

A Feeling for Others

The college and professional football seasons are in full swing, and it is an exciting time of year for fans of the sport. Football is an arena in which victories and defeats are registered, heroes and goats are made, and exhilaration and disappointments reign. It is also a sport that puts its contestants at great risk. Injuries and the reaction to them become the crucible in which character is analyzed.

Cleveland Browns linebacker Chris Spielman had to retire from football early in the 1999 season after suffering an injury that resulted in the narrowing of his spinal canal. Spielman had skipped the entire 1998 season to care for his wife, Stefanie, who was battling breast cancer at the time, and to care for their two children.

After spending 10 National Football League seasons with the Lions and Bills, Spielman – who grew up in Ohio – was finally getting a chance to play for his beloved Browns, only to have it taken away almost as soon as the season started.

How did he react? Was he bitter? His wife, Stefanie, said: “He had a couple of emotions. He said that he felt like he was letting down (our children) Madison and Noah because they’d never get to see him play. And he said he felt sorry for all those people who bought his Browns jersey, the 54 Spielman jersey. That shows what kind of man I married. He feels so much for other people.”

That’s a beautiful story, and it reveals a lot about Spielman’s values.

But there is much to be admired, too, about the thousands of associates in Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home, who daily perform in an even more important environment where skill is demonstrated with an attitude of love and compassion – the delivery of service to our residents. Their talents are not displayed moment by moment before thousands of applauding spectators or witnessed by millions at home in front of their television sets. But they are cheered on by the smiles and hugs of those who depend on them, and they light up a scoreboard buried deep within the heart. Their names and their deeds appear on records kept in heavenly places.

--Beecher Hunter