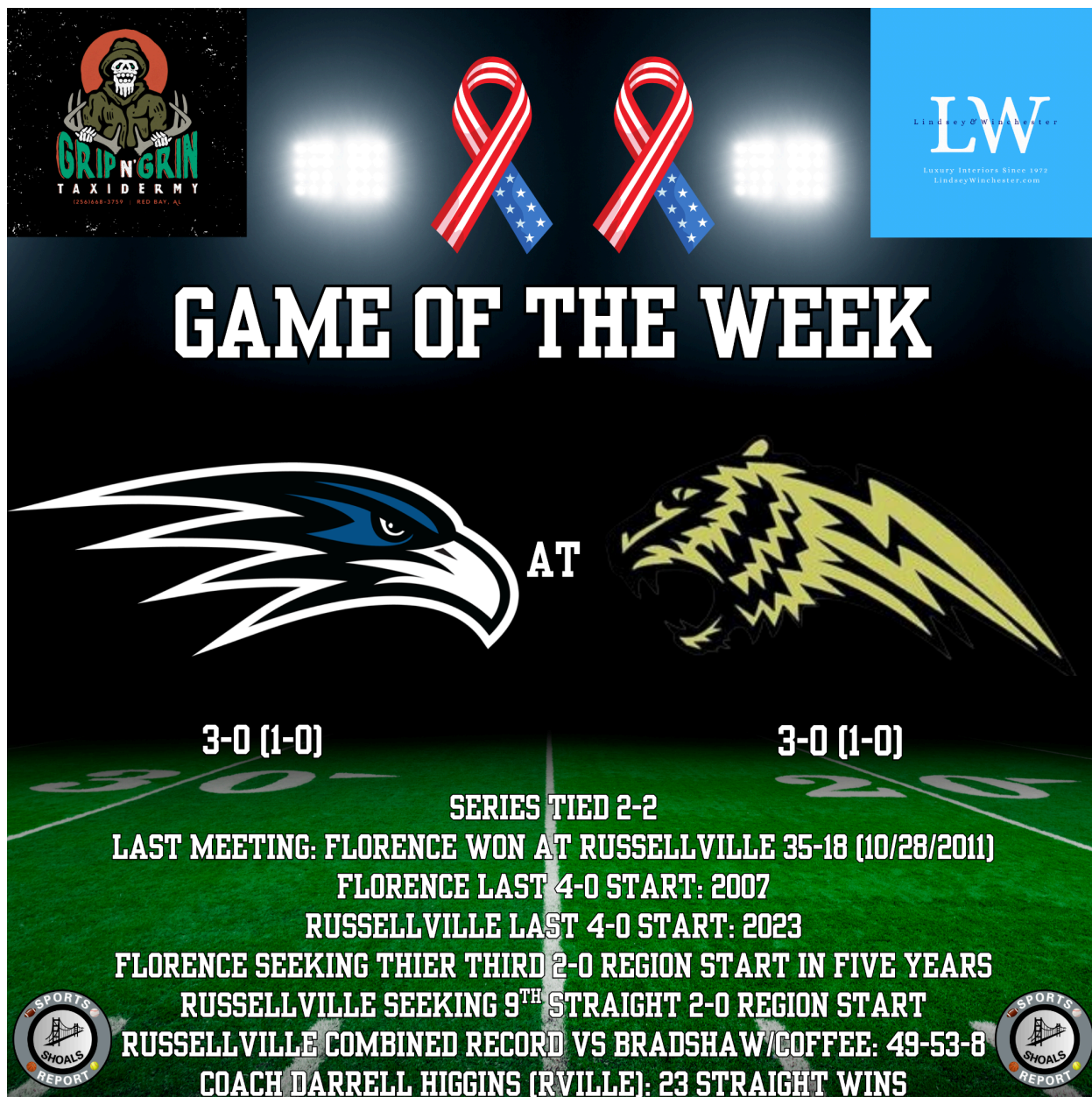


# Week 4 Florence at Russellville Preview



The graphic features a dark background with stadium lights. At the top left is the 'GRIP N' GRIN TAXIDERMY' logo. At the top center are two red, white, and blue American flag ribbons. At the top right is the 'LW' logo for 'Luxury Interiors Since 1972'. The main title 'GAME OF THE WEEK' is in large white letters. Below it are the logos for Florence (a blue and white hawk head) and Russellville (a yellow and black hawk head), separated by the word 'AT'. Below the logos are the records '3-0 (1-0)' for each team. The background shows a green football field with yard lines. At the bottom, a series of statistics are listed in white text. Two circular 'SPORTS SHOALS REPORT' logos are at the bottom corners.

**GRIP N' GRIN TAXIDERMY**

**LW**  
Luxury Interiors Since 1972  
LindseyWinchester.com

## GAME OF THE WEEK

**FLORENCE** **AT** **RUSSELLVILLE**

**3-0 (1-0)** **3-0 (1-0)**

**SERIES TIED 2-2**  
**LAST MEETING: FLORENCE WON AT RUSSELLVILLE 35-18 (10/28/2011)**  
**FLORENCE LAST 4-0 START: 2007**  
**RUSSELLVILLE LAST 4-0 START: 2023**  
**FLORENCE SEEKING THIER THIRD 2-0 REGION START IN FIVE YEARS**  
**RUSSELLVILLE SEEKING 9<sup>TH</sup> STRAIGHT 2-0 REGION START**  
**RUSSELLVILLE COMBINED RECORD VS BRADSHAW/COFFEE: 49-53-8**  
**COACH DARRELL HIGGINS (RVILLE): 23 STRAIGHT WINS**

**SPORTS SHOALS REPORT** **SPORTS SHOALS REPORT**

How long has it been? It has been a long time since Russellville and Florence City Schools (Bradshaw/Coffee) were in the same region. They last played in 2004, before Bradshaw and Coffee consolidated into Florence High School. It has been a long time since Florence began 4-0. It has been a long time since Coach Darrell Higgins (Russellville) lost a game as a head coach (November 1, 2024), before he rattled off 20 straight wins at Mars Hill and won back-to-back state championships. It has been a long time since Florence last played at Russellville. However, they have never played in a region game. This one will mean a little bit more because the stakes are elevated.

Speaking of stakes, let's talk about the stakes for a minute. We are only in week two of region play, so we have five more weeks of region games after this. Then we have two weeks of non-region play, so a total of seven weeks left. However, we can look toward the playoff draw. Florence and Russellville are in region 7. Clay-Chalkville (won three of the last five 6A championships) is in region 6. Parker (2024 6A Champion) is in region 5. They are both considered the top two teams in 5A. They are also considered the favorites to win their respective regions. Region 7 pairs with Region 6 for the first round, and Region 8 pairs with Region 5 for the first round. The Florence-Russellville winner will be considered the potential favorite to win the region championship. Now let's assume that Clay-Chalkville and Parker both win their region. The Region 7 one seed would be in line to play Clay-Chalkville in the Quarterfinals and if chalk holds (no upsets in the first two rounds), then Clay-Chalkville would come to Florence or Russellville. The Region 7 two seed would be in line to play at Parker in the second round, which is a two-hour bus ride one way. We know this is all based on assumptions, but you can never discount a region game for this reason.

Let's talk about the home team in this matchup first. Russellville will play their third home game of the season this week and has gotten off to a fast start. Beating Deshler (by 1), Mars Hill (by 14), and Hartselle (by 21). You cannot nearly ask for a tougher stretch to start the season than Russellville has had so far. All three opponents made the playoffs last season and won at least one playoff game. Coach Higgins had this to say about the early season: "Beating three really good teams to start the season has helped in building our confidence, but more importantly, we have been tested in different ways, and our players are learning how to handle adversity. At the same time, we understand what we have done the first three weeks doesn't matter when we kick it off Friday night. Florence is a great football team, and we know we're going to have to play our best football." Coach Higgins has brought the wing-T from Mars Hill to Russellville and has run it effectively. According to [MaxPreps Rushing Leaders](#), Tarus Davis (senior) is fifth in the state with 556 rushing yards through three games, averaging 9+ yards per rush. Coach Higgins also added that the running game will be very important this week against Florence. He also praised his team for how well they have adapted to the new offense and how they act in the classroom and on the field

Now for the visitors, Florence Falcons. Florence has played in 7A for the last eight seasons. They are now the largest 5A in the state and have rolled in the early season, allowing seven points per game and only 21 total so far through three games. They got the proverbial monkey off their back last week vs Muscle Shoals, winning that game for the first time since 2014 on the field and winning at Muscle Shoals for the first time since 2010. Now comes another streak on Florence's schedule. We mentioned earlier how Coach Higgins has won 23 straight games. We have seen a long streak end each week of this season so far. Florence has a potential answer for Tarus Davis. His name is Jahyden White (junior), he has multiple offers to play college football that include Troy, UNA, Jackson State, Ole Miss, Memphis, and most recently Virginia Tech. He plays defensive tackle and is a run stopper up the middle. Florence's offense is led by a three-headed running back room including Dacarson Johnson, Alijah Hines, and Kyon

Williams. They are a senior, junior, and sophomore, respectively. Then you have Sophomore Quarterback Coston Mahan, who is turning heads on the baseball diamond and can fire the football down the field. Florence has pieces all around that can change a game. Kyon Williams had the lone touchdown last week vs Muscle Shoals.

This game is interesting for several reasons, including the potential playoff implications, the local aspect, the streak of streaks ending, and the aspect that these two teams will be in the same area in basketball and baseball. They have not played since 2011. They have only played four times. Everyone knew when the reclassification was announced that this was a game to see, and now it has come to fruition. If you want to know what to expect, Coach Higgins said it perfectly: “Two teams who will play hard and tough football. They are very well coached and have one of the best 5A teams in the state.” We feel like it is not far fetched to call this a prove it game. Where the winner will join Clay-Chalkville and Parker in the north half contention.

Zack Pounders,

Shoals Sports Report