

Alex Scoggins finds friends and fun with Vanderbilt football team

By Michael J. Lewis

Hats. Lots and lots of hats.

That's one of the things 10-year-old Alex Scoggins remembers most about his adoption by the Vanderbilt University football team on September 11, 2013.

Alex, whose radiation and chemo from his brain tumor cost him much of his hair for a while, understandably loved getting beautiful black and gold Commodores hats from his new friends on the team.

"I was just really nervous and really excited when I met them," Alex said last week. "But they were really nice and gave us all kinds of stuff."

Alex's journey to Vandy and Friends of Jaclyn began in December, 2012. Alex's mom, Izzy, says that then 6-year-old Alex began having headaches and feeling nauseous, and after a trip to the doctor, the Scoggins family was told he was just suffering from migraines.

However, the symptoms continued, and a trip to the emergency room a short time later brought a diagnosis of a medullablastoma.

"We were so blessed that they found the tumor so fast, because it was the size of a racquetball," Izzy recalls. "They found cancer cells in his spinal fluid, but they got it all out and he's been pretty clean since then."

After his surgery, Alex underwent 30 rounds of radiation, followed by six months of chemo at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. All of that treatment affected Alex's optic nerves, as well as damaged his ability to walk; he uses a wheelchair and a walker, and watches Vandy home games from a wheelchair.

But that hasn't stopped Alex from being a big part of the Commodores' squad. The team gave him a football signed by the whole team, and Alex was invited into practice huddles by former Vandy coach James Franklin.

The Vandy program changed coaches in 2014, but new head coach Derek Mason was eager to keep Alex involved. Izzy says that Alex has remained close to several Commodores over the past two years, and Mason has even taken Alex into the interview room with him after games.

Additionally, Alex's twin siblings, 6-year-olds Carter and Caroline, have been involved with the team as well, welcomed just as much as Alex whenever the Scoggins family drives the 40 miles from their home in Smyrna, Tenn. to Vandy's campus in Nashville.

"The relationship has really been wonderful, and I feel Alex has gotten a lot out of this experience," Izzy says with a smile. "We're very grateful for all the support we've gotten."



