

Sax

Continued from B3

This is one of the calamities that put John Sax's favorite aircraft under increased scrutiny. From March 2022 to November 2023, 20 service members died in four fatal Osprey crashes, as noted in a recent NBC story. The U.S. military grounded its entire fleet of about 400 V-22 Ospreys after the crash of an Air Force Special Operations Command Osprey off Japan last November killed eight airmen.

In the case of the Purple Foxes, the fallen crew members remain a familiar presence at Camp Pendleton, where the new generation of Marine pilots wear patches bearing their names.

"We talk about them all the time," Miller said. "When we walk into the squadron, we have a huge plaque with all their pictures above the entrance way."

"They are kind of a driving force for us to always do the right thing."

'John spoke of you often'

The first fundraiser for the Capt.



Steve Sax of the Los Angeles Dodgers laughs as manager Tommy Lasorda tells a story about him during practice ahead of Game 3 of the World Series on Oct. 18, 1998, at the Oakland Coliseum.

John J. Sax Family Foundation took place at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Los Angeles on Nov. 7, 2023. More than a thousand Marines attended, according to one estimate. Miller, who was John Sax's commanding officer and closest confidant, wrote Steve Sax a letter in the aftermath of the tragedy.

"John spoke of you often and about how great his childhood was. What

is most amazing to me is that he never once mentioned that you were a professional baseball player. Humility was his most impressive character trait. He loved you, Deborah, Lauren and his family dearly. ... His life and legacy are a direct testament to how you raised John and for that, you should be proud."

For all of the baseball memorabilia he's given away, there's one notable doozy in Sax's home office. It's a 4-foot by 6-foot painting called "Babe and the Kids," based on a famous 1922 photo of Babe Ruth surrounded by schoolchildren. Sports artist Opie Otterstadt reimagined the photo by painting all the "kids" as Hall of Famers. There are baby-faced versions of Roberto Clemente and Sandy Koufax and George Brett.

"I look at this painting every day," Sax said.

Now, the image is at the heart of the biggest fundraiser to date for the nascent John J. Sax Family Foundation. Interactive digital versions of the painting are for sale, and the proceeds will fund grants for young people who dreamed, as John Sax once did, of taking flight. "Honestly, there's no way you can ever put a lid on that much light and energy," Debbie Sax said. "So we want to just keep it going."

Steve Sax said the foundation has already given away \$10,000 in grant money to aspiring aviators. The funding got a boost when Sax auctioned off all that hardware from his baseball career.

"It doesn't necessarily have to be the military," Sax said. "It could be somebody who wants to become an astronaut. It's pretty broad. But if they've got a passion for flight, that's what we're gonna help them with."

Steve Sax hopes the foundation will keep John's memory alive. More practically, it gives him something else to hold onto, right alongside the clay fighter jet and the poem.

One of the stages of grief is acceptance, but Sax is nowhere near that territory, and finds it hard to believe such a stage exists.

"Because I just don't understand it," he said. "I know John's not here. But I just ..."

He hits that wall again.

"... I can't grab it, still. You're moving forward but you're not moving on. ... I try to think about what John would want. But the one line I heard that really summed up losing a child was: 'The pain never goes away until you've taken your last breath. It won't go away until your heart stops beating.' But I believe in heaven. And I believe I'll see him again."

STEVE SAX, a former Major League Baseball player, on his son John, who died with four other Marines when the aircraft he was co-piloting malfunctioned and crashed into a remote Southern California desert on June 8, 2022

BRIDGE

Phillip Alder



Setting up a suit: The battle continues

Football coach Vince Lombardi said, "I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle — victorious."

One bridge deal should not be that exhausting, but many, especially in no-trump, are battles for suit establishment — as we saw yesterday and will see today.

How should the play go in three no-trump after West leads the spade six?

There are five scenarios. First, East wins with his spade ace and returns the spade jack, covered by the queen and king. South takes three rounds of

North 60-61-24			
♠ 8			
♥ A K 10 9 8 5 3			
♦ 7 4			
West East			
♠ K 7 6 4	♠ A J 3		
♥ 7 4 3	♥ Q J 10		
♦ 10 8 7	♦ Q 7 7		
South			
♠ Q 10 5 3			
♥ K 8 7			
♦ A 1			
♣ A K J			
Dealer: North Vulnerable: Both			
South West North East			
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
Opening lead: ♠ 6			

diamonds, losing the last of those but taking the rest for an overtrick.

Second, West ducks at trick two, giving South the trick he is due and retaining communication with his partner. Then, when East gets in with his diamond trick, a third spade gives West three tricks in that suit to defeat the contract.

Third, South does not cover the spade jack at trick two. This saves the contract whenever it can be made.

Fourth, East plays his spade jack at trick one. (Since East can anticipate gaining the lead in diamonds, this is not far-fetched, trying to make South burn up his one spade stopper immediately.) If South does win the trick, he will fail. But, fifth, if he works out to duck, he will get home.

What a battlefield of possibilities!

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Gordon Monson

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