

Raise The Standard: Waterloo

One team that will not be affected as much by the reclassification is Waterloo. They remain in 1A and also retain most of their region from last season. They retain everyone except Shoals Christian (now in Single A Private) and Vina (not playing region play for the next two seasons). However, they do gain Belgreen (first year of full varsity play) and traditional power and long-time 2A Red Bay. Waterloo will also have a new head coach, their fourth of the decade. Ty Cox takes over after being an assistant and head baseball coach last season.

Schedule notes include playing Belgreen for the first time ever in a football game on October 16. Then the week before that, playing Red Bay for the first time since 1967 on October 8. Coach Cox addressed the new opponents and hinted at how the big players in the region will be Addison and Red Bay. “We’re excited to see where we measure up in the region.” Waterloo will also open the season on August 21 at Holy Spirit Catholic School in Tuscaloosa. The non-region slate also includes Tharptown and Vina.

Waterloo and Holy Spirit are just over 150 miles apart. Coach Cox gave this quote: “Waterloo has played them before (2012-2013). We try to look for teams that are similar to us in size. We’re going to make it a special trip, and hopefully one these guys remember for the rest of their lives.” Conner Scott added that it will be nice to go play somewhere we have never played before. Braylon Phillips noted how it will be a good bonding opportunity for the guys. The other advantage is that it is game one, so they will be as fresh as possible for the game and travel.

Waterloo will play 10 games in a season for the first time since 2021. They had played nine in each of the last four years. Seven of them are region games, plus three non-region games. “I want to give these guys a chance to compete as many times as I can.” Coach Cox said. He then continued by explaining how you improve more in 1A by competing against other teams.

Coach Cox hopes the aspect of being a smaller school and being the baseball head coach can lead to success as well. “Being a 1A is unique because most of our guys play every sport. I want them to play everything and be well-rounded. It’s nice for me, coaching baseball and football, that we do not burn these guys out. Just like we were pushing in baseball about competing or raising the standard, as we said. We are trying to do the same in football. I’m excited to see how it shakes out,” he said.

Waterloo has seen an increase in football participation in recent seasons, and it has led to more on-field success. They were 2-7 in 2024 before going 4-5 in 2025. “Football is a sport where you get what you put in.” Coach Cox added. Waterloo missed the playoffs in 2025 by one game, and it was a last-second touchdown that Shoals Christian scored to tie it as time expired, then made the extra point to win. They have not made the playoffs since 2020 and have not won a playoff game since 2018, which remains the only playoff win in program history. If they win five games this season, it will be the first stretch in program history of three straight seasons where they increased their win total each year.

Zack Pounders,
Shoals Sports Report