

Long-Time Rivals Renewed, Some New Faces: How Deshler hopes to Build off 2025 Success

“I think football is the catalyst for the whole school year.” Coach Patrick Malone said about Deshler sports' success last year. What he did not know was that his 11-2 quarterfinal team would be a catalyst for what felt like an improbable basketball Final Four run and for baseball making the quarterfinals on the boys' side. Deshler is one of the more storied programs in the Shoals when it comes to sports, but especially football. Last season in the second round, Deshler escaped a win at Hamilton; neither team knew it, but they will play the next two years as part of the new 4A.

Hamilton is not the only new face in region play for Deshler this season. With the elimination of 7A and the private schools getting their own class, it meant some shifts in regions. Deshler will retain the following from last season: West Morgan, Brooks in region, and traditional rivalries with Russellville and Colbert County. The new region features Ardmore, Hamilton, Lawrence County, Priceville, and West Point. Deshler has not played Ardmore, Hamilton, Lawrence County, and West Point in a while, with West Point being the longest drought, as 2005 was last meeting, and both prior meetings were in the playoffs. They last played Priceville in 2021. “There are no easy first round games if you make the playoffs.” Coach Malone added. Coach also added how he and Coach Evan Shipp from Hamilton talked about the playoff game in the offseason, and both agreed that it was the loudest game ever. Deshler had to go to a silent count on offense. Deshler's early schedule is loaded with fun matchups. You have the 100th meeting versus Russellville to open. Then Colbert County, who they have played each year since 1967. Then it stays local as Lawrence County and Hamilton are next up.

Baseball has had several deep playoff runs over the last several years, and George Youngblood and Brycen Williams have been big parts of them. George said, “It helps us be cool under pressure in football.” Brycen added how it helps to take a deep breath and focus. Coach Malone added how multi-sport athletes benefit across the board.

Deshler is not just another football program. It is the fourth-winningest program in the state with 718 wins. The next closest Shoals program is Colbert County with 696. “Everywhere we go, we take the entire town of Tuscumbia, the school of Deshler with us, representing who we are and people behind us. The message we send is that we are different from everyone else, respectfully.” Coach Malone added. He then discussed how other coaches see Deshler and its oh, here they come and how it gives him pride as an alumnus of Deshler.

One highlight of the schedule comes on October 15th when Brooks-Deshler will be broadcast across the state on Alabama Public Television as the AHSAA Game of the Week. They

are excited about getting to present the rivalry to the state as well as putting guys in different environments with interviews, cameras, etc.

We mentioned the 100th meeting with Russellville. “To play somebody 100 times is special. Everyone has their stories of it...For these guys to get to be a part of it is going to give them stories for a lifetime.” Coach Malone said. There is some extra juice this season as Russellville’s new head coach, Darrell Higgins, was a long-time Deshler assistant before he took the Mars Hill job. “I wish him all the best of luck... starting week two.” Coach Malone said jokingly.

Coach Malone closed by saying, “I don’t run down the hill with them. I go out early and like to watch them run down with our little tigers (1st-2nd grade). For that one moment at 6:58 on a Friday night, it’s all about Deshler football.” He continued talking about how the Deshler environment is “For most people it may be the only part of Tuscumbia they see; you got the turf, LED lights, and for some reason the ball bounces a little differently on Friday nights. You drive through downtown Tuscumbia at 7:00 on Friday night, and you won’t see a light on in a store; you can park anywhere you want. You may have to because you have to walk a little bit. Everyone is there...There is a sweet spot in 4A; you’re not too big or small. Even at 8:00am Friday morning, you feel the excitement building.

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