



PRE-DRILL CAMP 2026 · LEADERSHIP SEMINARS · DAY 1

Bonds, Not Fear

"Lead the Culture Without Intimidation"

Dr. Thomas L. Jones, Jr.

Director of University Bands · Saturday, August 1, 2026

The Hampton University Marching Force

HAMPTON'S HEARTBEAT

Icebreaker

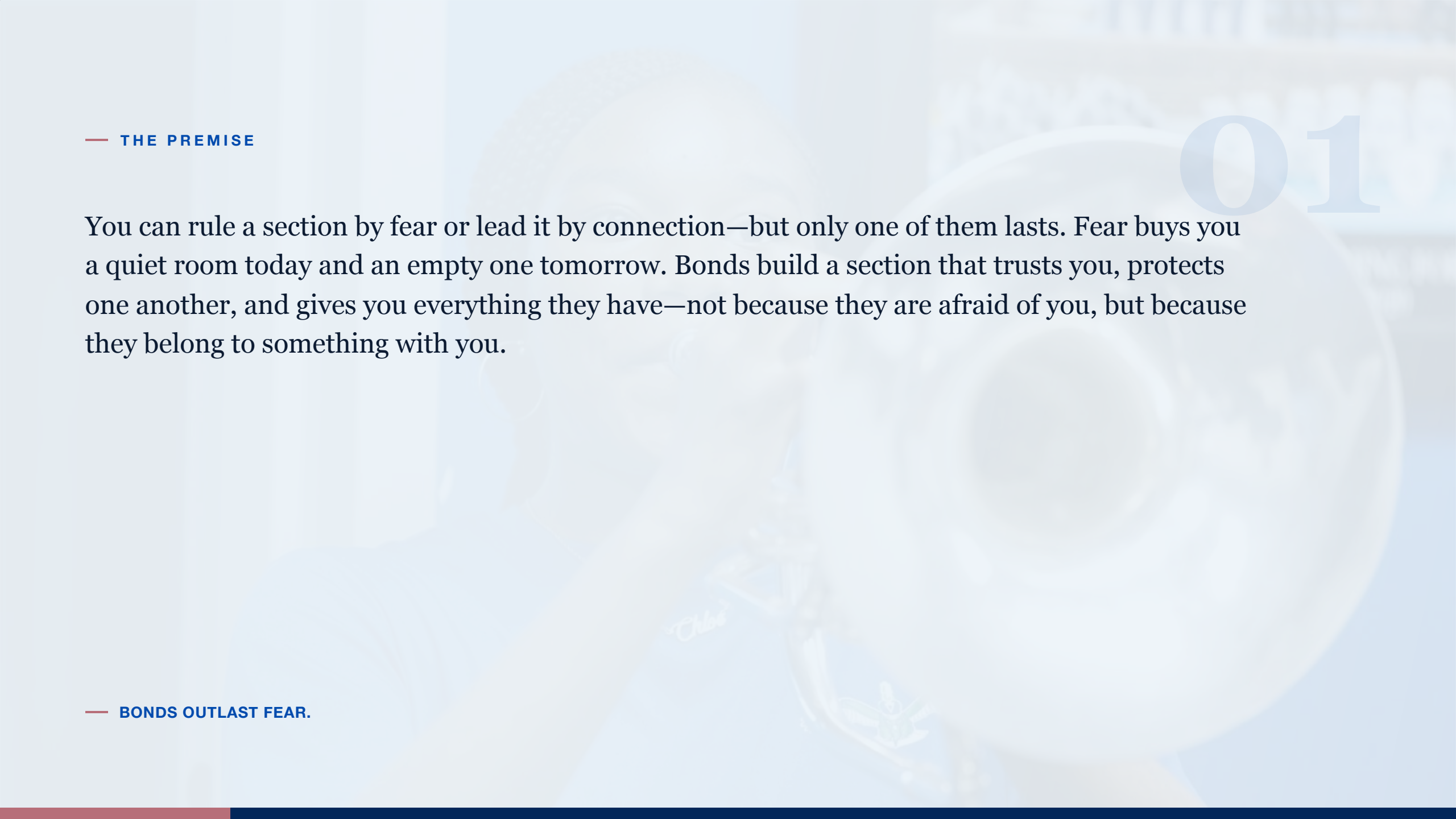
This is what a section sounds like when it moves as one—built on brotherhood, not fear.



Remember the Titans — “Left Side, Strong Side”

youtu.be/-AWtpFqKD-o

WATCH · 1:39



— THE PREMISE

You can rule a section by fear or lead it by connection—but only one of them lasts. Fear buys you a quiet room today and an empty one tomorrow. Bonds build a section that trusts you, protects one another, and gives you everything they have—not because they are afraid of you, but because they belong to something with you.

— BONDS OUTLAST FEAR.

The Fear Trap

Fear is the easiest tool to reach for—and the weakest one you own.

- ◆ Fear gets you **compliance, not commitment**. People do the minimum to stay out of trouble, and nothing more.
- ◆ A frightened section goes **silent**—members hide mistakes, stop asking questions, and stop bringing you problems.
- ◆ Under threat, the brain drops into survival mode: **no creativity, no risk, no growth**. Scared people shrink.
- ◆ And fear is the seed of **hazing**—a culture that makes people suffer to belong will eventually make them leave.

Sources: Zak, "The Neuroscience of Trust" (*Harvard Business Review*, 2017); LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (1996).

A Warning: How Good People Turn Cruel

The Stanford Prison Experiment—what a fear-and-power culture does to the ones in charge.

- ◆ In 1971, Stanford researchers randomly assigned students to be “guards” or “prisoners” in a mock prison. Within days, the ordinary students playing guards grew controlling and cruel, and the study was shut down early.
- ◆ The point is not that the guards were bad people. It is that a system built on **power over others** and **fear** can bring out the worst in almost anyone—including you.
- ◆ Hand a leader authority with no accountability, and the same drift can start: small cruelties, excused by “the role,” that grow into hazing.
- ◆ The study has since been criticized as more staged than scientific—but the warning it dramatized is real, and the safeguard is **culture**: build bonds, never a license to demean.

Sources: Haney, Banks, and Zimbardo, "Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison" (1973); Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect* (2007); Le Texier, "Debunking the Stanford Prison Experiment," *American Psychologist* (2019).

Safe People Rise

The most effective teams are not the most feared—they are the safest.

- ◆ Harvard's **Amy Edmondson** named it **psychological safety**: the shared belief that you can speak up, fail, and be yourself without being punished for it.
- ◆ When Google studied its best teams, psychological safety was the **number-one** factor—above talent, above resources.
- ◆ Safe people take smart risks, admit mistakes early, and give their real effort. Afraid people just hide.
- ◆ Your job is not to make your section comfortable. It is to make it **safe enough to be great**.

Sources: Edmondson, "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1999); Edmondson, *The Fearless Organization* (2019); Rozovsky, "The Five Keys to a Successful Google Team" (Google re:Work, 2015).

Everyone Needs to Belong

Belonging is not a luxury. It is a human need.

- ◆ The need to belong is **fundamental**—as real a driver as hunger. Every member walks in wanting to be part of something.
- ◆ Meet that need the **right way**, through genuine bonds, and you get loyalty, effort, and a section that stays.
- ◆ Ignore it, and people find belonging the **wrong way**: cliques, division, or the false family that hazing pretends to offer.
- ◆ Give them the real thing, and no one goes looking for the counterfeit.

Sources: Baumeister and Leary, "The Need to Belong," *Psychological Bulletin* (1995); Deci and Ryan, self-determination theory, *Psychological Inquiry* (2000).

Bonds vs. Fear

Two sections. One breaks under pressure. One bends and holds.

FEAR-LED *rules by intimidation*

- ◆ Obeys when watched, coasts when not.
- ◆ Hides mistakes until they become disasters.
- ◆ Every member for themselves.
- ◆ Loses people—and never knows why.

BONDED *led by connection*

- ◆ Gives full effort, watched or not.
- ◆ Surfaces problems early and honestly.
- ◆ Protects each other; no one left behind.
- ◆ Keeps people—and gets stronger every year.

How to Build Real Bonds

Connection is not an accident. You build it on purpose.

1 Know Them

Learn names, stories, and what each member is carrying. People bond with leaders who truly see them.

3 Be Human

Admit your own mistakes. A leader who is real gives everyone else permission to be real too.

2 Sweat Together

Shared hard work—clean reps, long days done right—bonds a section. Struggle toward a goal, never suffering for its own sake.

4 Protect Them

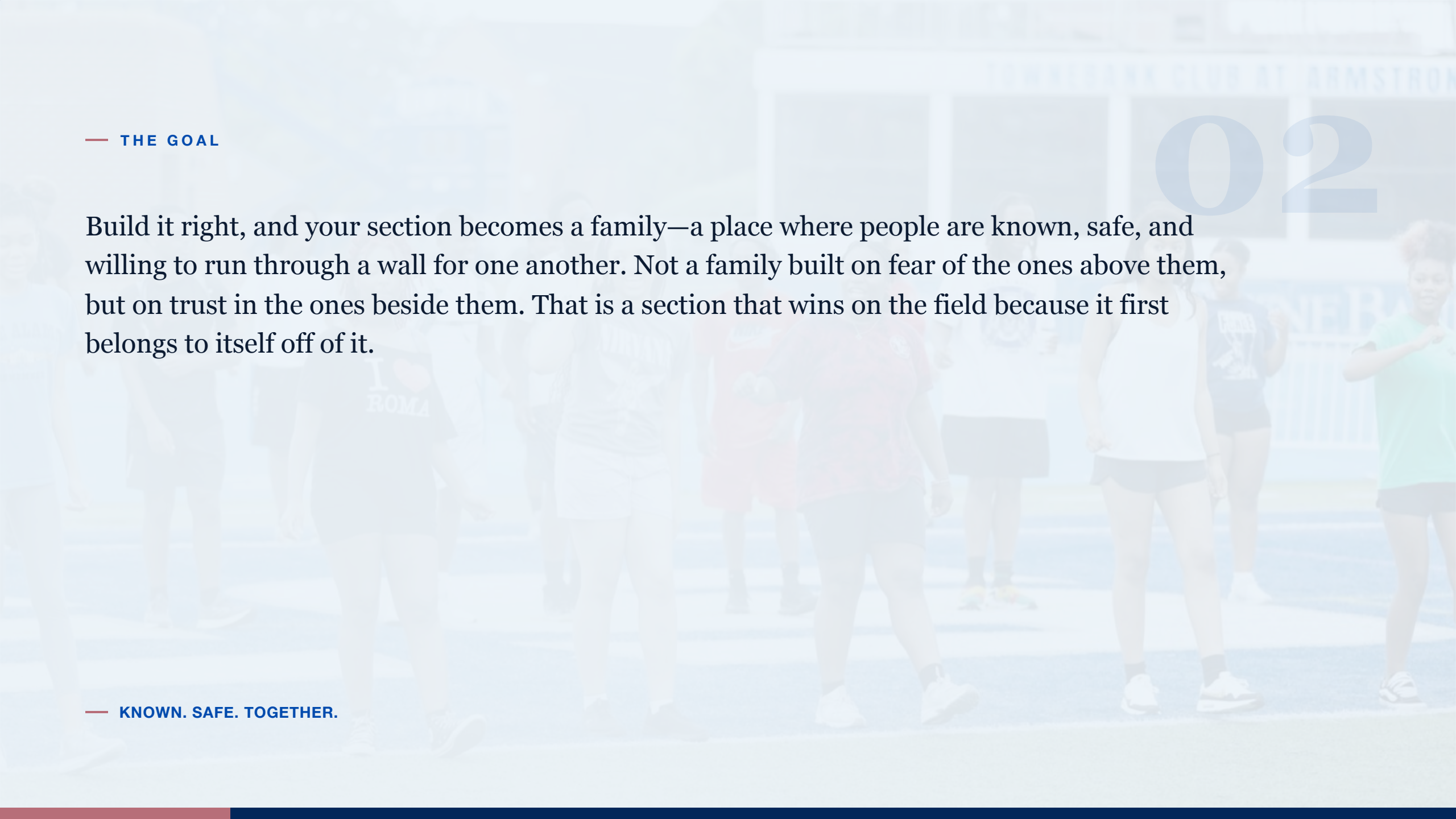
Defend your people, celebrate them, and never humiliate them. Loyalty flows to the leader who has your back.

Bonding Is Not Hazing

They are opposites. Know the line, and hold it.

- ◆ **Bonding builds up:** it is voluntary, it includes everyone, it protects dignity, and it points the whole section at a shared goal.
- ◆ **Hazing tears down:** it is coerced, it singles people out, it humiliates, and it is about power over—not belonging.
- ◆ If an activity only "works" because someone is afraid or ashamed, it is **not** team-building. It is hazing.
- ◆ Real belonging never requires cruelty. That is the whole promise of The Marching Force.

Sources: Nuwer, *Hazing: Destroying Young Lives* (2018); Jones, doctoral dissertation, North Carolina A&T State University (2014); HU Bands Anti-Hazing Policy (2026).

A faded background image of a soccer team standing on a field. The players are wearing various colored jerseys (white, red, green, black) and shorts. In the background, a building with the text 'TOWNSEND CLUB AT ARMSTRONG' is visible.

— THE GOAL

Build it right, and your section becomes a family—a place where people are known, safe, and willing to run through a wall for one another. Not a family built on fear of the ones above them, but on trust in the ones beside them. That is a section that wins on the field because it first belongs to itself off of it.

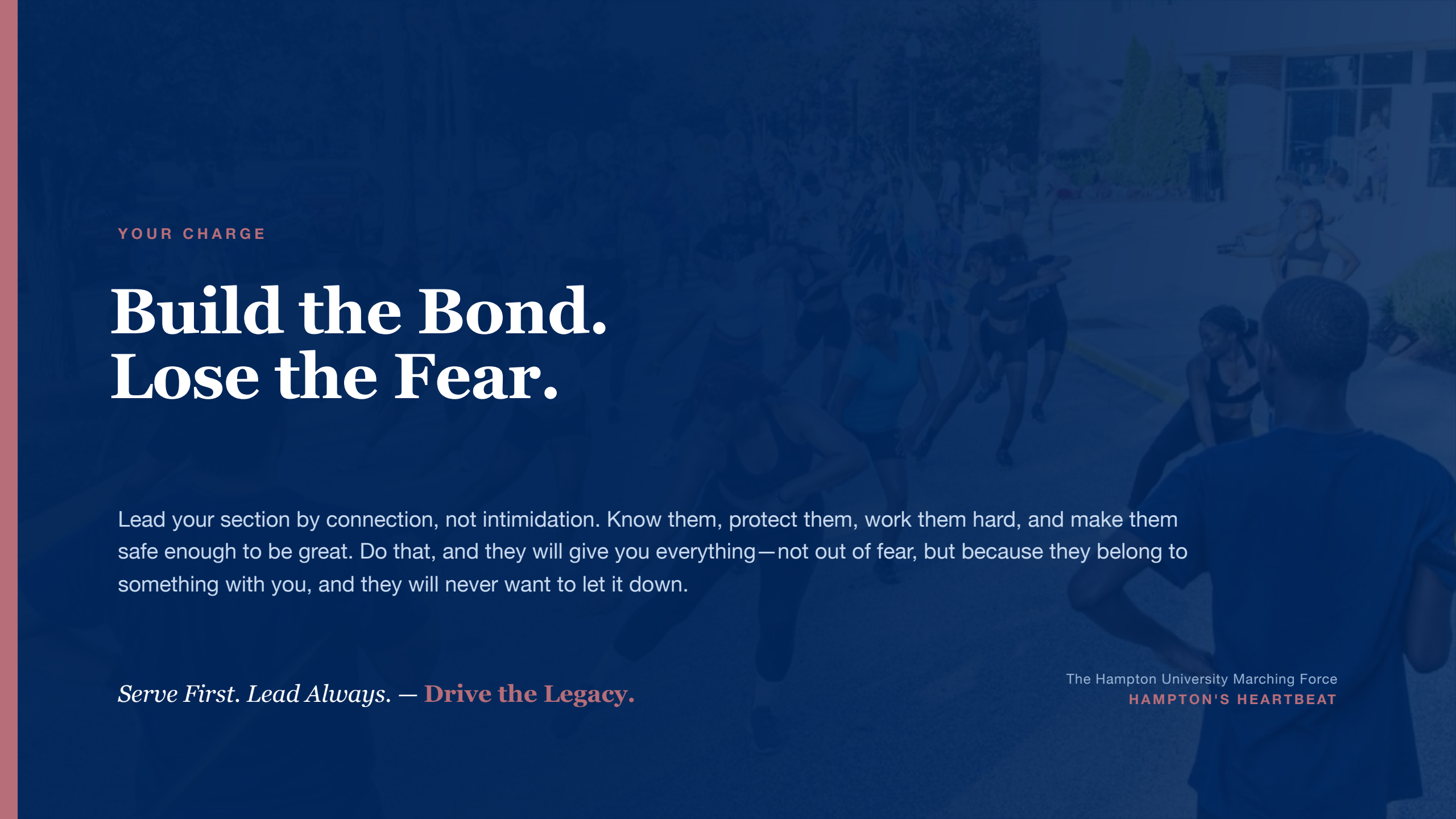
— KNOWN. SAFE. TOGETHER.

02

What It Looks Like Here

Bonds are built in the small, everyday moments.

- ◆ Learn every member's name in the first week—and use it.
- ◆ Check on the quiet ones. The member who says the least often needs you the most.
- ◆ Work them hard, then have their back completely. Demanding and caring are not opposites.
- ◆ Shut down humiliation the instant you see it—no matter who is doing it.
- ◆ Celebrate the wins out loud, and carry the losses together.



YOUR CHARGE

Build the Bond. Lose the Fear.

Lead your section by connection, not intimidation. Know them, protect them, work them hard, and make them safe enough to be great. Do that, and they will give you everything—not out of fear, but because they belong to something with you, and they will never want to let it down.

Serve First. Lead Always. — **Drive the Legacy.**

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