First and third situation: Failure of middle infielders to communicate on who will cover second base on a steal attempt. All infielders must communicate on every possible defensive call that might leave the fielder out of position to make the play.

**22.** Outfielder taking an extra step whenever a fly ball is hit toward him.

**23.** Defense trying for the difficult double play instead of making sure to get an out on every play.

**24.** Pitcher failing to break toward first base on every ground ball hit to the right side of the infield.

**25.** Defensive players not getting in front of ground balls and getting their body parts in the correct position – involves foot-spread, glove and hands out front, head down (button of hat visible), and bending properly at waist and knees.

**26.** Pitcher not leading the shortstop on a potential double-play ground ball hit back to the mound.

**27.** Rushing the throw unnecessarily.

**28.** Shortstops and second basemen who haven't mastered the basic double-play pivots and ways of evading the runners at second base.

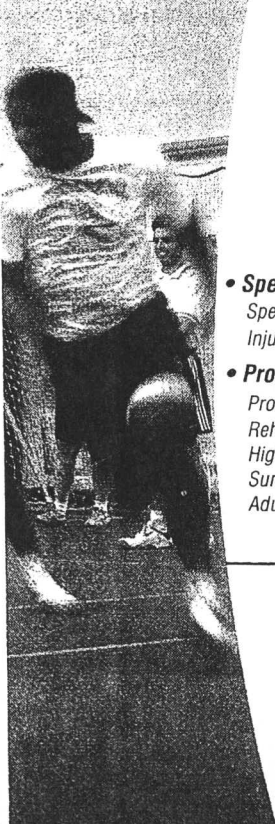
**29.** First baseman failing to trail a runner to second base and not acting as the cutoff man when the play warrants it.

This hardly represents an all-inclusive list of Cardinal Sins. Every coach will think of many others as they go along.

It is impossible to over-emphasize the practice of the fundamentals. Repetition breeds good habits and the elimination of mistakes.

Remember, many Cardinal Sins begin in the mind. The smart, aggressive player will always be thinking a play ahead. ■

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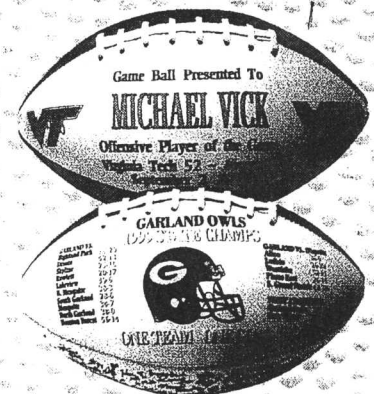
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