

The (KS)
Wichita Eagle, 2007-10-12
Section: SPORTS
Edition: main
Page: 7C

TENNIS HELPS MARKHAM BATTLE CANCER
DUANE FRAZIER, The Wichita Eagle

GODDARD - John Markham's fight with liver cancer has its days.

There are days when he energetically hits balls to his Goddard tennis players in practice, and there are days when he doesn't have the energy to leave the house. He talks excitedly about this weekend's Class 6A girls tennis tournament in Overland Park, while continuing to make preparations for hosting the 6A boys tournament next May.

"It's good to stay busy," he said. "I think that helps me get through each day."

Markham said he and his family have been overwhelmed by support since he was diagnosed with his illness last November.

"My wife has been my No. 1 supporter throughout this," Markham said. "But it's really been amazing to hear from so many people."

The last few months have been good. Markham is no longer undergoing the rounds of chemotherapy that left him sick and weak throughout the spring.

Last month, he underwent a therasphere procedure in Omaha, which injects radiation directly into the tumor on his liver.

"My energy is a lot better now," he said. "I haven't missed work, and I'm able to feed more balls at practice."

Markham returns to Omaha on Tuesday for a CT scan, which will reveal the results of the procedure.

"My ultimate hope is that it (the tumor) is gone," he said. "Realistically, we hope to have the size reduced for surgery."

One of the best parts of Markham's day is tennis. It's a sport he has loved most of his life.

He has coached tennis at Goddard for 23 years, leading the Lions to state boys titles in 2001 and 2002.

Last year, the school completed construction of its \$700,000 tennis facility, which features 10 courts and spacious areas for grandstands and lawn chairs.

Markham, who helped plan the facility, looks forward to the school's first opportunity to host a state tournament next spring.

"Along with his faith and family, I think tennis has been a real salvation for John," said Dan Buchanan, who has assisted Markham for seven years. "We all need something to keep us going, and I think he looks forward to that every day."

Earlynn Lauer, a senior tennis player for Goddard, said Markham's illness has never affected his attitude.

"He's always really positive," Lauer said. "Every day, he's trying to pump us up and get us to do our best. He's been an inspiration to all of us."

Lauer, a singles player, is one of four Goddard players Markham is taking to state.

For Markham, the Kansas City trip is an opportunity to see his son along with watching his top players compete at state.

"I'm enjoying myself," he said. "All you can do is take one day at a time and count your blessings. It's a whole lot better than sitting around and dwelling on the negatives."

Duane Frazier covers high school sports. Reach him at (316) 268-6296 or dfrazier@wichitaeagle.com.

State Tennis

When: 12:30 p.m. today, 9 a.m. Saturday

Where: Class 6A at Shawnee Mission East; Class 5A at Kossover Tennis Center, Topeka; Class 4A at Graves Park, Pratt; Class 3-2-1A at Riverside Tennis Center, Wichita