

Familiar Face, New Role: Head Coach Horton at the Helm

Brooks football scored just over 1,700 points in the last four seasons. The coach who helped coordinate all that is now taking over as the new head coach. Coach Mike Horton had spent the last four seasons as the offensive coordinator and was promoted to head coach after previous coach Tim Bowens took another job this offseason. “It makes it an easier transition for sure. These seniors were in eighth grade in my first year. It’s been great to be with them for all their high school career and see how they play.” Coach Horton said about the transition while being in the program already. The players were also very excited when Coach Horton got the job because it meant someone who had already been there.

Brooks remained in 4A when the reclassification was announced in January, but due to realignment, will have some new faces on its schedule. The new 4A Region 7 will be Ardmore, Deshler, Hamilton, Lawrence County, Priceville, West Morgan, and West Point. Brooks has played most of these in other sports over the last several years, but will retain Deshler and West Morgan from the last two years. A couple of notes on the schedule: Brooks has not played Hamilton since 2007. They have not played Ardmore, Lawrence County, and West Point since they were 5A in 2017. The last time they played Priceville was in 2023 in the playoffs, but the last scheduled in 2021. Despite all the new faces on the schedule, the players would not give any bulletin-board material, as they said they were looking only toward the first game.

They will open with familiar faces, though with Hatton, Lauderdale County, and West Morgan. Three teams they have played in the last two years and the last several years. Coach Horton noted how it was good to open with some familiarity. Then, note how you are going in blind to week one until you can get film on teams from this season. “First game, you go off the cuff from what they did last season,” he added.

The toughest stretch will arguably come from mid-September to mid-October. The meat of Brooks' schedule features road games at Hamilton and Central. Then a home game with West Point before two road games with Lawrence County and Deshler. However, to these guys, it is nothing new. In 2024, Brooks played the first five games on the road due to press box construction, and then in 2025 played the first five games at home as the home/away designations flipped. However, it will be three playoff teams from last season, with Hamilton, Deshler, and West Point in that stretch. “It's nothing we're not used to. We tell our guys we're going to try and bring excitement to every single game, whether it's at our place or someone else's place.”

Brooks will also have a new face at quarterback. While Tanner Bowens shifts back outside to wide receiver. Jaxon Hartman transferred from Muscle Shoals this offseason. He is a

sophomore and already turning heads in the recruiting world. “These guys welcome everybody who comes in.” Coach Horton added about Jaxon.

New head coaches can often mean some nervousness; however, do not fear. Brooks has had pretty good success with coaches in year one. Coach Bob Godsey was the last first-year head coach to finish below a .500 win percentage in 1998 at 4-6. Coach Tim Bowens was the last first-year head coach to miss the playoffs but still finished 6-4 in 2022, and they were one game away from making the playoffs. Coach Brad Black went 11-2 in year one in 2015, and the playoff loss was to the state runner-up, Fayette County. Coach Jerry Hill went 6-5 in 2004, and they lost to a state semi-finalist, Alexandria, who lost to state runner-up Deshler. Coach Chris Balentine went 9-4 in 2003, losing to Alexandria, which lost to runner-up Deshler. Brooks is looking to get back to where they are used to, and that is the playoffs, and to make a playoff run.

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Shoals Sports Report