



Jim Hill: a day in the life of a police officer

By Jim Hill | Oct 12th, 2016 | Comments: 1

I've gotten asked many times throughout my career, what's it like to be a cop?



My response has usually been along the lines of; it's stressful, it's exciting and it's a chance to make a difference in the world. Lately, I've been thinking more about how does the job make you feel every day and how could I sufficiently convey the emotions of just every day cop life.

It's game time. To all of you who have ever played a sport, think back to those moments when you were getting ready to play the game. As you put your uniform on, every piece has an essential meaning and purpose to making you successful during the game.

As you add each piece of equipment, you also start to put on your game face. Everyone that's played a sport in a competitive setting knows what it means to put on your game face.

Jim Hill You're putting away the normal you and bringing to the forefront the laser focused, finely tuned-in athlete that you'll need to be for the next 60 minutes. You're getting ready to face you're opponent across the field or court and it's time to go to battle.

Policing is similar.

Everyday a cop puts on their uniform and every piece must serve a purpose that may be called on at any moment. Many of us put on compression shorts and shirts under our uniform because its game day. We lace up our boots that we've chosen for speed and durability because its game day. We put on our body armor and wonder is this the day it will save me, not be enough or just be hot and uncomfortable, but today is game day so we tighten the straps.

We put on our gun belt that is heavy and awkward, but necessary to carry the tools we might need, but hope we won't. Last we check our duty weapon, knowing all too well what the implications of needing it could be. As we're doing all this without any real thought we're putting on our game face because it's game day.

The game starts the moment we step out of our homes. We're in a clearly marked uniform, but the opposing teams aren't wearing a uniform. As a matter of fact the opposition is wearing the same clothes as everyone else. There won't be any whistle to tell us when the play starts or ends, it could happen at any time.

We won't know until the play is in progress whether we're on offense or defense, but the opposition will. We do know that no matter what is happening in the game or during the play, we're carrying a "ball" our duty weapon, which the opposition may try to take from us at any moment.

The game is in progress not 60 minutes, but for 8, 10 or 12 hours. There are no timeouts or referees. The game clock is still running when you stop for a soda, for

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food or to use a public restroom. During times when most people would naturally let their guard down, cops are still on the playing field and never know if a play is about to begin.

It takes a lot of energy to be on the playing field all day long. Especially knowing that if the opposition scores points it could be somebody's life, even your own.

Then when you get home, you can take the uniform off. However, the game face is never fully gone. See the opponent doesn't necessarily respect the fact that you're "off" the playing field. They may want to take the game to your locker room, your house. And the next day, you'll get up and get ready to join the game already in progress for another shift and another shift and another.

Even in the moments when you're completely out of your uniform and in your normal clothes to do the normal things that people do, you've picked your normal clothes to conceal your off-duty weapon and extra ammo. You know that the game is continuing all around you and your family and you need to be ready to come off the bench at a moment's notice.

That's how it feels ... but it's not a game.

Editor's note: Mr. Hill is Scottsdale resident and member of the law enforcement community

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