



Leading Under Pressure

Speaker Script · "Composed. Decisive. Steady."

PRESENTER Dr. Thomas L. Jones, Jr.

SLIDES 14

THE HAMPTON UNIVERSITY MARCHING FORCE · PRE-DRILL CAMP 2026

Presenter notes for every slide, in order. Bracketed cues are stage directions; quoted lines are suggested wording — say them in your own voice.

01 Leading Under Pressure

SLIDE 1 — TITLE: Leading Under Pressure

SAY: "Something is going to go wrong at camp. That's not pessimism, that's a schedule. Today is about who you are in that moment."

02 Icebreaker

SLIDE 2 — ICEBREAKER: 42, Rickey Recruits Robinson (1:20)

SET UP: "Branch Rickey tells Jackie Robinson exactly what's coming, and then asks him for something harder than fighting back."

Play it.

AFTER: "He asked for a man with the guts NOT to fight back. That's composure under the worst pressure any athlete ever faced."

PERSONAL NOTE (Dr. Jones): you staffed the Jackie Robinson organization for years. Say so — it makes the clip land differently coming from you.

03 The Premise

SLIDE 3 — THE PREMISE (statement slide)

Read it.

THE LINE: "Pressure does not build character. It reveals it."

Then: "What they read in your face becomes what the whole group feels next."

Takeaway: "Pressure reveals the leader."

04 What Pressure Does to You

SLIDE 4 — WHAT PRESSURE DOES TO YOU

Teach the physiology plainly — adrenaline, racing heart, tunnel vision.

NAME IT: Goleman's amygdala hijack — the emotional brain seizes control before the thinking brain catches up.

THE REFRAME: "You can't switch it off. You can manage it. That skill is the whole game."

05 Use the Pressure

SLIDE 5 — USE THE PRESSURE

Yerkes-Dodson, the inverted U. Draw it in the air with your hand — flat, peak, collapse.

"Too little pressure and you go flat. Too much and you fall apart. The peak is in the middle."

COUNTERINTUITIVE POINT: "Pressure isn't the enemy. Bored and careless loses games too."

06 Control the Body First

SLIDE 6 — CONTROL THE BODY FIRST

DO THIS ONE LIVE. Don't just describe box breathing — run it.

"Everybody with me. In for four. Hold four. Out four. Hold four." Do two rounds with the whole room.

Then: "That's the tool soldiers and first responders train. The long exhale is the switch."

RULE: "Do it before you speak or decide."

07 Threat or Challenge?

SLIDE 7 — THREAT OR CHALLENGE?

"Your body reacts to how you label the moment."

THE USABLE BIT: "That pounding heart before a big moment is fuel, not fear."

GIVE THEM THE PHRASE: "Tell yourself and your people 'this is our moment' — not 'this is going wrong.'"

08 You Fall to the Level of Your Training

SLIDE 8 — YOU FALL TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR TRAINING

"You don't rise to the occasion. You sink to your preparation."

WHY WE DRILL: "Rehearse the hard moments on purpose — the tempo change, the rain call, the confrontation. This is why we drill a thing until it's boring."

LAND: "Confidence under pressure isn't a feeling. It's evidence you've been here before."

09 Decide, Then Move

SLIDE 9 — DECIDE, THEN MOVE

Boyd's OODA loop: Observe, Orient, Decide, Act — then run it again.

THE HARD TRUTH: "You'll rarely have all the information. A good decision now beats a perfect one too late."

"Frozen is the worst option on the field."

AND: "Once you decide, commit. A team can follow a clear call. It can't follow a leader who keeps flinching."

10 Slow Is Smooth, Smooth Is Fast

SLIDE 10 — SLOW IS SMOOTH, SMOOTH IS FAST

Say the title slowly — the delivery is the lesson.

TRIAGE: "Name the one thing that matters most right now and do that first."

PRACTICAL: "Slow your voice and your movements. A calm tempo from you slows the whole room."

11 Your Calm Is Contagious

SLIDE 11 — YOUR CALM IS CONTAGIOUS

Emotional contagion — the group syncs to the person in charge.

"Panic spreads. Poise spreads. Whichever one you show, you're handing it to everybody watching."

PERMISSION: "You don't have to FEEL calm to project calm. Project it anyway — you'll often talk yourself into it."

12 After the Moment

SLIDE 12 — AFTER THE MOMENT

The recovery half, which most people skip.

"Don't drag the last mistake into the next set. The group takes its cue from whether you let it go."

"Debrief, don't dwell."

AND: "Name the poise you saw out loud. Praising it trains them to reach for it again."

13 The Pressure Playbook

SLIDE 13 — THE PRESSURE PLAYBOOK

Four, in order: Breathe, Prioritize, Decide, Project.

Make them repeat the four back. This is the slide they need at 2 p.m. on a hot Thursday.

14 Steady Under Fire.

SLIDE 14 — CLOSE: Steady Under Fire.

"Grace under fire is not something you're born with. It's something you train."

End on the sign-off.