

Captain's Manual: A Guide to Player- Led Leadership

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LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LEAD WITH CONSISTENCY. LEAD WITH INTEGRITY.

Captain's Message

Being chosen as a team captain or member of the leadership council is more than an honor — it's a responsibility. You are the heartbeat of this team, the example your teammates follow, and the voice that keeps everyone aligned with our values. Leadership is not about speeches, popularity, or authority; it's about showing up every day, setting the standard, and serving your teammates.

Your actions shape the culture. Your words build connection. Your effort drives performance. And your care leaves a lasting legacy. This manual is your guide, but the true leadership comes from you — in how you practice, compete, and support those around you.

Lead with purpose. Lead with consistency. Lead with integrity. When you do, you don't just elevate yourself — you elevate the entire team.



How to Use This Manual & Season Tracker

This manual is designed to guide you — the team captain or leadership council member — in leading with purpose, consistency, and impact. It is a practical tool, not a rulebook. Its value comes from daily application, reflection, and partnership with your teammates and coaches.

Key Principles

1. **Lead by Example:** Your actions matter more than words. Every practice, game, and off-court interaction is an opportunity to reinforce the standards and culture you want your team to embody.
2. **Be Intentional:** Each domain — Culture & Standards, Communication & Connection, Performance & Competitiveness, and Service & Stewardship — contains actionable duties and prompts. Use them to focus your leadership each week.
3. **Partner, Don't Direct:** This manual is for player-led leadership. You are a bridge between teammates and coaches, not a replacement for coaching. Bring feedback, support, and guidance while empowering peers to take ownership.
4. **Reflect & Track:** The season tracker condenses duties, checklists, and discussion prompts into a single reference. Track actions daily, reflect weekly, and use discussion prompts to spark meaningful leadership conversations.
5. **Rotate Focus:** Leadership isn't static. Rotate emphasis across domains throughout the season to ensure a balanced approach that addresses culture, communication, performance, and service.

Using the Tracker

- **Review duties at the start of the week and check them off as you complete them.**
- **Use discussion prompts in leadership council meetings to guide dialogue and decision-making.**
- **Take notes on successes, challenges, and observations to share with the team and coaches.**

DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

Every team has a culture. The question is whether it happens by design or by default. Captains shape and protect that culture by living the standards daily and guiding teammates to do the same.

Culture isn't revealed in speeches; it's in small, repeated choices — how we practice, respond to adversity, and carry ourselves on and off the court.

Captains set the tone by consistency. If you model effort, discipline, and humility, those values spread. Protecting culture also means addressing what doesn't fit, from calling out a lapse in effort to having one-on-one conversations about off-court behavior. Remember: the culture you allow is the culture you create.

FIVE ACTIONABLE DUTIES

- Model punctuality and preparation at every team activity.
- Celebrate teammates who live the standard.
- Address effort or attitude slips in real time.
- Set the tone for energy in warm-ups and practice.
- Lead by example in off-court behavior — academics, social media, community.

ACTION STEPS

Checklist

- On time and prepared?
- Recognized teammates living the standard?
- Addressed at least one slip?
- Energy level consistent?
- Modeled off-court behavior?

Discussion Prompts

1. What does our culture look like at its best?
2. Where have we drifted from our standards?
3. How can accountability conversations be more natural?
4. What small habit would lift the whole team?
5. How do we maintain culture during adversity?



DOMAIN 2: COMMUNICATION & CONNECTION

INTRODUCTION

Talent and toughness are wasted without trust and communication. Captains keep the team connected, ensuring voices are heard and information flows both ways. Listening is the foundation — noticing when teammates are frustrated, distracted, or disengaged, and creating space for honesty.

Captains also serve as bridges between players and coaches, carrying messages with honesty and respect. Connection is more than talk; it's creating belonging. Strong communication prevents isolation, eliminates confusion, and keeps the team aligned.

FIVE ACTIONABLE DUTIES

- Hold weekly check-ins with teammates.
- Bring team concerns to the coach privately.
- Ensure every teammate hears positive recognition weekly.
- Pair younger players with veterans for mentorship.
- Address conflicts early.

ACTION STEPS

Checklist

- Checked in with teammates?
- Clarified coach's message?
- Included quieter teammates?
- Praised teammates publicly?
- Listened more than talked?

Discussion Prompts

- 1.How connected do we feel as a team?
- 2.Who might be slipping through the cracks?
- 3.How can we create more honest dialogue?
- 4.How to improve communication during games and practices?
- 5.How do we handle disagreements without division?



DOMAIN 3: PERFORMANCE & COMPETITIVENESS

INTRODUCTION

Success is built on habits. Captains ensure those habits support performance and competitiveness every day. Coaches can plan, but players choose how hard and consistently they compete. That tone is contagious, and it starts with you.

Performance leadership is raising the standard of effort and protecting focus. Competitiveness is more than playing hard — it's how you respond when practice is tough, when mistakes happen, or when adversity hits. Captains influence through example, reminders, and accountability.

FIVE ACTIONABLE DUTIES

- Lead warm-ups and set the pace for energy.
- Reinforce details in drills.
- Be first to dive on the floor, sprint back, or take a charge.
- Encourage resilience after mistakes.
- Keep teammates engaged in film and scouting sessions.

ACTION STEPS

Checklist

- Tone set in practice?
- Modeled competitive effort?
- Reminded teammates about execution?
- Reset group after adversity?
- Consistent preparation in all aspects?

Discussion Prompts

1. What does “competing every day” look like?
2. How do we respond when practice energy dips?
3. Which execution details slip most in games?
4. How can we challenge each other in practice?
5. Difference between playing hard and competing with purpose?



DOMAIN 4: SERVICE & STEWARDSHIP

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is about service. Captains lift others, protect the team's reputation, and leave the program better than they found it. Stewardship means thinking beyond today's game, toward long-term growth.

Service shows up in supporting teammates through challenges, offering mentorship, and creating trust. Stewardship is representing the program positively in public, online, and in community interactions. Captains set the standard, knowing others are always watching.

FIVE ACTIONABLE DUTIES

- Check in weekly with younger or less experienced teammates.
- Lead by example academically and off the court.
- Represent the team positively in public and online.
- Participate in service or outreach opportunities.
- Support teammates through personal challenges.

ACTION STEPS

Checklist

- Supported younger teammates?
- Set good academic/off-court example?
- Represented team positively?
- Built trust among teammates?
- Considered long-term program impact?

Discussion Prompts

1. How do we define leaving the program better than we found it?
2. What does serving each other look like daily?
3. How do we support teammates through tough times?
4. What legacy do we want to leave?
5. How can off-court behavior reflect our values on the court?



Captain' Season Tracker

Instructions:

Check off duties daily, reflect weekly, and use discussion prompts in leadership council meetings. Rotate focus across the four domains to maintain balanced leadership.

Domain 1: Culture & Standards

Duties:

- Be on time and prepared
- Recognize teammates living the standard
- Address effort/attitude slips
- Set energy tone in practice
- Model off-court behavior

Weekly Reflection:

- Small habit that could lift the team?
- Where have we drifted from standards?

Domain 2: Communication & Connection

Duties:

- Check in with teammates
- Bring concerns to coach
- Ensure positive recognition for teammates
- Pair younger players with mentors
- Address conflicts early

Weekly Reflection:

- Who might be slipping through the cracks?
- How can we improve open dialogue?

Captain' Season Tracker

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Check off duties daily, reflect weekly, and use discussion prompts in leadership council meetings. Rotate focus across the four domains to maintain balanced leadership.

Domain 3: Performance & Competitiveness

Duties:

- Lead warm-ups with focus and energy
- Reinforce drill details
- Model hustle plays (dives, sprints, charges)
- Encourage resilience after mistakes
- Keep teammates engaged in film/scouting

Weekly Reflection:

- How do we respond when practice energy dips?
- Which execution details slip most often?

Domain 4: Service & Stewardship

Duties:

- Check in with younger/less experienced teammates
- Lead by example academically/off-court
- Represent the team positively in public/online
- Participate in service/outreach
- Support teammates through challenges

Weekly Reflection:

- How do we leave the program better than we found it?
- How do we support teammates through tough times?

Meeting Guide

Captain & Leadership Council Meeting Guide

Purpose:

These meetings are for captains to lead the conversation, address team needs, and partner with the head coach. The goal is collaboration, problem-solving, and proactive leadership, not simply reporting.

Structure of a Meeting

1. Opening (2–3 minutes)

- Quick reflection on past week: wins, challenges, observations.
- Set a focus or theme for today's meeting.

2. Team Culture & Standards Check-In (5 minutes)

- Are standards being maintained on and off the court?
- Are there any behaviors or habits slipping?

3. Communication & Connection Review (5 minutes)

- How connected are teammates?
- Are any players disengaged, frustrated, or isolated?

4. Performance & Competitiveness Update (5 minutes)

- How is practice effort?
- Are we competing with purpose in games and drills?
- Any adjustments needed for preparation or focus?

5. Service & Stewardship Reflection (5 minutes)

- Are captains and teammates supporting one another effectively?
- How is the team representing itself on and off the court?

6. Action Items & Next Steps (2–3 minutes)

- Identify priorities for the coming week.
- Assign follow-up responsibilities if needed.

Suggested Discussion Questions

Culture & Standards

- Which habits or standards need reinforcement?
- Are there any recurring behavior issues to address proactively?

Communication & Connection

- Who needs more support or guidance?
- How can we improve team dialogue and trust?

Performance & Competitiveness

- Are players consistently competing with purpose?
- What drills, routines, or focus points need emphasis next week?

Service & Stewardship

- How are captains supporting younger or less experienced teammates?
- Are we leaving the program better than we found it?

Coach Partnership Questions

- Where do you see gaps in team accountability or culture?
- How can captains help implement your vision without taking over your role?
- Are there opportunities for captains to lead initiatives or model behavior this week?

Tips for Running the Meeting

- Captains rotate who leads each week to build ownership.
- Keep the conversation concise and focused; aim for 20–25 minutes.
- Take notes on action items and follow up the next meeting.
- Encourage honest discussion while maintaining respect for teammates and the coach.

Conclusion

Leadership is a journey, not a title. Being a captain or member of the leadership council is a responsibility that extends beyond the scoreboard, practice, or game day. Your influence shapes the culture, energy, performance, and legacy of the team.

This manual is a guide — a framework to help you lead with consistency, purpose, and integrity. The true measure of leadership is not in completing checklists, but in the habits you build, the relationships you nurture, and the example you set every day.

Remember: your role is to serve your teammates, hold standards, foster connection, drive competitiveness, and protect the long-term health of the program. When you lead with intention, your impact multiplies — helping not just the team in the present, but the players and culture of tomorrow.

Carry this manual with you as a reference, a reminder, and a roadmap. Reflect often, act consistently, and seek to leave the team better than you found it. The mark of a great captain is not the games won, but the people developed, the culture strengthened, and the legacy left behind.

Lead well. Lead with purpose. Lead together.