

United Against Cancer: John Galas' Impact on Sarcoma and Soccer

By Claire Bassetti?

John Galas has spent most of his life around soccer. While playing in college he realized pursuing the sport professionally may not be an option, so he transitioned into coaching. John has now spent over 25 years leading teams through the highs of wins and lows of losses on the pitch. At an early age, he developed a deep passion for soccer and embraced the competitive spirit inherent in the sport, a mindset that proved invaluable when he faced his toughest opponent yet: cancer.



Not only was it cancer, but a rare form that develops from the connective tissues that hold together the human body, called sarcoma. While rare, there are over 100 different sarcoma subtypes with approximately 17,000 new diagnoses each year in the United States alone. John was diagnosed with sarcoma in October of 2023, and confronted this challenge with the same determination he displayed as both player and coach. Despite the uncertainty that loomed ahead, he remained determined to end this fight with only one outcome: a victory. Reflecting on his sarcoma journey, John acknowledged the gravity of his diagnosis, recognizing it as one of the most difficult moments of his life. Yet, armed with unwavering support from

family and friends, and a relentless fighting spirit, he embarked on a courageous battle against cancer.

“I’ve got one option and that’s to win, however long that takes, no matter how uncomfortable it might be. I just had a mindset that I was going to win, and this was one speed bump along the way,” John said. “The mentality was to fight and to stay positive, much like I coach my teams.”

Prior to his diagnosis, Galas has spent over two decades coaching at the collegiate, academy and professional levels including stints with the MLS’ Portland Timbers and NWSL’s Portland Thorns. Starting his career with Florida State University’s women’s team, he returned to Eugene, Oregon to coach with the University of Oregon’s (UofO) women’s program. Following the UofO, Galas jumped into the pro ranks, working with the Portland Timbers, then of the USL A-League. After one season in Portland, Galas returned to the collegiate ranks, embarking on a 4-year campaign with the University of Arizona women’s program in Tucson Arizona. In 2011, Galas was hired as the Director of Goalkeeping for the Real Salt Lake MLS Academy in Casa Grande



AZ. While working for the academy, he and his brother hatched the idea of launching a professional development league team and in 2013 Lane United FC (LUFC) was founded in Eugene, Oregon. Additional coaching experiences have taken him to Spain as well as back to Tucson from 2019-21 coaching professionally with FC Tucson. Currently, Galas leads LUFC as the sporting director and head coach, a position he has held off and on since 2013. John's journey through soccer and sarcoma has not been one he has navigated alone; his family, friends, and the soccer community have rallied behind him, providing unwavering support throughout his battle with sarcoma.

"Once John received his treatment plan from the medical team, we knew what we needed to put in place as he navigated chemo, radiation and surgery over the coming months," explained Anna Galas, John's wife and Critical Path Institute (C-Path) Grants Manager. "You plan and train for a competitive season with the goal of achieving the best outcome, winning, and I think we, as a family, certainly approached John's fight against cancer that way."

Through John's story you feel his passion for soccer, and his will to battle against sarcoma. As a newfound cancer advocate, John has helped propel himself into the research world with the aim that he can help push research forward.

"You never want to be diagnosed with cancer, but there is a silver lining," John explained. "You end up galvanizing communities and helping with research. Bringing people together is the least I can do for the amount of support my family and I have received throughout this process."



Inspired by John's story, the Danish sports uniform manufacturer Hummel designed special kits for LUFC, which draw from the yellow of the sarcoma awareness ribbon, and the blue from the logos of kit sponsors and research and patient advocacy organizations, C-Path and xCures. These special kits were worn in a friendly match on May 16 and will be distributed to the auction and raffle winners during the July 3 game in honor of Sarcoma awareness month.

The communal effect was felt with over 300 people in attendance for the preseason match in May and a sold-out stock of United Against Cancer jerseys. [Bids on the worn United Against Cancer player jerseys are ongoing](#) until July 3.

XCures, and C-Path's CURE Drug Repurposing Collaboratory (CDRC) have collected drug repurposing data in sarcomas through electronic health records. The deidentified data is then shared to generate interest in evaluating existing FDA approved drugs not approved initially for sarcoma in clinical trials. To learn more about the project click [here](#).

All proceeds for the United Against Cancer campaign will benefit the Northwest Sarcoma Foundation.