

United Local High School

Boys Soccer



Captain's Handbook

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What is a Team Captain?

Being selected/elected as a team captain is a tremendous honor and privilege that you should be very proud of. However, this new role also brings a great deal of responsibility.

You are no longer just a member of the team. You are expected to be a leader on and off the field, a role model within our community and school, and a bridge between the team and the coaching staff. Leadership is not always easy and sometimes, in order to be successful, you may have to make difficult decisions to improve the team.

Don't worry, though, because there is no specific style or personality that defines a great team captain. The most important thing is to be yourself. Just because you are now a captain does not necessarily mean you need to change the way you act. You were chosen to lead for a reason; so be yourself. You can be demanding and direct, but never angry, arrogant, or bossy. The best leaders are those who can make everyone around them better.

You are expected to exemplify integrity, sportsmanship, discipline, responsibility, humility, teamwork, commitment, and respect.

You have earned this honor; however, you can also lose this honor.

THE MOST IMPORTANT KEY TO ACHIEVING GREAT SUCCESS IS TO DECIDE UPON YOUR GOAL AND LAUNCH, GET STARTED, TAKE ACTION, MOVE

-John Wooden-

Qualities of a Good Team Captain

- Leads by example and always strives to do his best
- Recognizes team needs
- Helps the team set goals
- Is not afraid to speak his mind
- Keeps the team in line, both inside and outside the school
- Selfless
- Appropriate behavior and conduct
- Strong focus on academics
- Will motivate others
- Honest
- Dedicated
- Inspiring
- Good Communicator
- Good Listener
- Enthusiastic
- Hard Working
- Respectful
- Dependable
- Positive
- Disciplined
- Responsible
- Humble
- Committed
- Exhibits sportsmanship
- Exemplifies integrity

Leadership Styles-Team Captains Can Lead in Different Ways

There are a variety of different leadership styles that result from differing personalities.

- So if you are quiet, be the leader that leads by example. You lead by playing hard, being respectful to officials, and by staying focused during practice, bus trips to away games, and pregame. You perform well in the classroom and stay away from alcohol, drugs, and other prohibited substances. You conduct yourself on and off the field positively as a representative of the team, the school, the community, and your family.
- If you are not quiet, however, you may be more comfortable with being a vocal leader. You lead by working hard and verbally motivating the team to maintain a positive atmosphere. You conduct yourself on and off the field positively as a representative of the team, the school, the community, and your family.

Part I-Captain's Roles and Responsibilities

Think about effective/successful captains from teams you have had previously played for. Focus on their characteristics or skills to consider how they contributed to being a better captain. Following this, reflect on the specific duties of a captain. These range from leading warm-up exercises to handling situations involving teammates making poor decisions off the field.

Part II-Rate Yourself

Using your list of captain characteristics, skills, and responsibilities from Part I, write down the ten most important. Next, rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 with regard to your success in possessing each characteristic (1= little or no ability, 5=some ability, 10=high ability). Consider which characteristics are your strongest and which are your weakest. Then, focus on how you can improve your weakest characteristics throughout the season.

Relationship with Your Coaches

A captain's ability to develop a relationship with the coaches will help determine the success of the team.

THE STRENGTH OF THE GROUP IS THE STRENGTH OF THE LEADERS

-Vince Lombardi -

Work with Your Coach to Set Mutual Expectations

It is important to be a leader and to be the bridge between the team and the coaches. Even though you have captain status, however, the coaches still make the final decision relative to team matters.

I have included below common questions that team captains may have about their role and expectations during the season. If you need more clarification or wish to discuss these topics further, feel free to schedule a meeting with the coaches.

- What do you expect from me personally this season?
 - You are expected to exemplify integrity, sportsmanship, discipline, responsibility, humility, teamwork, commitment, and respect.
 - You are to be a leader and role model for your teammates and others both on and off the field.
 - You conduct yourself on and off the field positively as a representative of the team, the school, the community, and your family.
- How can I help you this season?
 - You help set, monitor, and adjust team goals and expectations for the upcoming season. Setting goals will keep the team motivated throughout the season. It is important to have pre-season, season, and tournament goals.
 - You are the voice of the team and as such serve as the “bridge” between your teammates and the coaching staff.
 - You are the voice of the team during games and serve as the “bridge” between the team and the officials.
 - You have the responsibility to not only follow team rules, guidelines, and expectations yourself, but to help ensure your teammates are doing the same.
 - At practice you help set up equipment, ensure it is properly put away, lead warm-up, serve as a role model of focus and hard work. Always be positive and uplifting.
 - At games you help to motivate the team through your words and actions. Help inspire the team during the team reflection time and during the team breakout. Help inspire the team with your tireless work ethic on the field. Help inspire the team through your sportsmanship and respect for the officials, opponents, coaches, spectators, and the game itself. Always be positive and uplifting.
 - You are permitted to provide suggestions and your personal input throughout the season (the coaches sometimes need outside perspectives on things).
- What is the process to address problems and concerns this season?
 - If you are aware of a potential minor problem with a teammate (minor infractions of team policies, poor attitudes, etc.), you may discuss the matter with that teammate and then let the coaching staff know what was discussed. This will allow the coaching staff know of any potential minor problems and will allow them to continue to monitor the problem to determine if further intervention is necessary.
 - If you are aware of a potential major problem with a teammate (drug/alcohol/tobacco use, illegal activities, dangerous/life threatening issues), you must immediately let the coaching staff know so that they can address the potential major problem with the teammate. You help serve as additional eyes for the coaching staff.

- What do I need to understand that I may not know?
 - Your words and actions represent more than just yourself as an individual.
 - If you are unable or unwilling to fulfil your duties as described in this Captain's Handbook, you will have your role as captain of the United Local High School Boys Soccer Program rescinded and a replacement captain may be named.
 - You have great responsibility with this role; it is not just a title of status symbol.

There are some tough issues that come with being a team captain. For example, a player may approach you with issues about playing time or insufficient grades. Perhaps a teammate is using drugs, or has an eating disorder. Regardless of the problem, work with your coach ahead of time to plan a strategy for resolution.

A healthy relationship with the coaches must be maintained throughout the season. Here are some ways to achieve this goal:

- Schedule frequent meetings with the coaches to discuss team goals and any potential issues/problems affecting the team.
- Maintain respectful communication to ensure mutual trust.
- To prevent preferential treatment of captains, set coach and captain boundaries.
- Alert coach to other player and team issues.
- At the end of the season, discuss with the coaches the successes and failures and help set pre-season goals for next year.

Relationship with Your Team

Your relationship with the team is one of the more important aspects of being a captain. As a team captain, you must be willing to accept the leadership role and embrace all members. Teammates should also feel as if they can confide in their captain. To maintain a good relationship, stay respectful and positive and find ways to work with your teammates.

YOU WON'T WIN CONSISTENTLY WITHOUT GOOD TEAM LEADERSHIP. IT'S JUST THAT PLAIN AND SIMPLE. YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE PLAYERS WHO ARE WILLING TO BUY INTO YOUR SYSTEM, DEMAND THE BEST FROM THEMSELVES AND THEIR TEAMMATES, AND HOLD THEIR TEAMMATES ACCOUNTABLE.

-PAT SUMMITT -

Lead by Example

“A leader leads by example whether he intends to or not.” –Author Unknown

As a team captain, it is important to remember that your position holds great responsibility. Many times a team captain is held to higher standards than others due to the fact that his or her actions are more closely monitored by fellow teammates, coaches, and spectators. You need to be aware that your every move, whether good or bad, creates an image that reflects on your entire team, school, community, and family. As a captain, it is necessary to lead by example at all times because good actions will be replicated and can strengthen a team as a whole.

Work with Your Fellow Captain(s):

In many cases, you will be serving as co-captains with one or more of your teammates. The relationship between the team captains is vital to achieve success. As a team captain, it is necessary for you to have positive relationships with your fellow captains. This relationship must be friendly without holding back opinions or constructive criticism. It is impossible for you to be an effective team captain if you do not work together with your fellow captain. Team captains must work as a unit to ensure that spirit, attitude, and effort are 100%. If your teammates see a strong bond and union between their captains, they will be more likely and willing to follow the leaders, and be compelled to work to keep good relationships among the team.

Stay Respectful and Positive

Focus on ways to instill your team's trust. Respect the ideas of your teammates. Allow your teammates to contribute their opinions. In essence, a team is a family and as a family, it cares about all of its members. Everyone should be treated the same, regardless of age, playing time, or role on the team. Know the line between helping and being a coach. Instead of taking over practice, pull teammates aside for constructive criticism. Be there to talk with teammates about problems. Don't talk about others' bad play. If you don't respect your teammates, they won't respect you. Hazing is never an acceptable behavior. Hazing refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. Regardless of age or role on the team everyone should be treated with respect.

Work with Teammates

Goal setting with your team may seem like a small thing to do, but it helps in a big way – it may be just as important as setting goals with your coach because it gets you all on the same page. Tell a teammate how much they mean to you and the team. This makes them feel more accepted and more willing to give their best. Remember, you don't have to be a good athlete to make a huge contribution. Have a close relationship with your co-captains and keep each other informed on important issues. Remind each other of your goals and how you want to obtain them. It's an easier job if you can lean on one another for support.

New Player Mentoring

Each incoming player (whether a Freshman or a first-year upperclassman) will be assigned a Team Captain as a mentor. The role of the mentor is to help the new players get acclimated to our team culture, policies, rules, and expectations. The mentor should help ensure that the new players are following and meeting team policies, rules, and expectations and should look to build a close relationship with the new players both on and off the field. Each mentor should discuss any potential problems/issues that they become aware of with the coaching staff. The ideal outcome of this mentorship is a smooth transition into our boys high school soccer program.

Five Core Concerns to Build Respectful Relationship with You Teammates

Concern #1: Appreciation

Every member of your team wants to know that their thoughts, feelings, and actions are valued by the coaches and teammates. Everyone on the team puts in a tremendous amount of time and energy to achieve shared goals. Try to find ways to show your teammates appreciation for their commitment to the team. Encourage teammates to demonstrate appreciation for each other.

Concern #2: Association

Your teammates want to be treated as an integral part of something meaningful. They want to be valued by teammates and not excluded from team functions away from the playing field. That is, each student-athlete will make a deeper commitment to the team when they feel a strong sense of association. Unfortunately, sport teams all too often breed an in-group out-group mentality. Injuries too can seem alienating to team members. When teammates can't participate because of injuries be sure to keep them close to you and the rest of the team.

Concern #3: Self-Management

Student-athletes want to be respected for their ability to make independent decisions. Most of your teammates will possess a desire to be self-directing. However, this does not mean they don't want your help. It just means you need to help them set their direction and stay on course.

Concern #4: Status

Every team member is concerned with his or her status and their "relative position" to teammates. Bench players, in particular, want to be given recognition and not to be treated as inferior to others. While it is generally evident who the best players are on the playing field, the contributions others make in various roles as teammates should not be relegated to second-class status.

Concern #5: Role

Each of your teammates desires a role to play and truly wants that role to be valued. It's common for athletes to perceive their role in an ambiguous way. Through patience your guidance can help teammates understand, accept, and grow in their respective role. You can point the way by helping teammates make sense of their role on and off the playing field. Your teammates will be seeking out and serving in a variety of roles throughout the season. Some roles are more vital than others. No matter the vitality of the role, each role is important for a successful team. Always pay attention to your teammates and help them to find value in their role.

In summary, each teammate will have a different perception of how his or her 5 Core Concerns are being met. Perceptions should be visible in their various behaviors, attitudes, emotional reactions and thought patterns. Your leadership task is to continually work at identifying underlying problems and find solutions. This is best done when you actively engage in honest conversation with your teammates building solid relationships. Great leaders care to know their teammates.

Relationship with Other Groups

It is important to develop a relationship with people outside of your team. This includes the student body, fans, parents, game officials, etc. Remember that you and your team are a reflection on your school as well as your community and family.

LEADERSHIP ISN'T REALLY ABOUT LEADING PEOPLE. IT'S ABOUT GETTING THEM TO FOLLOW YOU.

-Steve Young -

Student Body

Every member of the student body is a teammate, whether it's someone who may potentially be a teammate or even a student that may be a fan in the stands cheering you on. Understand that the little things will help get you support. Smiling at schoolmates, helping someone with his or her extra books or even holding a door –it's the little things that make the difference between good and great teams. Get to know other team captains within your school. By spending time with each other, you learn new styles and techniques that may help you solve team problems. By getting together with other captains, you will become a more effective captain yourself.

Community

You are a representative of your team, school, community, and family on the field, off the field, and in the classroom. Always remember you are being watched. The kids in your community look up to you, so take a close notice of your actions and behavior. Take pride and be active in your community.

Officials

Officials don't win or lose the game, you do. You can't control the officials, so focus on what you can control. Just like you, officials will make mistakes. Learn to overcome this adversity and play on. Get a feel for how they are going to call the game, and even then, talk to the referees in a respectful manner about questionable calls. After the competition, thank the officials.

Fans

Fans must realize that a ticket is a privilege to observe a content and support the high school activities, not a license to verbally assault others. As a captain, you can help promote positive sportsmanship during the contest. Serve as a positive role model during the contest and expect the same of parents and fans. Support participants, coaches, school administrators, and fans who display good sportsmanship.

Team Building

Team building activities are important because they allow you to form better relationships with your teammates. By building a strong foundation for your relationships, your team will work better together in practice and in games.

LEADERSHIP IS GETTING PLAYERS TO BELIEVE IN YOU. IF YOU TELL A TEAMMATE YOU'RE READY TO PLAY AS TOUGH AS YOU'RE ABLE TO, YOU'D BETTER GO OUT THERE AND DO IT. AND THEY CAN TELL WHEN YOU'RE NOT GIVING IT ALL YOU'VE GOT.

-Larry Bird -

Guidelines of Team Building Activities

- Avoid cliques - Not only can they hurt individual team members, but they can also limit your team's success. A captain's role is to dissolve any cliques and help them realize how it weakens the team as a whole.
- Include everyone at all team events - The more you offer team activities, the closer your team will be. Team building doesn't stop when the season is over.
- Maintain out-of-season relationships.
- Sometimes team building can be more than just performing a simple activity. It requires lots of time, effort, and cooperation between teammates.
- Match up players from different grades and let them be each other's responsibility for a week. They should both be able to learn things from each other. The two can do drills together, sit together on the bus, or just give advice. The younger player will benefit from the experience and the older player will benefit from seeing a fresh point of view. Switch partners periodically throughout the season.

Sportsmanship

As a team captain it is your responsibility to ensure that your team keeps their composure on and off the field. Many times sportsmanship can be compromised by emotions. It is important to manage your emotions in the "heat of the battle". Sportsmanship has nothing to do with athletic ability. Sportsmanship has to do with a team captain using the Qualities of a Good Team Captain to promote respect for the game, the officials, and the opponent. As a team and as a team leader you represent your school, community, and family. Positive sportsmanship is a good reflection on both.

ONE MAN PRACTICING SPORTSMANSHIP IS FAR BETTER THAN A HUNDRED PREACHING IT

-Knut Rockne -

Social Media

In being selected as team captain, you are not only a leader for your team, but a representative and image of your school, community, and team. As a team captain and student athlete, you have a responsibility to your school, your coaches, your teammates, your community, and your family by cooperating with the media. Because you are representing yourself, your team, your coaches, your school, your community, and your family, you need to always be aware of what you say and what you do. Many times during high school athletics, you may be approached by different types of media: the school newspaper, local newspaper, local news station, radio, television, or magazine. In this day and age, social media has a great impact on how others view you; therefore you need to be prepared.

THE LEADER HAS TO BE PRACTICAL AND A REALIST YET MUST TALK THE LANGUAGE OF THE VISIONARY AND THE IDEALIST

-Eric Hoffer -

Media Basics

- The opportunity to deal with the media is a learning experience in developing communication skills.
- Your appearance, what you say, and what you do will stay with you for the rest of your life. Your image is reflected through the media, use that to your advantage and have good judgment.
- The media is not your enemy as long as you handle them properly: give your side of the story, a positive opinion, and your message.
- You are NOT obligated to answer a question you do not feel comfortable answering. A proper response could be, "I'd rather not comment on that question at this time."
- Never agree to a telephone or personal interview unless arrangements have been made by a school official or coach. If you are contacted by the media, tell them to contact your school's representative or coach.
- Always have patience with the media and interviewers.
- Think through every question you are asked before answering, and be sure what you say will not embarrass you or others.

Media Ground Rules

- Always tell the truth.
- Know the difference between your "public answer" and your "private answer." We all know we tell each other things we would not want to share with everyone else. Do not share your private answers with the media.
- Know who you want to reach. Who is your audience? In every interview situation, consider how you can impact your audience.
- Know your message. Keep firmly in your mind exactly what you want to say and what you want your message to be. With that focus, you will be sure to say things you won't regret in the future.

- Resist the temptation to fill the silence. If you have them at hello, say goodbye. It is common to feel compelled to keep talking to fill the awkward silence, but DON'T. It is when you say more than intended that you often make mistakes.
- Never mistake familiarity for trust. You may know the interviewer, but be sure to always stay on topic and never make any "off-color" comments. Assume what you say will always end up in print.
- Keep it under control: Remember that you are in control of the interview. The interviewer is the one asking YOU the questions. You are in control of what statements go into the interview, and whether they are positive or negative.
- NEVER criticize the officials, the opponent, or teammates in the media.

Summary

Being a captain is a special opportunity. You have the power to make or break your teammates' year. It is not just about winning games; it is about making a difference. Whether it is helping them to a state championship, they will always remember or giving them friendship that will last a lifetime, being an active team captain can make a difference in your teammates' lives. By stepping up and striving to be the best captain you can be, you learn the skills of leadership that will not only give you success in your high school sports career, but can also give you success beyond high school.

Now that you know your strengths and weaknesses, you can utilize the different sections of this handbook to improve your skills as a captain. It is important to realize that this handbook doesn't have the answer to every question, so you may have to look to others for advice or experience it yourself. Don't forget that all leaders struggle in certain areas. Instead of overlooking your flaws, embrace them and use this handbook to make yourself a better captain and person.

Acknowledgement

The United Local High School Boys Soccer Captain's Handbook draws heavily from the IHSAA Student Advisory Committee's Captains Handbook.