

Setting Sail on Year Six: Coach Garrett and Rogers Pirates Entering Season Six Together

One team in the Shoals stayed in 3A and will open its season at a former baseball stadium now turned soccer/football stadium. Ironically enough, it is the same team that shares a name with a Major League Baseball team. Rogers Pirates will remain in 3A and gain a few new opponents this season while they open the season a week later than most everyone else on a Thursday Night in Huntsville at Joe Davis Stadium (former home of the Huntsville Stars) and now home to minor league soccer and St. John Paul II Catholic School football.

Rogers will play ten straight games for the first time since 2015. Coach Daniel Garrett has had the bye week at the halfway point of the season every year he has made the schedule. He mentioned at media days last year that he had researched the optimal time for the bye week. “Part of it was out of our control (due to reclassification). I remember sitting in the region meeting (in January) and three schools that all had each other scheduled non-region were now in the same region. We were then scrambling to find games. We then did a spring game for the first time since I’ve been here. We did that to get some answers to questions we had.” Coach Garrett said.

Staying in 3A helped Rogers because they retained half the region from last season. They lost Mars Hill, Colbert County, and Sheffield to the private class, and the other two went to 2A, but they gained Central, Wilson, and West Limestone. The teams that remained are Lauderdale County, Colbert Heights, Elkmont, and Clements. “We’ll play whoever they tell us to play.” Coach Garrett said about the new region. He enjoys how it has more Lauderdale County schools so it can lead to more excitement week to week. “We try to play as many county schools as we can.” He also added. There are six other schools in the Lauderdale County School System, not counting Rogers, and they will play all but Brooks and Waterloo. The schedule fell just right where they do not leave Lauderdale County after October 2 at West Limestone. They then play three of the last four at home versus Lauderdale County, Central, and Lexington with a road game at Wilson mixed in.

Rogers will open the season in a unique venue. Joe Davis Stadium, former home of the Huntsville Stars (AA) minor league baseball team. St. John Paul II is entering year two of playing home games there now. It has been converted to a soccer layout for minor league soccer, but you can still see the baseball remnants at the venue. “I’m excited; it’s a really nice renovated stadium.” Coach Garrett added. They will play on Thursday, August 27th, just two days before Samford and North Alabama (UNA) play on the same field to open their season. Coach Garrett also added how it’ll be a college-type environment with the stadium size.

Coach Garrett is entering year six at Rogers. We all know how year four is a milestone year with your first group of seniors. However, at a smaller school, year six is the first group you

take from seventh grade to twelfth grade. “This group doesn't mind being pushed. Sometimes being coached and receiving criticism is not cool in today's world.” Coach Garrett said about this group of seniors and other players.

Rogers had their highest scoring season last year since 2022. They set a new mark for scoring average per game, averaging 35.3 points per game. They also allowed 300+ points for the first time since 1983, and it set the record for most points allowed in program history with 375. They have brought in two assistants to improve on both sides. Ches Dye comes in as the new offensive coordinator, and Zeke Pigg comes in as the new defensive coordinator.

Coach Garrett is now one of the more veteran coaches in the area in year six. He is the third-longest tenured coach behind Heath Wood (Central) and Ben Floyd (Cherokee). He joked that it made him feel old despite being in his mid-30s. He has learned quickly about how he has stepped up and been a leader for the guys younger than him and spreading the wealth.

Rogers is a small school and community but has a lot of support. Coach Garrett mentioned how all the boys' sports have worked out together this summer in the morning. Then while workouts are going on, Coach Garrett's mom and other women in the community are cooking breakfast for the players. “We lift together, then we go eat. It's been huge camaraderie-wise but also nutrition,” he added.

Zack Pounders,

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