

A Performance Like No Other

Can inspiration make a difference in performance? Absolutely! Here's a story attributed to Bennett Cerf, co-founder and president of Random House, the world's largest English language trade publisher.



Lou Little (1893 – 1979), born in Leominster, Mass., was head football coach at Columbia University. Prior to that, he held a similar position at Georgetown University.

One year, there was a youngster on his squad who was not a gifted athlete, but whose personality served as a morale builder for the entire team. Coach Little was deeply fond of the boy. He liked the proud way he walked arm in arm with his father on the campus from time to time. If the team was far enough ahead, he would let him get into a game occasionally for the last few minutes.

One day, about a week before the big finale with Fordham, the boy's mother called Coach Little on the phone. "My husband died this morning of a heart attack," she said. "Will you please break the news to my boy? He'll take it better if it comes from you."

Little did what was necessary, and the boy went home sorrowfully.

He was back three days later, and came straight to Little. "Coach," he begged, "I want to say something to you that means an awful lot to me. I want to start in that game against Fordham. I think it's what my father would have liked most."

Little hesitated, and then agreed. "Okay, son, you'll start; but you'll only be in there for a play or two. You aren't quite good enough, and you know it."

True to his word, Little started the boy – but never took him out. For 60 full, jarring minutes, he played inspired football, running, blocking and passing like an All-American, and sparking the team to victory.

Back in the clubhouse, Coach Little threw his arm around the boy's shoulders and said, "Son, you were terrific today. You stayed in because you belonged there. What got into you?"

The boy answered, "Remember how my father and I used to go about, arm in arm? There was something about him very few people knew. My father was totally blind. This afternoon was the first time he ever saw me play."

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This story has deep meaning for what can be accomplished when a person looks deep within himself or herself and finds extra reserves of ability. And for those of us in health care, we are involved in a mission far more important than a football game.

Our residents deserve for us to be on our game, to be “terrific” every day.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter