

The Team Standards Session

Build Standards Your Team Will Actually Hold,
Because They Helped Write Them



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The Team Standards Session

Most coaches think they set standards. What they actually do is post a list they wrote and assume the team absorbed it. The athletes nod, and then they ignore it, because it was handed to them, not built by them.

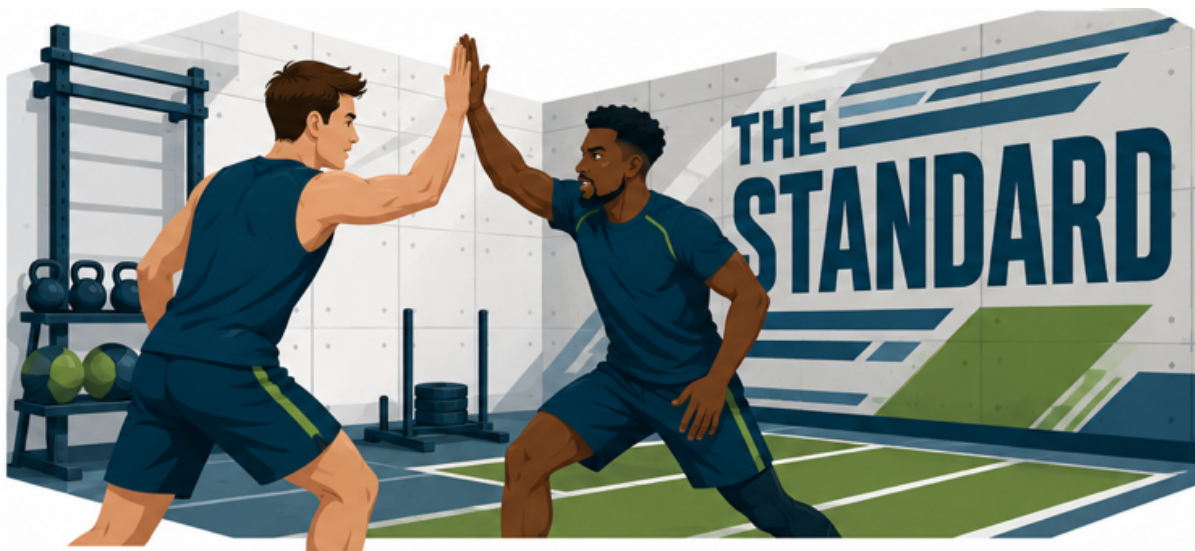
The standards that actually govern behavior are the ones the team created and agreed to out loud, including what happens when someone breaks one. This is the most important facilitation you will run all preseason. Give it real time. Ninety minutes at least.

A standard you post is a suggestion. A standard they build is a promise.

Before the Session

Two things get handled before you gather the team.

- Align your staff first. Your assistants have to be on the same standard before the athletes ever hear it. A culture your assistants do not enforce is one your athletes will not believe.
- Tell the team what this is. One sentence. We are going to decide together how this team treats each other and competes this season, and then we are going to hold each other to it.



During the Session

Do not lecture. Facilitate.

Your job is to pull the standard out of them, not read it to them.

1. Open with a connection moment. Start with a quick question that gets everyone talking before the real work. A loose room shares honestly. A stiff and uncomfortable room only gives you what they think you want to hear.

2. Put the real question on the table. Pick the thing this team most needs clarity on.

How do we talk to each other after a mistake? What does effort look like when we are down twenty? What do we do when someone is late? Unspoken expectations are premeditated resentments, so name the blank before the team fills it in on their own.

3. Everyone writes first, alone. Hand out index cards. Each athlete writes their answers privately before anyone speaks. This is the step most coaches skip, and it is the one that matters most. It keeps your loudest three from setting the standard for everyone and gives your quiet athletes a real voice.

4. Go around and share. Every athlete reads what they wrote. You listen more than you talk. Ask a follow-up when something is worth going deeper on. Let them hear how much they already agree on. They usually agree more than they expect.

5. Group it into five to seven behaviors. Pull the overlapping answers into a short list of clear, positive behaviors. Not fifteen. Five to seven they can actually remember. Write them in their words, not yours, so the standard sounds like the team and not the coach.

6. Decide the consequence together, in advance. This is the step almost everyone leaves out, and it is the one that makes the rest real. Before you leave the room, the team decides out loud what happens when a standard gets broken. A standard with no agreed response is just a poster. What you permit, you promote, so settle it now while it is calm, not later in the heat of a bad night.

7. Commit to it out loud. Have the team sign it, put hands in, say it together, whatever fits your program. The point is a shared moment where every athlete publicly owns the standard they built.

After the Session

A standard you build and never mention again quietly disappears. Keep it alive.

- Post it where the team sees it every day. The locker room, the practice plan, the group chat.
- Refer back to it by name the first-time behavior drifts. The standard only holds if you use it.
- When a new athlete joins, walk them through it and ask what they would add. It stays theirs, not a relic from a preseason meeting.
- Revisit it when the team changes or the season shifts. A living standard bends and holds. A framed one just hangs there.

The One Thing to Remember

The conversation matters more than the poster.

What your athletes say to each other in this ninety minutes, and how they respond when a teammate is honest, teaches them more about your culture than any list ever will. Run the session for the discussion, not just the document.

And if you want a hand facilitating this with your program in person, that is the work I care about most.

Reach me anytime at sean@greatresultsteambuilding.com.

