

2026 SSR Softball Season Review

From a hashtag that rallied a team to a team making school history to one team repeating as area champions despite not hosting the area tournament in either year. They all sound like movie storylines; however, all three were real-life stories from the 2026 softball season. Shoals Christian made regionals for the first time since 2017. Colbert County brought home the first girls trophy in school history. Wilson was a repeat area champion in an area with two 40+ win teams. These are some of the major stories of the 2026 softball season.

Early Season

What would become one of the major stories got started early. Makayli Davis (UNA signee) from Colbert County struck out 17 on opening day in a win over East Lawrence. She would finish the season with 576 strikeouts, leading the nation. Davis would throw a no-hitter versus Belgreen on March 12, then the next day a perfect game versus West Point.

Mars Hill started the season rough. They were 0-4 before beating Brooks. They would be 1-4 without the girls (Molly Wright, Briley Durham, and Lila Embry) from basketball. They would finish the season 22-22 at full strength.

Sheffield got their first win since March 2023 in February of 2026 over Tanner winning 18-3, and the whole lineup scored a run in the win. They would continue their winning ways in March 2026 with another win over Tanner, this time 27-15. Marking the first consecutive wins for Sheffield since April 2018. Coach Shannon Casiday was on that team in 2018 and now is the head coach for Sheffield. Sheffield would only win those two games this season.

Softball is a tournament sport, and there are two local tournaments that become marking points for the season. The TimesDaily tournament in March and the Bash tournament in April. The TimesDaily tournament is at the Muscle Shoals Airport Complex and features mostly local teams, and we get some fun matchups. The Bash tournament is at the Florence Sportsplex (same site as regionals) and features teams from all over the north half of the state. Central and Deshler both had outstanding weekends at the Timesdaily tournament. The bash tournament would be rained out early into bracket play.

Spring Break

Speaking of tournaments, the weekend spring break began with the Elkmont tournament. Once it got to the bracket portion, the Shoals teams beat each other in the bracket. Central beat Lexington and Mars Hill on their way to winning the tournament. Lexington had a comeback win over Belgreen 9-7 with a five-run fourth inning. That would be a precursor to a regional matchup.

Deshler went to Gulf Shores and went 4-2 before falling in bracket play. Murfreesboro hosted a large tournament with schools from all over that included the following local schools: Lauderdale County, Colbert County, Florence, Shoals Christian, Waterloo, Colbert Heights.

Brooks went to Pelham for a tournament. Wilson went to Oxford, AL, a place they hoped to end their season at and get familiar with the fields. All teams performed well over this week with higher competition. Some highlights from this week included Makayli Davis surpassing 1000 career strikeouts. Florence had a four-run inning to walk off with a win. Colbert Heights went 3-0, including a walk-off win. Wilson went 2-2, only losing to 6A and 7A schools.

Late Season

Late season softball features more tournaments, and we progress to the Lauderdale County Tournament. Where we saw a matchup three times in two days. A matchup we would eventually see seven times this season. Wilson and Central, a classic Shoals rivalry, would play in the opening round and county championship. Wilson won the opening round game to get their first win over Central this season. Wilson beat Florence in the winner bracket final 24-8 after trailing 6-2 in the second inning. Central would fight through the loser bracket, including a dramatic nine-inning win over Brooks in a game that had 29 runs on 46 combined hits. Brooks led 8-0 after the first inning. Central led 9-8 after the fourth inning. Central then beat Rogers in a one-run game Saturday morning. Then beat Florence by three. Before beating Wilson by one run, then two runs to win the county tournament.

The same weekend as the county tournament saw a record fall. Hallie Holland broke the record for most home runs in a career at Colbert County in a 6-4 win over Skyline.

Other milestones that were achieved in early April was Molly Wright reaching 300 career hits as a junior and breaking the record for most hits in a career at Mars Hill. That record was 297, held by her sister EK Wright (2023), who is now at UNA. She did this at the Bob Jones tournament that also featured Deshler and Wilson. Both of which made runs in the bracket.

The regular season would end in April, and then it was time to turn the page to the tournaments that matter the most. Area, then regionals, then state.

#NoMoreGreenTeams

Waterloo, Athens Bible, and Covenant Christian all have green in their color scheme. Shoals Christian is cardinal red and Vegas gold. Shoals Christian had not been to regionals since 2017. They decided to create a mantra for this season with #NoMoreGreenTeams. From Coach Haley Hayes: “The context behind no more green teams comes from the fact we have 3 green teams in our area (Athens bible, Waterloo, Covenant). In the past, two green teams always advance to regionals (usually Waterloo & Athens Bible). It’s now our goal to eliminate the green teams from making it past the area tournament.”

Shoals Christian had a chance to host the area tournament this season, but Athens Bible ended as the 1-seed. Waterloo and Shoals Christian would play in the opening round, and Waterloo beat Shoals 2-1. The journey would then begin. Shoals eliminated Covenant Christian after beating Cherokee. Then it was Waterloo again for a spot at regionals, and the loser would be done. The game was 3-0 Shoals Christian through five innings. Waterloo made it 3-2 in the

sixth before Shoals put it away with a five-run seventh inning to win 8-2. Shoals was headed to regionals but still wanted to win the area. Athens Bible was in their way now. Athens Bible led 4-1 into the seventh inning, and Shoals had made it 4-3 with two outs and the tying run on second. A flyout would end the game, but Shoals had accomplished their goal for now.

Wilson Repeats

One of the most dramatic areas the last two seasons was 4A Area 14. Last season, we saw 5-seed Wilson win this area and come up one win short of making the state tournament. This season, we began to see history repeat. Central was at the top of the area due to winning the run differential tiebreaker 13-12 over Deshler in their head-to-head meetings. Wilson would once again be an underdog on paper. Deshler had beaten Wilson in both meetings during the season, but Wilson comes alive in tournaments, beating Deshler 7-3 in the opening round. Wilson was now one win away from back-to-back regionals. They would face Central next and win that one 6-5. Leading 6-1 into the bottom of the sixth, Central scored two in the sixth and seventh innings to attempt a comeback.

Central would then have to beat Deshler in a game where the winner makes regionals and the loser goes home. Deshler had already beaten Hatton convincingly and beat Brooks in a comeback already that day. Deshler trailed Brooks 5-0 and 6-3 before tying it at 6-6 in the fourth inning. Brooks went up 7-6 in the sixth inning. Deshler tied it at 7-7 and headed to the seventh. In the bottom of the seventh, Alivia Lewis reached on a single and reached second on an error. Kendall Scogin walked it off, scoring Lewis and sending Deshler to an elimination game versus Central. Central would beat Deshler in a 1-0 pitching duel. Sadie Miles knocked in the only run on a single in the fourth. Deshler had their chances, though. In the fifth, a runner was picked off at third base. A double play ended the sixth inning. The bottom of the seventh began with a walk and a single. Central would get an out at third on a fielder's choice. Runners on first and second, one out. A double play would end the game and Deshler's season. Central's Paislee Ticer threw a complete-game shutout with no strikeouts and only two walks. Devyn Green had thrown the previous two games versus Deshler. Alivia Lewis allowed the run, but it was unearned as the runner that scored reached on an error.

The stage was set; we were going to get Wilson versus Central for the area championship. Central had to win two games. Wilson needed one as the undefeated team. This was the seventh meeting of the season for both, and Central led the season series 4-2. Wilson came out with a six-run first inning. Central made it 6-5 through three innings, then took a 7-6 lead in the fifth inning. Now we get to the exciting part. Two outs in the top of the fifth and a runner on first, EK Hewett hit a two-run homer to put Wilson up 8-7. Then with two outs in the bottom of the fifth and bases loaded, Izzy Miller hit a grand slam to put Central up 11-8. It would stay 11-8 into the seventh. Wilson began the seventh with a single and a walk, then a fielder's choice loaded the bases. Olivia Poarch cut the lead to 11-10 with a single. Poarch would be the go-ahead run. Avery Darby walked to load the bases with two outs. Hailey Rhodes to the plate. Backstory here is Rhodes transferred from Central after the 2024 season. She played junior varsity as a freshman

at Wilson in 2025. This was her first year eligible for varsity. She fouled off the first two pitches and then ripped a single. Hewett would score, and Poarch would score. It was now 12-11 Wilson. Central would go three up, three down. Wilson was area champions again, but both were going to regionals.

Other Area Tournament Drama

Lexington made a return to regionals after two comeback wins. They beat Lindsay Lane after trailing 3-0 through four innings. Scoring in each of the last four innings. Matti Shook tied it at four in the seventh to force extras. Emry Ashley's sacrifice fly scored Kami Collier to advance to regionals. The next day, they would play Tharptown for the area championship. Trailing 4-0 through three innings. They would score in the fourth, fifth, and sixth to go ahead. Cooper Knox was the tying run on an error and the go-ahead run on Willa Moore's double in the sixth. Then the wheels fell off for Tharptown. Matti Shook and Jaylee Williams went back-to-back with homers to make it 9-5.

Colbert Heights beat Mars Hill twice in their area tournament by a score of 5-3 in both games. Including Addison Holcomb walking it off in the area championship game with a two-run home run.

Colbert County dominated their area tournament. Outscoring opponents 26-0 over 17 innings. Lauderdale County beat Rogers 7-6 in eight innings in the opening round, overcoming a 6-1 fifth-inning deficit. Braydee Aday scored the tying run on Maylee Chandler's double in the bottom of the seventh. Then Bailey Corum walked it and scored Blakely Cornelius to win 7-6. However, there was a play at the plate, and the umpire called obstruction. Tag was applied by Rogers' catcher, but the call was obstruction and the run scored. Rogers won 8-1 the next day over Lauderdale County in an elimination game, scoring seven in the third inning.

Regionals

Regionals would take place in Florence and at the Sportsplex, the same site as the bash tournament and county tournament. The Shoals area teams are very familiar with the fields. We began on Monday with 4A Wilson and Central. Both teams won their opening round game in five innings. Central beat Cordova 13-1 and Wilson beat Dora 15-1. Wilson got down 1-0 in the first but countered, scoring seven, then three, then two, then three to run rule Dora. Central scored four in the first inning, then eight in the third to run-rule Cordova. Each team lost their second game. Central lost 2-0 to Good Hope, and Wilson lost 4-0 to West Morgan in a game that was scoreless into the fifth. The 1-1 record for each meant both had to win out on Tuesday to make state.

Tuesday was quick for both teams. Wilson lost 8-2 to Curry. Wilson had two hits and scored both runs in the fourth to make it 4-2 before Curry put it out of reach at 7-2 in the bottom of the fourth. Central lost to Hamilton 6-2, scoring in the fourth and sixth innings on sacrifice flies. Both seasons came to an end.

The stories of regionals began on Tuesday with Shoals Christian. Natalee Saylor dominated South Lamar in a 3-0 opening round win, striking out 17 of the 21 outs. That was a new career-high for her. In Shoals Christian's second-round game, they had a comeback win over Lynn. Trailing 3-1 in the bottom of the sixth, they would load the bases, then a run came in on a hit by pitch. Delanaey Powell ripped a single to tie it at 3-3, scoring Saylor. Khloe Adomyetz's walk brought in the go-ahead run (Savannah May). Shoals then needed one more win to make the state tournament for the first time in program history. They would lose both games on Wednesday, 13-3 versus Hackleburg and then 13-4 versus area foe Athens Bible. Athens Bible went up 4-0 in the third; Shoals would counter with four of their own to make it 4-4 into the fifth inning. Seven runs in the fifth for Athens Bible and two in the seventh put it away, though. However, Shoals still went farther than most thought they would this season.

Wednesday was due to be a fun day at regionals. We had four teams playing and all playing head to head in the opening round. Colbert County played Mars Hill for the fourth time this season, winning 4-3. Colbert Heights beat Rogers 6-4, withstanding Rogers' four-run sixth inning to cut into the lead. Colbert County had the most drama of the next round, beating Madison Academy 2-0 in a game where Makayli Davis struck out 13 and had a two-run home run to put Colbert County up 2-0. Colbert Heights would fall to Winfield 9-3 in the next round. Mars Hill beat Gordo 11-0. Rogers beat Whitesburg Christian 9-3.

Wednesday also saw Lexington go 2-0, beginning with a 17-0 win over Tuscaloosa Academy. Highlighted by three inside-the-park home runs, with two by Matti Shook and one by Baylee Hale. They then saw Belgreen again, where they would have to come back to win. Trailing 5-0 through two innings, Lexington scored nine runs over the third and fourth innings. Two singles started it in the fourth, down 5-3. Georgia Keeton scored the tying run on an error. Macy Davis scored the go-ahead run on an error. Then a third straight error opened it up to an 8-5 lead as Cooper Knox and Emry Ashley scored. Lexington would win 9-6. Lexington's season would end on Thursday as they lost to eventual 2A Champion Lamar County 13-0 and the eventual third-place team in 2A Sumiton Christian 10-2.

Thursday was going to be a day where the Shoals could send one or two teams to state in 3A. Colbert County made it pretty easy to get one there. Makayli Davis had a 19 strikeout performance, which was her new career-high to this point. She struck out the first 18 outs of the game before allowing an out on a ball in play. Mars Hill beat Colbert Heights after having not beaten them in any of the previous four meetings this season. Brie Robertson capped a nine-run fourth inning with a grand slam. However, Madison Academy would be the season-ender for Rogers, winning 4-0 and Mars Hill 11-2 to advance to state after beating Winfield 10-4.

State Tournament

Colbert County had already made history this season. They had the most wins in program history, school history. Makayli Davis and Hallie Holland had numerous records as well.

However, there was one more goal: a state tournament trophy for the girls' sports. Football and boys basketball have several each already.

The opening round saw an 8-0 lead through three innings over Glenwood. Capped by a Kylee Holland three-run homer in the second inning with two outs. Game two was another career-high by Makayli Davis as she struck out 20 batters in an 8-0 win over Hanceville. She struck out the first 20 outs of the game before a ground out ended it. She allowed one hit and only one walk.

Then we got to see the de facto state championship game between number one and number two. Saint James and Colbert County were playing for a spot in the state championship game. Davis struck out 13, and Emily Needham, a South Alabama commit (St. James), struck out 14. Needham had a perfect game for 7.2 innings before Bellah Hill had a single and then advanced to third on an error. Two one-out singles led to the game-winning run for St. James to win 1-0 in the bottom of the 8th. Creleigh Gargis attempted to turn a double play, but the throw was off at first base, allowing the run to score. The season was not over yet. Colbert County would need to win one game on Friday to reach the championship game.

After some rain late Thursday night moved Friday's games to Jacksonville State, we would finally get back to action. Madison Academy defeated 2025 champion Wicksburg to get another shot at Colbert County. Colbert County got out to a 7-0 lead before Madison made it 7-4 after the second and 7-5 after the third. Colbert County made it 12-9 through five innings. Bottom of the seventh: Colbert County now leads 12-11 after two runs so far from Madison. Tying run on second and game-winning run on first with two outs. A bloop ball over the first base bag was caught by Bellah Hill, and the celebration was on. Colbert County was bringing home a trophy regardless.

Saint James would face Colbert County again. Colbert County had to beat Saint James twice, while Saint James had up to two opportunities to win once to win the championship. Saint James would jump on Colbert County with three in the first, two in the second, and four in the third, making it 9-0. Hallie Holland scored the final run of the 2026 softball season with a home run in her last high school at-bat. She is signed to play college ball at Northwest-Shoals Community College next season. Colbert County would fall 9-1 but still bring home a red map (runner-up trophy). However, for Coach Will Inman, there's only one way it could have been a better season, and that is a blue map (championship trophy). They finished 51-10 and were runner-up. That is also the first state trophy on the girls side in a major sport and potentially any sport on the girls side.

Zack Pounders

Shoals Sports Report