

We're Going to Keep Pushing Forward: How Cherokee is Pushing Through

Coach Ben Floyd enters year seven as head coach. He has now seen a full group come not only from ninth grade but from seventh grade. Being a smaller school, he sees most of the seventh through twelfth grades daily. His first season was the COVID-19 season in 2020, so it was a struggle with all the rules, regulations, and restrictions in place. "It was recruiting the hallways. I can convince kids to come out and try it (football). You'll have a good time. You'll look back years down the road and think, man, I had a good time." Coach Floyd added that he has seen kids come through. Cherokee has nearly 30 players on the team this season. "We're going to play varsity regardless as long as we have numbers. We're not going to not play varsity to rebuild our program through junior varsity. We're going to keep pushing forward."

Cherokee was one of the teams that was not affected by the reclassification as much. They remained in 1A and retained their entire region (Addison, Belgreen, Hackleburg, Meek, Phillips, Waterloo) except Shoals Christian and Vina. They will gain Red Bay and Belgreen in their places. Vina cannot play region play for two seasons due to the forfeits last season. Shoals Christian moved to the new "A Private Class." They have not played Red Bay since 2017 when Cherokee was a 2A. They played Belgreen the last two seasons, but this will be the first time it counts for a region game. They will play Vina, Tharptown, and Brilliant in non-region.

Cherokee will still play Vina and Tharptown this season despite the two not playing a full varsity schedule. Coach Floyd added, "It's a struggle with the smaller schools to get kids out for football. Vina is a big rivalry game for us. We can compete with Tharptown." He also added how Vina and Tharptown still have seniors, juniors, etc., and will still play, but they will not be in a region and eligible for playoffs at the end of the season. "I'm going to do anything I can to help anybody. Keeping them on the schedule was not a question; it's good for our kids and good for their kids as well," he added.

Coach Floyd enters year seven at Cherokee and, following some retirements and moving in the coaching world, he enters as the second-longest-tenured coach in the Shoals Sports Report Coverage Area (Colbert and Lauderdale Counties). "I was looking at Cherokee's football history the other day. We have had a lot of good coaches. I've been part of the program since 2014 but have been head coach since 2020. I'm third on the list for longest tenured (Bud Mills 20 years, Gene Mitchell 12 years). I know the records have not been great, but the consistency is huge for the kids." Coach Floyd added. He went on to add how coaches have used Cherokee as a stepping stone to a bigger job. Coach Floyd also mentioned how he told family how his goal is not to see what bigger school he can go coach at, despite being from Doshier. "What impact can I make, not just wins/losses but in the community at a place like Cherokee?" He hopes the wins/losses can turn around, but at the end of the day it's bigger than football for Coach Floyd.

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