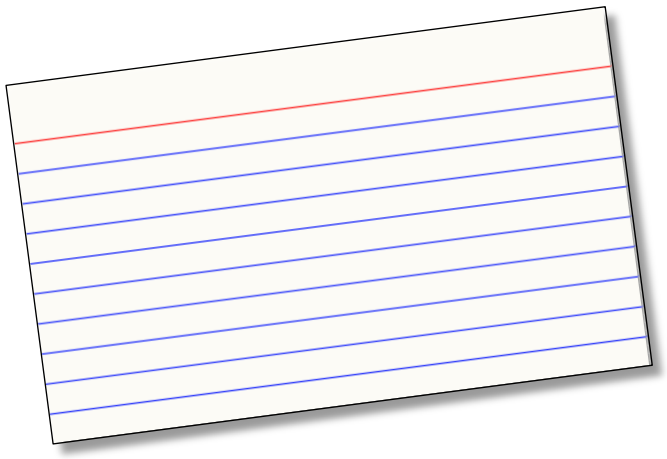
The Commitment Card Guide for Athletic Teams

A 90-day system for peer accountability
that builds trust across your team



Original concept by Coach Bob Ladouceur, De La Salle High School
Adapted by Sean Glaze

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WHERE THE COMMITMENT CARD CAME FROM

The commitment card is not my idea. It belongs to Bob Ladouceur, who coached football at De La Salle High School in Concord, California.

The coach

Coach Ladouceur took over a struggling De La Salle program in 1979 and led it for 34 seasons before retiring in January 2013. Before coaching, he worked as a probation officer.
That background matters. He was not trying to build great football players first.
He was trying to build strong teammates who kept their word.

The results

Measure	Record
Seasons as head coach	34 (1979 to 2012)
Career record	399 wins, 25 losses, 3 ties
Winning streak	151 straight games, from 1992 to 2004
Legacy	His program inspired the book When the Game Stands Tall by Neil Hayes (2003) and the 2014 film of the same name

How the original process worked

Every week, Coach Ladouceur paired his players up, always in a different order. Each player wrote three goals on a 3x5 index card: a conditioning goal, a practice goal, and a game goal. Then he read that card out loud to his partner and handed it over.

The rule was simple. Every goal had to be measurable and observable. If a teammate could not watch it and count it, it did not go on the card. At the end of the week, the team could see whether each player delivered on his promise.

> *"The idea behind the commitment cards was that I wanted players to be responsible to each other and understand that their contributions impact the team as a whole."*
>
> Coach Bob Ladouceur, as told to Don Yaeger, Forbes (2015)

The impact beyond football

Here is the part that gets me. According to Coach Ladouceur, most of his former players kept those cards for years as a reminder to live up to the commitments they made to the people who once believed in them. He also used the cards to teach humility: nobody is perfect, and a missed commitment was a chance to learn, not a reason to hide.

The scoreboard got the headlines. The cards built the men.
That is why this tool works in a locker room and in a conference room.

WHY THIS CARD MATTERS

Most teams talk about accountability. Very few build a system for it.
The commitment card gives your players a simple, repeatable way to make a promise to a teammate and then report back on whether they kept it.

It costs nothing. It takes about ten minutes a week.
And it changes who owns the culture.

What it does beyond the scoreboard

- **Moves accountability from the coach to the locker room.** When a teammate holds you to your word, it lands differently than when a coach does. Players stop performing for the coach and start showing up for each other.
- **Builds relationships on purpose.** Partners rotate every week. By midseason, every starter has made a promise to a freshman and every reserve has held a captain accountable.
- **Makes effort visible.** Goals must be measurable and observable. "Play hard" disappears. "Win 80% of my one on ones Wednesday" takes its place.
- **Teaches players to keep their word.** This is character training disguised as goal setting. The habit of saying what you will do and then doing it follows a player into marriage, work, and leadership.
- **Normalizes falling short with humility.** Coach Ladouceur used the cards to teach that nobody is perfect. A missed goal becomes a chance to own it and adjust, not a reason to hide.
- **Gives your team a language for hard conversations.** "Did you keep your card?" is a lot easier to say than "you have been slacking."

How it connects to the GREAT culture model

GREAT element	What the commitment card builds
Goals	Every player writes specific, measurable goals for games and practice.
Relationships	Rotating partners create connection across classes and positions.
Expectations	The standard is written down and spoken out loud.
Accountability	Peers report on peers. The team owns the standard, not just the staff.
Thanks	Kept commitments get celebrated. Partners thank each other for push.

ANATOMY OF THE CARD

Use a simple 3x5 index card.

Line	What goes here
Name and week	Player name and the week number of the season.
Game goal	One observable action in the next game. Tied to the player's role.
Practice goal	One measurable target for a specific practice day or drill.
Teammate goal	One thing the player will do to make a teammate better this week.
I commit to	The name of this week's partner.

The filter: could a teammate watch it and count it?

If a partner cannot observe it or measure it, it goes back for a rewrite.

Too vague	Card ready
Play harder on defense	Get a hand up on every shot I contest Friday
Get better in practice	Win 8 of 10 reps in the Tuesday pass rush drill
Be a better teammate	Text two underclassmen encouragement before Thursday
Block better	Take a positive first step (8 inches) on every run play



THE SEASON ROADMAP

The card works best when it grows with your team. Here is how I would install it across a full season.

Phase 1: Install Preseason

Goal: *Players understand the why and can write a card that passes the filter.*

- Tell the De La Salle story. Name Coach Ladouceur and what the cards did for his program.
- Coaches go first. Every staff member writes and reads a card out loud to a player partner. Players need to see you do it.
- Run a 15 minute card writing clinic. Show the vague versus card ready examples, then have players rewrite three bad goals together.
- Write the first real cards. Coaches review every card and send back anything that fails the filter.
- Set the team rules: no excuses at report out, no mocking a missed goal, check in midweek.

> **Coach note:** Expect weak cards in week one. That is the point of the install. The rewrite conversation teaches more than the first card.

Phase 2: Build the Rhythm Weeks 1 to 4

Goal: *The weekly cycle runs on its own without the coach pushing it.*

- Run the weekly cycle (next page) the same way every week. Same day, time, script.
- Rotate partners every week. Mix classes, positions, starters and reserves.
- Coaches still review cards, but now ask players to precheck each other before turning them in.
- Track the team keep rate on a whiteboard: commitments kept divided by commitments made.
- Celebrate kept cards publicly. Keep corrections for missed cards private.

> **Coach note:** Watch for players who write easy goals to protect their keep rate. Call it out gently: "That goal would not stretch you. What would?"

Phase 3: Hand It Over Weeks 5 to 9

Goal: *Players lead the process and the card starts shaping character, not just performance.*

- Captains or a rotating player leader run the report out. Coaches step back and listen.
- Hold a midseason card review. Each player picks the card they are most proud of and why.
- Let players start requesting partners they want to be pushed by, alongside the coach rotation.
- Ask the team: "What has the card taught you that has nothing to do with football?"

> **Coach note:** This is the phase where most programs drop the system because things feel busy. Do not. The payoff is in the second half of the season.

Phase 4: Finish Strong Late season and playoffs

Goal: *Cards sharpen focus on role clarity when the pressure is highest.*

- Tie game goals directly to each player's role in the game plan. Every role matters, so every card matters.
- Seniors partner with underclassmen intentionally. This is how your culture outlives your seniors.
- Before the biggest games, have partners read each other's cards out loud in front of the team.
- Keep cards simple. Fewer words, sharper targets.

> **Coach note:** Pressure pushes players back toward self focus. The card pulls them back toward each other.

Phase 5: Reflect and Pass It On Postseason

Goal: *Every player leaves with proof that they keep their word.*

- Return every card each player wrote, bundled together. Players will keep theirs for years.
- Each player writes a short note to the partner who pushed them the most.
- Run a reflection conversation: Which commitment was hardest to keep? What did you learn about yourself when you missed?
- Ask returning players to write one commitment card for the offseason and name a partner.
- Coaches review the season keep rate and partner data to plan next year's install.

> **Coach note:** The bundle of cards is the trophy that matters most. It shows a player who they became, not just what the team won.



THE WEEKLY CYCLE

Keep it short and consistent. Ten minutes total on the main day, a two minute touch midweek.

Step	Time	What happens
Write	Day 1, 5 min	Players write cards. Coach or captain names partners for the week.
Commit	Day 1, 5 min	Partners pair up. Each player reads the card out loud and hands it to the partner. The partner keeps the card all week.
Pulse	Midweek, 2 min	Partners check in before or after practice. "How is the conditioning goal going?" No lectures, just a nudge.
Report	End of week, 5 min	Partner reads the goal out loud and asks "Did you keep it?" Player answers yes or no. No excuses.
Reset	After report	Missed goal? Player says one thing they learned and what they will adjust. Team claps for the honesty.

The report out script

1. **Partner:** "Your practice goal was to win 80% of your one on ones Wednesday. Did you keep it?"
2. **Player:** "Yes." Team responds with a clap or a call.
3. **Or Player:** "No. I won about half. Next week I am finishing every rep through the whistle."
4. **Partner:** "I will be watching." Team claps for the ownership.

> **The rule that makes it work:** honesty gets applause. Excuses get silence. When players learn that admitting a miss is respected, they stop hiding and start growing.

Pairing system

- Rotate every week so nobody gets comfortable with the same partner.
- Mix grade levels, position groups, and playing time on purpose.
- Odd number? Make one group of three, or a coach takes the extra player.
- Keep a simple pairing log so you can see who has not been paired yet.
- From Phase 3 on, allow some player chosen pairings mixed with coach assigned ones.

THE COACH'S ROLE

- **Model it.** Write your own card every week. Your cards should be as specific as the players'.
- **Approve, then step back.** Review cards early. By midseason, let players do the reviewing.
- **Do not become the police.** The partner owns the follow up. If you take it over, the system dies.
- **Watch patterns.** A player who misses three weeks straight needs a private conversation.
- **Tell the stories.** When a kept commitment shows up on the field, point to it in film.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Problem	Fix
Goals stay vague	Run the filter out loud: "Could your partner watch it and count it?" Send it back until the answer is yes.
Same goal every week	Require at least one new line each week. Growth means moving the target.
Players write easy goals	Ask partners to approve the goal before it is final. Peers spot sandbagging fast.
Partners skip midweek pulse	Build it into practice: two minutes during water break on the same day every week.
A player fudges the report	Partners were watching. Let the partner speak to it. Follow up privately if needed.
It feels like it takes too long	Hold the time limit. Ten minutes on day one, five minutes on report day. Use a timer.
Missed goals cause embarrassment	Revisit the rule: honesty gets applause. Coaches share their own missed cards first.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Wins and losses will take care of themselves. Track these instead:

- **Keep rate:** commitments kept divided by commitments made, team wide, each week.
- **Pulse rate:** how many partners actually checked in midweek.
- **Connection reach:** how many different teammates each player has partnered with.
- **Player voice:** a three question survey at midseason and postseason. Who pushed you most? What did the card teach you? Would you keep using it?

TEMPLATES TO USE

Commitment card (print on 3x5 cards or cut from this page)

COMMITMENT CARD	Name: _____ Week: ____
Game goal	
Practice goal	
Teammate goal	
I commit to	
Kept it?	Yes / No What I learned:

Weekly tracking sheet

Player	Partner	Game	Practice	Cond.	Teammate

**Mark each goal Y or N. Keep rate = total Y divided by total goals.*

Want a Hand Running This With Your Team?

You can run this guide on your own. Plenty of leaders do.

I would also be glad to help.
I work with teams on the culture around commitments, not just the tool...

Here is how Sean can help:

- **A team workshop** that walks your people through the G.R.E.A.T. steps as a catalyst event
- **A keynote** for your event on why being a Winning Teammate improves everyone's season.
- **One on one coaching** for the leader - so you have a thinking partner as you implement.



About the Author:

Sean Glaze is a workplace culture keynote speaker and team building event facilitator who spent 20 years coaching basketball before transitioning to corporate speaking. He has worked with organizations including Cisco, John Deere, CDC, Emory University, and Southern Company, helping teams build accountability, trust, and stronger collaboration.

He is the author of several leadership books including Rapid Teamwork, What Effective Leaders Do, and The 10 Commandments of Winning Teammates, and he built the G.R.E.A.T. Culture Model, a framework leaders use to diagnose and strengthen team dynamics.

Contact Sean!

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