



Yogi Beare!

Values of a Blue Angel



Foreword

by Nick Bollettieri President, IMG Academies



IT WAS THE HIGHEST HIGH that a human being could ever experience—40,000 feet at Mach 1.20 (over 800 miles an hour) with Lt. Scott (Yogi) Beare at the controls of his F/A-18 fighter jet. I was flying with a Blue Angel.

When I first heard that I had been selected to fly with the Blue Angels as part of their VIP public relations program, my mind immediately went back to my own experience with the Naval Air Corps. I had always wanted to become a fighter pilot with the Navy.

But first I had to get past the written examination, which, frankly, I flunked with “nonflying colors.” Trying to put the best face on this disappointment, I later explained, “Hell, my name’s Bollettieri. I’m Italian. I skim things!”

The closest I actually got to flying was jumping out of airplanes as an Army paratrooper. It’s been written that

“Bollettieri always wanted to be the first one out of the plane,” and it’s true. I’ve always loved the excitement, loved the risks, loved the action.

My desire to fly fighter jets never really left me in the four decades that intervened between my Naval Air Corps and the invitation to fly with the Blue Angels. And so, when the opportunity presented itself, I knew it would be as close to actually being at the controls of a fighter jet as I would ever get.

Once in Pensacola, Florida, the home of the famed Blue Angels, I passed the physical, aced my preflight instruction course, and headed out on the tarmac. It was then that I first encountered my pilot-to-be who introduced himself as Lt. Scott “Yogi” Beare, and punctuated his introduction with a sharp Navy salute.

We climbed into the two-seater F/A-18 Hornet, and Yogi’s crew chief strapped me in tighter than a drum. He then took his place in the cockpit, started the engines, and we taxied out. I tuned in with my earphones: “Blue Angel 7 requesting permission for takeoff.”

Very politely but nonchalantly, Lt. Beare explained, “Nick, there’s a little plastic bag here in the back if you need it.” (I later learned that the majority of the “passengers” on these flights made use of the plastic bag. In fact, Yogi confided that on occasion when he was giving a ride to a particularly obnoxious or self-important VIP, a certain set of daredevil maneuvers would guarantee that his rider would turn green and grope for the bag.)

Yogi treated me more gently—not with the maneuvers but with his demeanor. He was always reassuring in tone and always kept me abreast of what stunt he was about to put me through next. Nevertheless, I lost count of how many times I screamed “Holy S---!” but I’m proud to say that my never needed the plastic bag.

When we shook hands at the end of the flight, I had a premonition that we would eventually become close friends. I am pleased to report that that has come to pass.



When Yogi first took me flying, he no doubt knew more about me than I knew about him. In fact, largely because of his humility, it was years before I learned of the heroism he displayed under fire flying sixty-eight sorties over Iraq during Operation *Desert Storm*. I knew nothing of his commendations from the Secretary of the Navy or that he had pretty much been considered a “screw-up” by his father when he was growing up.

For years Yogi never shared with me that he had fought his way up from manual labor mechanical positions in engine rooms, to the pinnacle of the fighter pilot hierarchy, an F/A-18 fighter pilot...and then even higher into the pantheon of Naval aviator legends—the cockpit of a Blue Angel’s F/A-18.

In one sense, Yogi was the quintessential “straight arrow” with a Boy Scout persona—until the Scoutmaster turned his back. Then Yogi would be perfectly capable of instigating all sorts of mischief. If confronted, he could

easily slip back into an innocent “Who, me?” In short, he reminded me—of me.

Over the years, Yogi would fly down in an F/A-18 to visit with us at the IMG Academies in Bradenton, Florida. On one occasion, just before leaving to return home he told me, “Have everyone ready at the Academy when I take off from the Sarasota Airport.”

Word spread quickly around the Academy campus for everyone to come out and watch. Something was up. As Yogi had told me, the most exciting thing about a Blue Angels show is something called the Sneak Pass. In that maneuver, a pilot in plane Number 5 screams in from out of nowhere at over 600 miles an hour less than fifty feet off the ground. As you might imagine, it’s quite a crowd pleaser. (For the record, during his third year with the Blue Angels, Yogi flew in Number 5 position—the most fun, most dangerous, and most coveted position.)

In any event, that day in Bradenton, Yogi and his F/A-18 appeared out of nowhere above our tennis center pushing the lowest legal limit he was allowed to fly. The noise was deafening! All the buildings shook and people ran for cover. Poor Julio Moros, a coach who has been with me for more than thirty years, never got the word that it was just Yogi passing on his way out of Sarasota saying farewell. Julio panicked and dove into the bushes.

Right then and there I knew Yogi and I were very much alike. I, too, have been known for pushing the limits from time to time. Even we Boy Scouts have to have our fun.

But don't let me mislead you: Yogi and I both know—and you will know too as you absorb the wisdom of this book—that it is adherence to the “core values” of life that determine both the quality of our lives and the successes we achieve.

These core values that Yogi embodies have, frankly, gone out of vogue in much of America. In fact, to some people, values might sound downright corny. But, when Yogi and his able author Dr. Ken Majer write about determination, motivation, endurance, friendship, honor, love, teamwork, family, commitment and more, I can assure you they are not merely spouting homilies or engaging in abstractions. They are setting out for us a roadmap of how to live a meaningful and successful life.

At the Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Bradenton, it is the same discipline that Yogi brought to all aspects of his life that separates the truly great players from the merely competent. I've had the opportunity to work with many of the finest players in the world, including Andre Agassi, Boris Becker, Venus and Serena Williams, Pete Sampras, Monica Seles, Martina Hingis, Mary Pierce, Maria Sharapova, and dozens and dozens more. Every one of them was disciplined—some to a fault.

It was another “Scott”—not Scott Beare, but Dr. Scott Peck—who reminded us in his book *The Road Less Traveled* that “discipline is the tool that we use to solve life's problems. With a little discipline, you can solve some problems. With more discipline, you can solve

more problems. But with total discipline, there is no problem that you can't solve."

When I first read *Yogi Beare! Values of a Blue Angel*, I was truly impressed with the principles and values by which Scott Beare has lived his life. His endurance, his courage, his drive to keep going—and his getting into trouble, then fighting his way out of it—well, that's how I've lived my life, too.

I would like to see everyone—I mean *everyone*—read this book. Anyone who reads it, from high school students to college kids to business executives to politicians to athletes will benefit from it. Simply put, if you follow the principles by which Yogi lives his life, you have a darn good shot at becoming really successful in yours.

Like Yogi, you're going to have tough times along the way. You need to do what Yogi does: Stay on the cutting edge, but don't go over the edge. Take risks, but guard against the ones that can kill you.

I guarantee that if you read the Prologue of this book, you won't put it down, and, by the time you reach the last page, you'll be a better person for the experience.

As I used to tell Andre Agassi and continue to tell all of our players: "Always go for the "winners" on the court—and in life. Live a principle-driven life, and have fun along the way."

In other words, live your life the way Scott "Yogi" Beare lives his. —*Nick Bollettieri*



Prologue

*In moments of truth you're put to the test
Has your training truly made you the best?*



“KNOCK IT OFF! Knock it off!” I gave the order to my wingman, Doc, to cease our air-to-air dogfight.

“Roger that, Yogi. Knock it off!” Doc replied as he recognized the life-threatening danger I was in. My F/A-18 Hornet was in a violent inverted flat spin and was tumbling wildly toward the desert floor at over 28,000 feet per minute. I had only seconds to live or die.

As my airspeed dropped, I released the rudder. It was too late. My Hornet, the world's most advanced and sophisticated jet fighter, flipped over on its back departing controlled flight. I pulled to the right, the plane flipped to the left. I was upside down and spinning out of control.

Contrary to the movies, flat spins are anything but flat. The plane wrenched, flipped, and jerked so violently that

my helmet hit the canopy one instant, G-forces crushed me into my seat the next, or I was jammed sideways, my shoulders painfully hitting the metal edges of the cockpit.

“Knock it off! Knock it off!” I repeated.

“Roger that, Yogi. Thirty thousand feet,” Doc radioed, informing me of our altitude. His job was to stay with me and call out my altitude to prepare me for my last resort if I were unable to right my airplane: eject at 10,000 feet. My job was to regain controlled flight.

An aviator’s mind is spring-loaded with procedures. There is no time to think or contemplate, only time to act. Immediately I shouted aloud the F/A-18 Spin Recovery Procedures verbatim. My words echoed in the cockpit as I reacted with robot precision.

“Controls release!”

“Feet off rudder pedals!”

“Speed brake in!”

“Throttles idle, check air speed, altitude, AOA,* yaw rate!”

I checked my instruments. Altitude=26,000 feet; air speed=0; AOA pegged negative; yaw=high. No question about it. I was in an inverted spin.

Inwardly, I became composed.

“Throttles idle.” Done.

“Rudder opposite.” Full left. Done.

“Aileron opposite spin.” Full left. Done.

“Spin Recovery Switch to *RECOVER*.”

* Angle of Attack

I was being thrashed about so violently, yet I was calm enough that I wondered for a moment if I were going unconscious. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the recovery switch with the safety guard cover down. I reached over and flipped the cover up as I heard Doc radio, "Eighteen thousand feet." A few moments later, "Thirteen thousand feet." I reminded myself that the official eject altitude was 10,000 feet.

"Analyze." I did.

Then, with my nose low, my airspeed began to climb. The plane had begun to recover and I was regaining controlled flight. But suddenly, my airspeed indicator, altimeter, and other instruments went completely blank. The air data input that measures air flow over the skin of the aircraft must have confused the flight control computers, shutting them down.

The plane flipped again. I hit my head hard on the canopy. G-forces crushed me into my seat. I felt like I was on a carnival ride spinning around upside down as well as being socked from side to side.

Doc shouted, "*Eight thousand!*"

I had fallen through the 10,000-foot eject barrier.

This was not good.

