

So much joy, so much sorrow; these Yankees deserved their success

by Steve Kelley

Knight-Ridder Newspapers
October 28, 1999

NEW YORK - In the first moments of their third world championship in four years, the New York Yankees gathered at the pitcher's mound and wrapped their arms around their devastated right fielder, Paul O'Neill.

Early Wednesday morning, O'Neill's father, Charles, died of heart disease. Somehow, for nine innings that night, O'Neill blocked out the pain and played a game on the grandest stage baseball offers.

"I don't know if I could have done that," winning pitcher Roger Clemens said after his team's 4-1 World Series clincher over Atlanta. "I mean, he was out there facing 90- and 95-mile-an-hour fastballs with all he was going through. He was hurting."

In the pitching-mound mob, O'Neill buried his sorrow on the shoulders of Manager Joe Torre and teammates from Jim Leyritz to Derek Jeter and Chad Curtis. A cocoon of caring.

They tried to shield O'Neill from the prying eyes of the television minicams.

Finally O'Neill ran off the field, the batting glove on his right hand covering his face, but not able to hide the tears that flowed freely.

"You don't know what a guy's going through in a situation like that," Curtis said. "He came out here tonight and was just trying to get through the night. I'm just glad we could win it tonight and get it over with, because he needs to deal with that. That's bigger than baseball."

So much joy and so much sorrow has been visited on this team this

year.

Third baseman Scott Brosius' father died of cancer during the season. Last week, reserve infielder Luis Sojo lost his father to a heart attack.

After they left the field, the three Yankees gathered in the off-limits players lounge and cried. All of the feelings that had been locked in some emotional closet were unleashed in a flood of anguish and release.

"We have three guys in this clubhouse right now who have that perspective," Curtis said. "They've all had to deal with the deaths of their fathers. If you were able to look at those three guys right now, you'd see they were pretty reflective."

There may not be a more dignified team in sports than these New York Yankees.

It isn't merely the team of decade, as this World Series sweep of the Atlanta Braves proves inarguably, but this is a collection of human beings you wish you knew. It is a team with perspective. A team that understands its good fortune. A team as grounded as a guru.

"We're very businesslike," Torre said. "We take nothing for granted. And we keep grinding."

The Yankees understand adversity. They know what cancer is. They know what an aneurysm is. They know how death feels. They understand how to overcome. They have won 12 straight World Series games. They were 11-1 in this postseason.

"The adversity started, really, in '96 when David Cone had that aneurysm," Torre said. "It shocked everybody, stunned everybody. We could either worry about it, or play the season."

"I think we've gotten into a real

good habit of dealing with whatever lowlights there are. You know the club."

Yes, this team is good; as good as



TMS PHOTO
New York Yankees Mariano Rivera, Joe Girardi and Scott Brosius celebrate the Yankees' World Series victory as they sweep the Atlanta Braves, beating them 4-1 in Game 4 Wednesday night.

tragedies and go out there and do the job that we're capable of doing in spite of the odds against us."

Torre missed the first 35 games of this season after being diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Last year, Darryl Strawberry was diagnosed with colon cancer. Then he relapsed and became drug dependent. He missed most of the season. Players worried about both of them. They worried about the health of the fathers of Brosius and Sojo and O'Neill. They worried and they won.

"Tragedy is a part of life," Torre said. "Just because you're an athlete doesn't mean you're exempt. This is just unusual to have all of these things happen at one time to one

the Yankee teams of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig; as good as the teams of Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle; as good as the teams of Reggie Jackson and Ron Guidry. But it is more likable than any other Yankee team from any other decade. Everybody plays a role on this team. Every player has his moments. The Yankees share the wealth.

"They have ability, and they know what to do with it," Torre said. "No question this ballclub is very close."

Last night, Clemens pitched 7 innings of four-hit, one-run ball.

"I finally know what it feels like to be a Yankee," he said. How good are the Yankees? Clemens has five Cy Young Awards and was voted to the All-Century Team, but in New York he is a No. 4 starter.

"Even my brother Frank questioned my sanity when I took the job," Torre said. "It was because I would have to face the abuse or whatever the hell you're supposed to face when you manage in New York. But I knew one thing: It was an opportunity to get to the World Series, which I had never been to."

No manager in baseball, no team in professional sports, is more deserving of such abundant success.

Young likely to miss rest of season

by Clark Judge
Knight-Ridder Newspapers
October 27, 1999

SANTA CLARA, Calif. -- The agent for Steve Young said Tuesday that the injured 49ers quarterback probably won't play again this season but will not announce his retirement when he holds a news conference Wednesday.

Speaking on KCBS radio, Leigh Steinberg said that Young -- who has not played since suffering a concussion on Sept. 27 -- is "probably going to end up on injured reserve," a designation that would disqualify him for the remainder of the season.

"This is a football injury," Steinberg told the radio station. "He was hurt on the field, and (injured reserve) is where those players go."

"But the news is not real encouraging. It's not cheery. Obviously, to show symptoms this many weeks later is not a real positive sign. ... Nothing is going to happen in the way of retirement this season. He will come to the right decision, but this will take a little while."

Young, who attended the 49ers' practice Tuesday, was not available for comment. He is expected to meet with the media today to give his first public remarks on his future in two weeks.

"I think Steve will more clearly define exactly what he's thinking right now," Coach Steve Mariucci said. "I think he will be able to clear some things up; be a little more definitive."

Mariucci did not say if the team would put Young on injured reserve but indicated there would be no announcement today.

"Is anything drastic going to happen?" he said. "No."

If the team were to put Young on the inactive list, it would open a roster spot and guarantee that Young -- who would remain with the 49ers to advise

its quarterbacks, particularly starter Jeff Garcia -- his \$3.75 million salary.

Young, who is signed through 2003, restructured his contract in February -- gaining \$3 million in a signing bonus and \$3.75 million in salary. The salary is not guaranteed.

Young, who has suffered four known concussions over the past three seasons, has sought several medical opinions since leaving the field late in the second quarter of a 24-10 win over Arizona. He first consulted Dr. Gary Steinberg, chief of neurosurgery at the Stanford Medical School, and received a report that, in Young's words, was "discouraging."

At the club's suggestion, Young visited other specialists -- with reports that he saw three in Utah last week -- and might not be finished. Mariucci said Young plans to consult at least one or two more specialists this week.

"Everyone involved is going to weigh the pros and cons," said Mariucci, who indicated he might hesitate to play Young even if he were cleared.

Two weeks ago, Dr. Steinberg -- no relation to Young's agent -- said the quarterback's condition was improving. He also said tests revealed Young suffered no bruises to his brain and described his latest concussion as "mild." He did not, however, clear Young to play.

It is unknown what ensuing examinations revealed, but Young's persistence in seeking medical advice seems to indicate that they are not positive. It is unclear when Young -- or the team -- will make a decision on his availability for the rest of the season.

"I don't know if it's in his best interests or the team's best interest to drag it out week after week," Mariucci said Monday. "We need to give it ample time and considerable thought. And he's getting there as far as having things cleared up in his mind."

Stewart among victims when out-of-control jet dives into prairie

by Cornelia Grumman
and Rogers Worthington
Chicago Tribune
October 25, 1999

MINA, S.D. -- A Learjet carrying pro golfer Payne Stewart and at least four others, all somehow incapacitated, rambled on autopilot across Midwestern skies for four hours Monday before running out of fuel and crashing in a bog in a farmer's field in South Dakota.

Whether Stewart, the two pilots and the other passengers, among them Stewart's agents Robert Fraley, 46, and Van Ardan, 45, were killed on impact or already dead when the plane began its descent may not be known for some time, aviation authorities indicated.

The twin-engine jet took off from Orlando, Fla., Monday morning bound for Dallas. Stewart, 42, known for wearing knickers and a tam-o'-shanter hat on the links, was to attend practice rounds in Houston Tuesday in advance of the PGA's final tournament of the year, the Tour Championship.

At the controls were veteran pilots Michael Kling, 43, of Orlando, a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot with 4,000 hours of experience, and Stephanie Bellegarrigue, 27, of Orlando, a commercial pilot with 1,700 hours of flight time. About 25 minutes into the flight they communicated with ground controllers at Gainesville, Fla., then went silent, despite repeated attempts to contact them by radio.

Authorities speculated the plane may have suffered a decompression accident that, at high altitude, would have killed everyone on board in such a short period of time the pilots would have had no chance to react or broadcast a mayday emergency signal.

The jet reached heights of 45,000 feet during its flight, not an unusual altitude for the Learjet 35, and was most likely carried northward by its autopilot.

An Air Force fighter jet on a routine training flight from Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., was diverted to check out the jet, an Air Force spokesman said, after ground controllers were unable to communicate with the plane.

Two other fighters were scrambled from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. to follow the Learjet. Two Air National Guard planes from Oklahoma later

picked up the pursuit.

Four hours after it had taken off and hundreds of miles north of its intended destination, the plane ran out of fuel and "fell from the sky like a rag," according to witnesses near Mina, S.D., in the north central part of the state.

"The plane pretty much nosed straight into the ground," said Lesley Braun, who lives about two miles from the site. "There's not a lot of debris spread out a long ways." TV crews broadcast images of steaming wreckage strewn around a wet farm field.

Only shards of debris could be seen from a site set up for the news media 50 yards away.

Mike Hammrich of the nearby Ipswich Volunteer Fire Department said he arrived shortly after impact and saw only smoke and small flames.

"There is a hole out there probably 15 to 20 feet wide and 8 feet deep," he said. "It's all in a hole. There was nothing there."

He said he and dozens of other emergency personnel from surrounding towns walked around the pasture looking for debris. The searchers found some human remains, but nothing identifiable, he added.

National Transportation Safety Board chairman Jim Hall said the agency dispatched a team to the site to begin an investigation. The NTSB released a brief statement about the incident.

The plane was operated by Sun Jet Aviation of Sanford, Fla., built in 1976 and carried the serial number 60, the NTSB said. It was flown from Sanford to Orlando Monday morning, where it picked up its passengers.

Stewart was a time-share customer at the company that owned the plane.

The NTSB said the plane was believed to have carried two pilots and four passengers. There was some confusion about the fourth passenger. Authorities were unable to reach next of kin to check for identification.

The plane left Orlando at 8:19 a.m. CDT for Dallas Love Field, a two-hour flight. It carried enough fuel to fly for four hours and 45 minutes. Air Traffic Control lost contact with the plane at 8:44 a.m., when it climbed through 37,000 feet on its way to an approved 39,000 foot altitude, the NTSB said.

Shortly after that, according to an FAA spokesman in Washington, air traffic controllers noted wide variations in the plane's altitude. Air traf-

fic controllers in Jacksonville, Atlanta and Memphis tried without success to contact the plane. At 9 a.m., an emergency was declared by air traffic control in Memphis.

The Air Force planes were scrambled at 9:08 a.m.

As it climbed to 45,000 feet, the Learjet was intercepted by the military aircraft that followed it until it crashed. At times, the plane was flying so slowly that the military jets had to circle it to keep it under observation. They were never able to get close enough to see inside the plane, but reported ice on the inside of the windows.

The strange and troubling journey and crash of N47BA, the serial number assigned by the Federal Aviation Administration to the Learjet, led to speculation about what might have happened, particularly after its military pursuers said the jets windows were covered by ice.

Some aviation authorities noted that the windows of a plane that had decompression at high altitudes would be icy.

Decompression accidents on private jets are rare, and even in commercial planes are considered unusual events. Most of the experience in dealing with the problem comes from military planes and pilots, where decompression is more common.

Planes must pressurize their cabins and cockpits whenever they fly above 12,000 feet because the environment becomes cold and hostile as the craft gains altitude. At 40,000 feet, the air is too thin to breathe and the temperature is 50 degrees below zero.

Jets generally send warmed, pressurized air from their engines into the cabin and cockpit areas to keep the atmosphere inside the plane the same as though the craft were flying at about 8,000 feet, which is still safe and comfortable for passengers and pilots.

A series of outlet and intake valves is manipulated to keep the pressures at the right level. Pressurization and depressurization is what makes an air traveler's ears pop.

Heavy rubber seals around windows and door openings keep the pressure inside the plane from escaping. But if a seal ruptures at high altitude, or if a door seal bursts open, the atmosphere rushes rapidly from the plane, taking oxygen with it.

In Washington, federal aviation authorities and pilots pointed to a blown

door or window seal as a potential culprit in Monday's incident, because the pilots did not even have the time to broadcast a mayday, the international distress signal, before the plane, now apparently under its own computerized controls, headed northward.

"If you are in the cabin of a Learjet, you are in a very small pressure vessel, quite different than a DC-10, 757 or a large passenger jet," said John Nance, a veteran airline captain and aviation analyst.

"Almost certainly something blew out. It could have been a window, a door seal or a duct seal. Whatever it was, it doesn't take much to empty the cabin of oxygen of a Lear because it's a very small cabin."

Learjets of the type that crashed Monday are equipped with oxygen systems that automatically release breathing masks for passengers. Pilots have masks attached to a separate oxygen system that they must strap on. Warning lights on the cockpit dashboard inform pilots whenever there is a drop in pressurization.

But at high altitudes, pilots and passengers are subjected to a "time of useful consciousness" whenever depressurization occurs. That is the amount of time a body can function without oxygen.

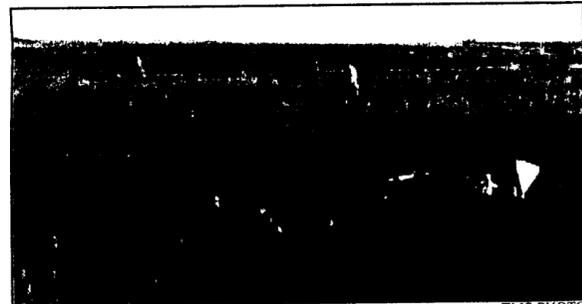
The time diminishes sharply with altitude. At 20,000 feet, it is 10 minutes. At 26,000 feet, it drops to two minutes. At 30,000 feet, it drops to 30 seconds. At 40,000 feet, it drops to 15 seconds.

"If there was a major depressurization, the pressure would go down instantly," said Jim Brennan, a former Navy fighter pilot and retired Boeing 747 captain. "Unless you had an oxygen mask handy, you couldn't do much about it."

Dr. Michael Silver, a pulmonary specialist at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center, said unconsciousness would come in seconds at high altitudes, and death shortly thereafter.

"The heart and the brain literally stop functioning from lack of oxygen, just like they would in a cardiac arrest," he said.

In Austin, Texas, Mike Flack, an attorney who has filed lawsuits in depressurization incidents, said it is generally impossible to determine what happened inside the airplane after a crash until toxicology studies reveal what blood gases were present in the crash victims at the time of



TMS PHOTO
Rescue personnel walk through the scene of the Lear 35 plane crash that killed golfer Payne Stewart and four others Monday near Mina, South Dakota. Debris from the plane is in the foreground.



TMS PHOTO
Payne Stewart smiles after receiving the U.S. Open trophy June 20, 1999, after winning with a spectacular 20-foot putt. Stewart was killed in a plane crash with four others October 25.

PAYNE STEWART CAREER HIGHLIGHTS
- won 3 major championships - U.S. Open (1991 & 1999) and PGA Championship (1989).
- won 11 PGA Tour titles
- on 5 Ryder Cup teams
- earned more than \$11.7 million on the PGA Tour

death.

That will give investigators the evidence they need to determine whether decompression was the likely cause, or whether there was some other culprit; carbon monoxide, for example, from an onboard fire, or another toxic gas that caused everyone to lose consciousness.

The Learjet in Monday's crash had more than 10,000 flight hours, according to Bombardier Inc., Learjet's parent company. It had 7,500 takeoffs and landings. Some 670 Learjet Model 35s were manufactured between 1974 and 1993.

The incident that claimed Stewart's life was similar to an accident nearly 20 years ago that killed Louisiana

State University football coach Bo Rein.

Rein, who had not yet coached his first game for LSU, left Shreveport, La. on Jan. 10, 1980, in a private plane en route to Baton Rouge after a recruiting trip. After passing through a thunderstorm, the plane, with a private pilot on board, lost radio contact and flew off course for hundreds of miles before it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia.

Investigators never recovered the bodies and were never able to determine what happened, but speculated that the plane, which reached 41,000 feet in altitude as it was chased by military planes, somehow lost cabin pressure.