

# John Schlarman Was Not Going To "Crawl In A Corner" After Cancer Diagnosis



by Larry Vaught

It wasn't quite a year ago when news broke that Kentucky offensive line coach John Schlarman had been diagnosed with cancer and that sophomore defensive standout Josh Paschal had skin cancer.

Just a few days later I had a chance to talk to Neal Brown, the former UK offensive coordinator who was still the head coach at Troy (he's now head coach at West Virginia). I knew he was good friends with Schlarman and the first thing Brown told me was that this adversity would only make Kentucky a closer, better team before adding Schlarman was the "toughest" individual he knew.

Turns out Brown was right about Kentucky's season as the Cats won 10 games. He was also right about Schlarman not missing a beat despite the treatment he had to take during the season.

"Neal was 110 percent right about that," said Kentucky recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow recently. "The weird thing about it is that cliché 'bad things happen to good people' and you could not have picked the best staff member and best player on team and they both get cancer. I was like, 'God is definitely trying to do something here.' What it did was make everybody come together and rally to those two guys."

Marrow, who also coaches tight ends, wasn't sure Schlarman could coach daily and fight the cancer battle.

"I am with coach Schlarman every day and I wondered how does he do this. Go to chemo and then come here and coach. It really changed me. You are never too old or too good to learn. I would look at him every day in meetings. He would catch me staring at him but I was staring at him like,

"Wow, this dude is amazing," Marrow said.

"John Schlarman is probably one of the top five people that I have met anywhere. It bothered me at first seeing that happen to him but how he dealt with that and his wife did ... How can you be a lineman and have a coach doing that and then say you get tired. When I talked to the tight ends I would say, 'He is doing eight hours of chemo and coming here. We can't be tired.'

"Neal was 110 percent right. It brought our team together. It helped our culture. Mark (Stoops) did a good job bringing that in. It could have gone the other way. You are dealing with kids from all these places and all of a sudden they see these guys with cancer. Everybody was dealing with their own thing but Mark a great job bringing it all together. I remember calling Neal when I got the news and I should have known he knew. He said, 'Vince if anybody can fight, John Schlarman will fight through this.' He was right."

Schlarman, a former UK lineman, admits it has been a "heck of a ride" with plenty of highs and lows the last 12 months.

"Obviously being a part of one of the best seasons ever in this program was a tremendous high for a Kentucky boy like me. But having to deal with that health-wise was one of the most devastating things I probably have ever faced in terms of the early prognosis. The outlook was not very good," he said. "I was fortunate I reacted to the medicine like I have. I haven't experienced just a ton of fatigue or throwing up or whatever."

"I have been very fortunate I have responded the way I have. Things have gone in a good direction and hopefully they continue to do that now that we are a year out (from the diagnosis). I feel a lot better now than I did a year ago."

Schlarman never tried to look ahead. As a coach, he knew how to take things day to day rather than let worrying about the future "drive you crazy." Not coaching was never an option for him because he needed to keep "normalcy" in his life not only for him but also for his wife, Lee

Anne, and four children — three sons and one daughter.

"I am not going to crawl into a corner or stay at home and stay in bed. I am not going to do that if I can avoid that. I think that is good mentally to not let this thing affect my life to where I can't do what I want to do," Schlarman said. "That's been really important."

"Responding to the medicine the way I have has been very beneficial. Coach (Stoops) being very accommodating if I needed treatment or going back and forth to Houston to do that also really helped. I am doing a pill form of a new type of drug now, so it has been different. I have not had to do the IV and the chemo like I had to during the season. Going through that for 14 or 15 times and now getting to this, you really appreciate this because it is not quite as taxing on the body."

Still, no matter what he faced, he kept a positive attitude that obviously rubbed off on players and coaches. Schlarman credits Bill Curry, his head coach at Kentucky, for helping put that positive mentality into his life. Same with his parents.

"Just growing up with two parents who worked hard their whole lives and never made excuses taught me a lot. It's just kind of what I observed and saw my whole life. I didn't know any better, or worse. I just try to always be positive," he said. "The support system here has been unbelievable. Obviously with my family, my wife and all our friends but also here in the work place."

"I am just very fortunate for coach Stoops, coach (Eddie) Gran ... everybody in this (football) building has been phenomenal. When you work with people like that and realize everybody has my back, it just makes you want to do better, do more, do whatever you can to help the program succeed. That's all I did. I didn't do anything special. I just did my job and plan to continue doing my job. That's all I know how to do."

\* \* \*

For University of Kentucky basketball fans who have not seen Isaac

Humphries play since he left UK two years ago after his sophomore season, they might be surprised by what they see from him.

He's played overseas for two years and finished last season with the Atlanta Hawks. This summer he's on the Sacramento Kings summer roster and hopes to land a roster spot with the NBA team for next season.

"I shoot 3's now. That is a little different now," Humphries said. "I have developed that 3 game and that is really a valuable asset in the NBA. I feel very confident in shooting the 3 but I am also comfortable putting the ball on the floor and attacking the rim."

"Last year I had a lot of freedom and took on the role for the team they needed me to. I explored other aspects of my game and will continue with that. So I have a little different game now but I am still the same guy."

He was in Lexington recently performing a concert to benefit the Ronald McDonald House.

"Basketball and music are both passions of mine and I love them both," Humphries said. "It's important for me to do both."

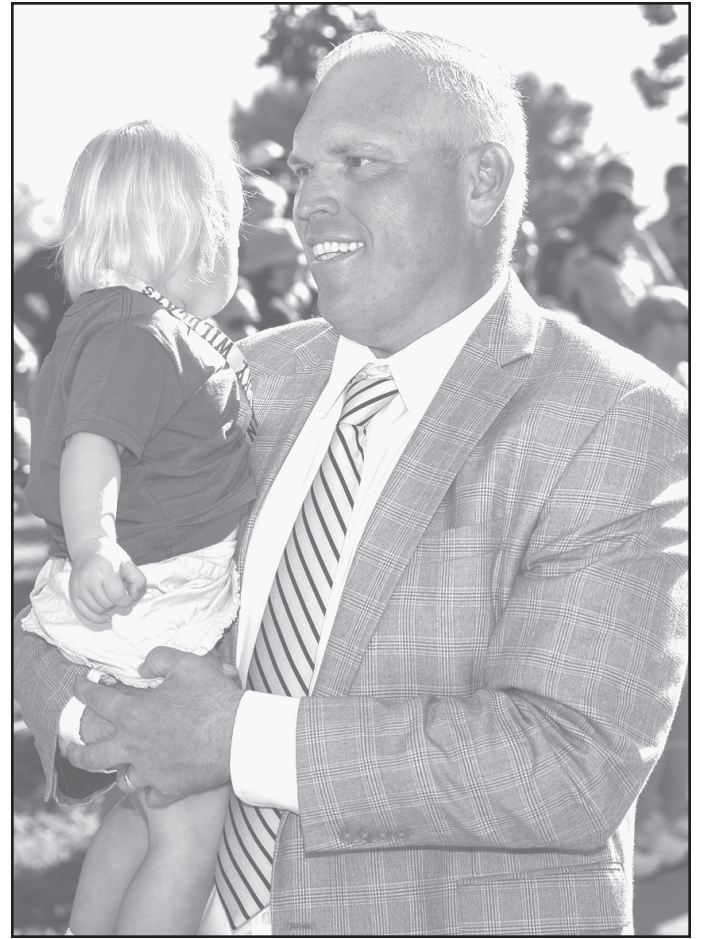
Kentucky coach John Calipari was a huge supporter of Humphries performing the concert. None of that surprised Humphries considering how the coach was when he played at Kentucky.

"I was surprised at how supportive he was of all us when I got here. With coaching there are ups and downs. It's just part of basketball," Humphries said.

"Off the court he was very supportive and made us believe if we believed in something to really back that. That kind of kept that with me. That's a lot of the reason that the concert happened. His support for us off the court was really cool to know he does support all we do and it's still the same way today as it was when I played for him."

\* \* \*

John Calipari will be the keynote speaker for the North Carolina-Wilmington basketball tip-off dinner Sept. 29 at the Burney Center on campus. Tickets are not yet on sale but



Offensive line coach John Schlarman was emotional last year after getting the game ball following UK's streak-breaking win at Florida just a few months after he was diagnosed with cancer. Above: Schlarman with daughter at Cat Walk last season. (Courtesy of Jeff Houchin Photography)

if you are a UK fan who would like to attend, you will be welcome.

"Obviously he has ties here because he went here and played basketball here," said Adam Fearing, executive director the Seahawk Club. "We reached out to the UK athletics department and he (Calipari) was nice enough to take the time to help us out with this. But it will open to everyone. We usually seat by priority. If you are a Seahawk Club member you will get first dibs but we are not going to turn anyone away who wants to come."

The club is finalizing pricing now but all proceeds to help the UNCW basketball program. Kentucky assistant coach Joel Justus also played at the school.

"Being a mid-major school, things like this make a big difference for us and it's really great to see John Calipari willing to help us out this way," Fearing said.

\* \* \*

Kentucky volleyball has two juniors — Madison Lilley and Gabby Curry — playing for the United States in the Pan American Games in August. They are two of only 12 players on the team. Lilley and Curry are also now currently playing overseas for the U.S. in the Pan American Cup. Both teams have former Olympians on the roster.

Curry and Lilley, along with senior Leah Edmond, were also named to the preseason all-SEC team when league coaches picked UK to win a third straight league title.

But two other juniors — Avery Skinner and Kendyl Paris — could also play huge roles next season for Kentucky.

"Kendyl has increased her vertical (leap). She has gotten stronger," Kentucky coach Craig Skinner said. "She is definitely a threat offensively. She can score now in front of and behind the setter, which makes it difficult to defend her. Her serve is amazing, too."

Avery Skinner didn't play as big a role as a sophomore as she did her freshman season. Apparently she wants to change that.

"She worked her butt off this winter and spring," the Kentucky coach said. "She was in the gym early and four or five times a week she stayed late. She really wants to be on the floor and put the effort and time in to make that happen. That type of engagement rubs off on everybody else as well."

"On this team, you better bring it in practice because if you don't somebody else will. There is no better motivator than competition and if your practice environment is tough, then we should be prepared. Every position group has competition. This year is going to be really competitive. Avery understands that and is doing what it takes to give her a chance to be a big part of our team."

\* \* \*

#### Quote of the Week:

"Being able to wear the USA flag on my cap has truly been an honor," Kentucky's Asia Seidt after she broke her own school record to earn the silver medal in the 200-meter backstroke at the World University Games with a time of 2:08:56.

#### Quote of the Week 2:

"He really looked good before he left for Kentucky when I saw him play. It looked like he had put on muscle mass. I thought maybe he would be on the bench player but he's really changed his look and could do a lot more than that now," Rivals.com recruiting writer on UK freshman forward Johnny Juzang.

#### Quote of the Week 3:

"This breaks my heart as I am literally in my car shedding tears. He meant so much to the BBN and provided us so many memories. Such a great guy taken way too early. BBN will never forget you," Kentucky fan Jennifer Musick on the passing of former UK quarterback Jared Lorenzen.

## County fair runs July 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> & July 27<sup>th</sup> Estill County Fair showcases agriculture!

County fairs are a great community event that showcase agriculture and has loads of fun for the entire family. Each event requires many dedicated fair board members and volunteers to make the event pleasurable for those attending. I for one would like to say "thank you" for all those who help make the Estill County fair a success each year.

The Estill County Fair is scheduled for July 13th through July 20th at the Estill County fairgrounds on South Irvine Road. I

will highlight some of the agriculture activities occurring at the fair: July 15th is the poultry show (6:30 p.m.), July 16th you can enter 4-H and open exhibits at the Exhibit Hall (10 a.m. to 7 p.m. for 4-H, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for adults). July 17th is the swine show (5 p.m.), July 19th is the open tractor driving contest (1 p.m.), July 20th is the open sheep show (10 a.m.), and meat goat show (1 p.m.). The exhibit hall will be open for viewing on Thursday and Friday 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. so come see the winning entries.

Many other events are planned for all ages including carnival rides. The cattle show has been moved to July 27th (unaltered show at 4 p.m., regular show 6:30 p.m.) so mark your calendars.

If you are interested in participating or being a spectator, details are listed on our webpage so visit <http://estill.ca.uky.edu/> then click on the "county fair" tab. You can also find Estill County Fair information on Facebook or their webpage ([estillcountyagriculturalfair.com](http://estillcountyagriculturalfair.com)). We hope to see you at the county fair!