

## 107\_Huffines\_Sports\_Med\_Caruso.mp3

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance podcast. I am your host Tim Lightfoot and we are so thankful that you took the time to download us and you are listening today. We have a special edition today. As always we have interesting people from the world of Sports Medicine and Human Performance with us and today is certainly no exception. We have Mr. Mike Caruso with us. Welcome to the podcast Mike.

**Mike Caruso.** Thank you.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** And let me tell everybody a little bit about you. Mike is current Associate Athletic Director for Events and Game Operations here at Texas A&M. He has been with the Athletic Department for over 20 years. One of the important reasons that we have Mike on today is that he directs all 21 of the Aggies's Sports and Event Management Game Operations including any kind of any NCAA Regional or National Events that we have here. He has been heavily involved with the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security since 2008 with curriculum development and is instructing at national training workshop and he is a trainer for the TEEX/National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center in their Sports and Special Events Incident Management workshops. And given the events of this past week we thought that we would have Mike on to talk a little bit about what we do and I am sure what is kind of common across the country. And one other thing before we go on, you can tell that Mike is very good at what he does because in 2011 we were given the Sport Event Security Aware Award and then that was followed by the NCAA Facility of the Year Award, both of which Mike was heavily involved with and probably responsible for. So again welcome to the podcast.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah, thank you, a pleasure to be here.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** In one way it is sad that we have to an event like Boston happen before we happen before we get you on the Podcast, but I think it is very relevant to talk about these kinds of things. Speak to us from an Event Management and why you can't plan for everything. You do have plans for if something happens.

**Mike Caruso.** Right. They had a plan in place and they had an incident action plan which we all have, well or we should all have, but hopefully they don't ever get to use it. You have your event action plan which is your standard operating procedures, how things should happen under a normal flow for your event and this speaks directly towards the course that TEEX is teaching. It is a Sports and a Special Event Management course. We teach not just...and it initially started with The National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) where we were focusing on stadiums and large events and large gatherings of people and we had broadened that to where now it is special events. Where the last workshop that I went to and trained at we had

representatives from the San Francisco Giants and 49er's, as well as concert folks from the city of San Francisco and the Beta Breakers Race which is very similar to what is going on. But all of those people came with the same pattern of having an event where they are going to have large collection of individuals and they are going to have different perimeters for their event, but they all wanted to do the training so that they had a plan in place and an incident plan in place if something does go wrong and obviously in the case of the Boston Marathon they had to utilize their incident command, as well as their protection for the spectators as well as the race participants.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** What kind of thing goes into one of those plans? Do people sit around the table and go oh man this might happen and what will we do if that happens?

**Mike Caruso.** Actually that is exactly what happens. The first thing that you do is a risk analysis. You look at what are the most common things that might go wrong in this event. Obviously for us and for the outdoor sports, weather is a key factor and that is really true across the country, but again it is different across the country. You know again, going back to the workshop I was working at out in California you talk about what is common risks and common hazards and for them tsunami is an obvious something, an event that they have to plan for. Not real high on my risk categories here.

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**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** If we have a tsunami here at Texas A&M we are really in trouble aren't we? (Laughter)

**Mike Caruso.** But the first thing that you do is you do a risk assessment and you look at it from an all hazards approach. You look at it from manmade potential, as well as natural potential. What is most likely to happen during an event and you put a plan in place to manage an incident if it would occur given those variables. So first thing you do is a risk analysis and I'm sure besides weather they are looking for things typically on the radar for them would be heat related incidents, hydration issues and things of that nature, but in this case and in our case for events here too, you have a plan in place for something like this, an explosive device or a manmade disaster.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** So I was going to ask, terrorism is a real risk that they have discussed in these kinds of situations.

**Mike Caruso.** We do tabletop exercises annually where we will bring in and we will do this for football primarily, but we will bring in everybody who is in our command center which is across the board. I mean we have, if you look at an event that has 87,000 people come to it, there is no university in the world that can have all of the resources necessary to be able to first of all manage that event on a regular basis, but then also if there is an incident that would occur if there was something that happens that is out of the ordinary. The resources that are needed to respond

to that and react to that; there is no university that has those. We have in our command center at Kyle Field we have law enforcement from both cities, the county, the Sheriff is there and the DHS is there. We have FBI folks, joint Terror and Task Force, so up in the Federal level all of those people get together and come in to do an exercise and basically what we do is we say what the things that are to most likely happen are? Now weather events we can respond to and we can do that internally, but we have done, for example, a hazmat issue and we have done a train derailment issue and we have done a number of different things where what we do if? And this is the if response to something that you hope never happens.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Do you lay awake at night worrying about these? Like if we had a tornado touch down during one of the football games?

**Mike Caruso.** You know, yes. I don't lay awake at night, but I am concerned, but the good part about it is I take comfort in the fact that I know that we have a plan. We have a plan in place to deal with the normal activities and the smaller and minor things that may happen inside of a large gathering of people, like a football game, but then we also have a plan in place and we have people in place. We have resources in place to be able to respond. The first thing that we want to do is try to prevent. Obviously that is number one out of the gate. If we can't prevent it we need to be able to respond to it and recover from it. So that is the scenario that we go through in our planning and we really haven't... I haven't...extremely...probably the best that I could from any university. I go around and teach these workshops at just different universities. The level of cooperation that we have and the collaboration that we have from all of those agencies I talked about is just tremendous. They come in and they are a tremendous support, not just for our normal game day, but also then from a standpoint if we did have an incident. Ours is truly over the top. I go to other places around the country where they really fight and struggle to try and get that collaboration from different agencies, but they need those agencies because those agencies have the resources that are ready to respond to an incident.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Well that was in what you just said that reminded me of some of the criticism after 9/11 was their lack of collaboration amongst some of the different units. So it is great to hear that is happening here very well and that people are trying to make that happen in other places as well.

**Mike Caruso.** There is a unity of command where we do have an incident commander and that incident up in West probably typifies that. You had so many different entities that were coming in trying to help. If you would just let them work on their own it would be total chaos. You have a unity of command in which there is an Incident Commander, he is the person, he or she, is giving the instructions on what to do and where to apply the resources. And then you have a Unified Command which is basically everybody that brings somebody, like College Station Fire brings their people. They still control their people and give orders to their people, but the person who is giving the orders to their people say for College Station Fire is getting it from the unified unity of command, the Incident Commander.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** And before I guess we go on we were talking before we went on the recording here about what was going on in West and you made a statement that was intriguing to me and that you could tell they had a plan.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah you could. I mean it was...there were people in waiting and there were people in position and it didn't look like an anthill where people were going all different directions. It was orderly and it was organized which told me that they did have an Incident Commander there that was in charge and getting all of the resources coordinated.

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**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** When you put these plans together do you plan differently when you have an event where you have 90,000 people around one event versus a Boston Marathon where you have people dispersed over a 26 mile course?

**Mike Caruso.** Absolutely. You have different sets of variables and not only from a standpoint of difference in the event, but the size and spoken nature of the event. Depending on who the rivalry is and depending on what the event is. We have, I will say the exact same plan, but obviously it is going to have different variables, but we have a plan for Men's and Women's Tennis. You know where we have 300-400 spectators, but you know if my daughter or your son goes to that tennis event you want them to be safe. You want them to come home just like the 87,000 that come to football. So we do the same planning, it is obviously at a different scale and a different scope than it would be for you know a major...and you know at different variables, different resources.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** So one of the things that we ask people here is to tell us a little bit of how they got interested in this. What happened was there something in your life that provoked you to become involved in Emergency Management Training or is this something you just woke up one day and said, this is what I am going to do?

**Mike Caruso.** It is really something that I inherited. I was...my background was basketball. I was a basketball player at Creighton University and I was a basketball coach for the first fourteen years of my post-graduate work and then I got involved in Event Management at a Division III school and really enjoyed it. I got the opportunity to expand it here at Texas A&M and I have kind of grown with the program here. Back when I first got here there was no such thing as Command Center. I mean at football, when I first got here there was one person in the game manager's booth who basically handled custodial and maintenance....

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Plumbing... (Laughter) we have a restroom that is plugged up.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah...and the command center was the Chief of Police with two other policeman and an EMS person also, though...there are four of them who just sat there and were watching the game and if there was...something happened they would call on the radio and take

care of it. Post 9/11 obviously things have changed. Our preparedness and our readiness needed to change and so all of us have grown and some are still catching up to be honest with you. You know it is again the collaboration and the amount of resources that you have available to be able to respond to something is obviously going to lessen the effects and lessen the impact down the road on your institution. So everyone is beginning to realize incident like this, like at the Boston Marathon incidents where things happen inside of larger athletic events kind of get everybody's radar up and the also incident on campuses. You know unrelated to sports have also gotten campuses involved more in the Emergency Management issues and it is kind of the same continuous improvement cycle where you develop a plan and you test that plan or someone tests it for you and then out of that you get your results, your after action and you follow up with what did we do right and what did we do wrong and then how can we improve. So you continuously improve. We do it in the Event Management Field and we do it in our standard operations in our procedures. We have follow ups after every game on what went well and what part of our facility or of our game management went well and we focused and continued to do those, but the things we find where we didn't do so well, that is improvement for the next game.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** So episodes like the recent bomb threats that we have had here at A&M that have caused evacuation of the campus and other universities have had this, we are not alone in that. Those things actually do add into the knowledge that has brought into these kinds of plans.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah, absolutely and it also makes you aware of the resources needed and basically is what you are doing is you are looking at again you do that risk analysis and take an all hazards approach, manmade and natural and you look at what is most likely to happen. What is the most likely hazard to influence? Alright now if that happens, if it does who are we going to call? What do we need to be able to respond to it and recover from it? So those are the people then that you start to invite in on the planning portion of it so that they are involved in your plan and they can take ownership in that plan, so they are going to come and help you and that is really where I think we are head and shoulders above a lot of other institutions in the level of collaboration that we have and the cooperation that we have from all of those outside agencies that bring resources here for our large events on campus for sporting events, but also other events.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** In recovering, you use the recover a while ago, and an event has happened you are trying to evacuate people. What is the biggest thing that you have to be concerned about with evacuation? I know with one of the bomb threats it was you couldn't get off campus, you couldn't drive your car off campus. I mean they kept saying walk off campus because you are not going to be able to drive off campus.

**Mike Caruso.** Well evacuation, in fact, that is the next workshops that we are developing right now that are in the developmental stage and I just finished testing and a curriculum development for...is evacuation. It is probably the one thing that we all talk about and we all plan for it and we hope that we absolutely never have to do it,

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because that is...if you get into an evacuation situation you are really putting yourself at a higher level of risk for all the people that are involved. It is very difficult thing to do. We have, but we practice evacuation and we record evacuation. We record at Texas A&M football how long it takes for our stands to empty. We are unique in that most of our fans stay to the end of the game. So it is a little easier for us, but I know exactly how long it takes for us to clear the portals on the East side of our stadium and the West side of our stadium.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Can you tell us those things?

**Mike Caruso.** Sure it is 13.5 minutes on the East side and a little bit longer on the West side. Our folks on the West side are a little more ancient and it takes them a little long to get away. Plus a lot of them want to use the elevators, they wouldn't be able to in an evacuation, but so that tells me as an event planner that I've got a 15 minutes window, if I say that we are going to leave and we have to leave through the Instant Commander, obviously. Also we know that we need 15 minutes of lead time. We can't make that decision and say that we have to have everybody out of here in five minutes, not going to happen.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Not going to happen, right.

**Mike Caruso.** And that is all part of the planning portion of it, but evacuations are just a whole another set of variables. You have to know where you are evacuating to and you need to have people that are there. First of all, if it is the MSC or Duncan Hall, wherever it may be...we need people ahead of the evacuees, so that the 15 minutes that takes us to leave us also need to give our people to get into position to execute the evacuation. We need to give them additional time to be in place for the evacuation. Evacuations are just a real difficult situation that we always hope that we never have to be involved in.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** You know our university here and one of the things that we were thinking about is that we are rebuilding our stadium, our football stadium. When they start to do a big project like that do they come to folks like you and say hey we are about to redo this, we need to talk about evacuation routes or how quickly it does...I mean are ya'll part of that planning for those kind of big buildings. And I am thinking about the number of stadiums around the country that are built like that.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah they had a meeting with the Environmental Health and Safety, University Police, as well as Event Management. We all gave our input and we said like here is our wish list, here is our green list. We want to have all of these different things in place. Then they take it forward and look at the standards that are for new buildings across the country and really around the world and they try and develop and incorporate as much of that as possible. Yeah, but it is again. All of your planning is based upon what you have. What is your facility like? What is your work force like? What is your crowd like? What is the inside of your facility like? So you take

all of that into consideration whenever you are making your planning. So we are going to start new and different planning. Our command center moves because where it is now they have access to be able to see in the stadium and they are not going to be, because we are going to enclose the stadium, so we had to plan for a new place for the command center. And actually we are going to improve it with the new facility because we are going to have a better structure in place down in the place where the command center is, which is pretty much in the bowels of the stadium, underneath it, but we are also putting some of the eyes that have never been able to be able to see visually inside of the bowl of the stadium we are going to put them in a position where they are going to be able to do that. So we are taking this opportunity to make things better.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Well that is the thing that people don't remember or don't think about when you renovate or building a new stadium you have to put all of that infrastructure in place and that is stuff that people will never see.

**Mike Caruso.** Well in the way that the stadium is going it is probably a lot of kin to the design for the Blue Bell Park, our new baseball stadium. We are going to have a lot more premium seating, all around the stadium, but primarily on the West side which means that my workforce will probably triple on the inside. Currently there are about 2,000 people that work for me at a home football game. We are probably going to double that with the new stadium.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Wow...

**Mike Caruso.** So we are going to be looking for employees real quick.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** That is a big workforce.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah, well...Cowboy Stadium is upwards of 6,000. Again and the reason they have so many is that because there are so many special access places, every door where it is a club or a suite or some private access. And when there is alcohol involved you need to have somebody at every entrance and exit, so.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Wow...

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah...

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** It gets big pretty quick doesn't it?

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah it does...it does... But boy is it going to be nice.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** So how do you communicate with a crowd of 80,000 if there is an event that happens and you have got to get them out?

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah, there are a number of different communication pieces and in fact, communication is probably one of the key components. In fact, when I go around to different

places I tell them that if you are going to test anything on an annual basis test your communication piece. We have a very elaborate communication tree where from the Instant Commander and all the different branches come down, whether it is medical, fire, police, event operations and maintenance folks and custodial.

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Everybody that has a radio and everybody that has a piece involved in the communication portion of it is trained to know who they are going to get information from and then what they do with it and how they react to it. But, yeah... it is a very elaborate communication tree, but it is very simple from the standpoint that I know as an usher that I am going to hear from my supervisor. My supervisor knows that he is going to hear from the Event Manager. The Event Manager knows that he is going to here, so it is a descending communication tree that gets one message, so it comes from one sources so everybody hears it, but that is something that we do annually too when we have that tabletop exercise where we get everybody back here in the summer and we set up the command center just to test it and make sure that all of these pieces work, but then we will do our tabletop exercise. But the one thing that we test every year is the communication piece.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** And I want us to kind of close with the thought that you keep coming back to, that you said is that we hope that we never have to use these things and we all do. Reminds me of early in my career I was asking for money to buy a crash cart for our lab in case we had a heart attack or whatever. And I had an administrator who said that you won't ever use that so we are not going to buy one. And it was like sometimes you have to put things in place, even if hopefully you will never use them.

**Mike Caruso.** Well, you know again...case in point; you look at the Boston Marathon...

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Right, right...

**Mike Caruso.** You know they are saying we have never had any troubles so we don't need a plan or we don't need this, that or the other. Well, then it comes and it happens what do you do? And that is the hardest parts about it is the ifs and are you prepared for it. And again the thing that allows me to sleep at night, that doesn't keep me up at night is that I know that we have a great group of individuals as well as entities that are going to come and help us and that we have a plan in place to be able to respond to anything. So, I know that we are going to do the very best job that we can to respond to anything and again that is going to allow us the recovery is going to be much shorter and is going to be a lot less impact on us.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** You have a bit of responsibility.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah... Yeah, but again good people that are working with you and helping you and you have a good plan in place, so you feel comfortable with the fact that you are going to be able to take on anything that happens.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Well it has been a real pleasure to have you today. Thank you so much.

**Mike Caruso.** Thank you...

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** We always leave with a take home message. So do you have a take home message for the audience?

**Mike Caruso.** I would just encourage everyone and I think this is being addressed here in the Boston incident that happened is for people to be aware. You know we have something with our event staff that if you see something, say something and we talk to them about if you see something that is not right, talk to somebody about it. Bring it up to your supervisor, bring it up to law enforcement and I would say the same thing for fans in a large experience like this. If you see something that you look at and you say that is not quite right, is that the way it should be? Bring it up to somebody and let them look at it and take it the next level and let them decide because we need their help just as much as they want to enjoy that fan experience, just like we want them to.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** And most stadiums now have some number that you can call or some way that you can notify.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah we have a text message system at Kyle Field where you can, anything out of the ordinary from you know from your seat is broken to somebody is loud and obnoxious around me to hey I saw something that I am not sure, you may want to check out. So it is an anonymous text messaging system that they can alert the Game Manager, as well as the Incident Commander.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Loud and obnoxious, so we shouldn't report visiting fans should we?

**Mike Caruso.** No that happens a lot. We try and discourage them from saying how come coach is running so much. We don't want that kind of message.

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Okay. Mike, thank you again for taking time on such short notice to come over and speak with us, we have enjoyed it.

**Mike Caruso.** Yeah, it was my pleasure...

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** And thank you all for taking the time to download us this week and as always we have a podcast question of the week brought to use right now by Kelly.

**Kelly.** What is the first step Emergency Planners take in developing response for a special event incidence?

**Dr. Tim Lightfoot.** Excellent question, so be the first one to send us the correct answer for that to [HuffinesPodcast@hlkn.tamu.edu](mailto:HuffinesPodcast@hlkn.tamu.edu) and you will win one of those nifty podcast t-shirts. And again thank you all for taking the time to download us and be with us this week and we hope that you will join us next week for another interesting person in the world of Sports Medicine and Human Performance and until then we hope that you stay active and healthy.

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