

You Play Like You Practice

Football season is over and I'm already looking forward to next fall. While listening to a recent post game interview of a famous coach, I remember him saying:

“No coach has ever won a game by what he knows-it's what his players know that counts.”

This brought back memories to me of being in Salt Lake City, Utah at the International Association of Chiefs of Police conference in October of 1998. While I was in a hotel lobby, watching a national news broadcast, I heard a report that over 1,000 homes in Victoria, Texas were underwater due to one of the most unusual floods on record. Standing next to me was a chief of police from South Carolina. He recognized that my name tag identified me as being the Chief of Police of Victoria, Texas, the very city experiencing this 500-year disaster. My newfound friend from South Carolina settled my nerves by saying,

“Why aren't you there? Police Chiefs get fired when they're not in their communities when disasters like this happen!” Although I had tried changing airline reservations without success, I remember looking at this South Carolina chief of police and saying, “I've been Chief of Police of that police department for over four years, and if I haven't prepared them to handle this and other emergencies without me, then I deserve to get fired. They can do it and they will do it better without me.”

He looked in amazement at me. I think he took me for a person who didn't care, a fool, or maybe even an idiot and he moved on.

After hearing this football coach in his post game interview, I remembered that day... and I think I was not the person who didn't care, nor was I a fool. My responsibility as chief was to train the players; I was the coach, not the player. My players will play like they are prepared, like they practice, and like they have been coached. I think coaching is really training. What do you think?