

Week 7 Deshler at West Morgan Preview



The graphic features a dark background with a green field at the bottom. At the top left is the 'GRIP N' GRIN TAXIDERMY' logo with a skull. At the top center is a colorful geometric pattern. At the top right is the 'LW' logo for 'Luxury Interiors Since 1972' with the website 'LindseyWinchester.com'. The main title 'GAME OF THE WEEK' is in large white letters. Below it are the Deshler 'D' and West Morgan 'W' logos in maroon with white outlines. The word 'AT' is between the logos. Below the logos are the records '4-1 (3-0)' for Deshler and '3-2 (3-0)' for West Morgan. A series of statistics are listed in white text: 'SERIES TIED 4-4 (LAST MEETING: WEST MORGAN 13-7, 10/30/2025)', 'WEST MORGAN HAS WON THREE STRAIGHT MEETINGS', 'DESHLER HAS NOT WON AT WEST MORGAN SINCE 2012 (55-21). HAS NOT BEATEN WEST MORGAN SINCE 2022 (21-6)', 'HAS DECIDED THE REGION CHAMPIONSHIP FOUR OF THE LAST FIVE SEASONS', 'WEST MORGAN HAS WON 29 STRAIGHT REGION GAMES, LAST LOSS, DESHLER 21-6 (9/30/22)', 'WEST MORGAN HAS WON 21 STRAIGHT HOME REGION GAMES, LAST LOSS BROOKS 29-21 (10/9/2020)', and 'WEST MORGAN IS 35-5 IN REGION SINCE 2021, 32-1 SINCE 2022'. At the bottom left and right are 'SPORTS SHOALS REPORT' logos.

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GAME OF THE WEEK

D **AT** **W**

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SPORTS SHOALS REPORT **SPORTS SHOALS REPORT**

The calendar has turned to October, so the games get bigger as the temperature outside drops. There are at least five games in and just outside our coverage area this weekend that affect the one-seed and two-seed in the region, or the two-seed and three-seed in the region. Deshler-West Morgan was circled on the calendar when the schedules came out after the new regions were announced in January, but a major music festival postponement made this weekend bigger in the area. Deshler-West Morgan has developed into a rivalry on the boys' side over the last several years. They have met six straight years in the basketball playoffs, with Deshler going

5-1 in those meetings. However, the football side has been dominated by West Morgan, which has won the last three meetings plus the last three region championships.

It takes a lot to be good at one sport at a school; it takes even more to be good at multiple sports at the same school. Deshler and West Morgan both have had high-achieving teams in all sports over the last several years. Coach Patrick Malone said this about Deshler: “Each school has its own ideology in how it builds its programs. I can only speak on Deshler and how we develop that thirst for winning. It starts with the community that creates the support system and pride in being the best that you can be. Our faculty goes to great lengths to not only teach but to instill character and make students as well-rounded as possible. Our entire student body supports every extracurricular activity. Our parents trust us to supplement the strong values that are being taught at home. So, when it comes time to compete and perform on the biggest stage, our student athletes are beyond prepared and ready to excel.” Deshler has had several deep playoff runs in the major sports (football, basketball, baseball, softball) plus some state championships in tennis as well as a team championship in baseball in 2025. West Morgan has also seen success in the major sports as well, including deep playoff runs, final fours, and state tournament appearances. Deshler-West Morgan has become a must-see rivalry no matter the playing surface.

Let’s dive into the game now with the home team and how they got here. Records can be deceiving, as West Morgan is 3-2, but look at who they played. They opened the season at 5A Athens, which was a 6A last season and lost 28-6. Then lost at Madison Academy 28-21 before region play began. Once region play began, West Morgan rolled through everyone, averaging 57.3 points per game in region play and allowing 13.3, with wins over Brooks, West Point, and Lawrence County. We will never knock a team for playing above their classification, but it is clear that West Morgan was intentional with the non-region schedule to play guys that are possibly bigger, faster, and stronger, so when you come back to region play, you are not shocked by the opponent. It makes you better and more battle-tested for later in the season. We would argue they are probably one of the better 3-2 teams in North Alabama because of the non-region games and how it translated into region dominance so far.

Now shifting to Deshler, who has been rolling all season since the opening loss to Russellville by one point. They got out to a fast start versus Hamilton and then had to survive a late game rally by Hamilton. Then came undefeated Priceville, and Deshler jumped to a 13-0 lead before Priceville cut into the lead, making it 13-7, but that would be all for Priceville as Deshler steamrolled to a 51-7 win. If Deshler can win this week, then we may start to have a conversation about whether the 2026 one-loss Deshler is better than the 2025 Deshler that started 9-0. However, it is going to be tough as West Morgan has a home-field advantage up there with the best of them.

There is an old saying: “Men lie, women lie, numbers do not.” Winning at West Morgan has been an uphill climb this entire decade. West Morgan has won 29 straight region games dating back to September 30, 2022. That last loss in region play was Deshler. West Morgan has won 21 straight region home games. The last loss was Brooks on October 9, 2020. West Morgan

Head Coach Drew Phillips took over in 2021 and has led them to a 35-5 region record. Then he has led them to a 32-1 region record since 2022. Deshler has not won at West Morgan since 2012.

This game has decided the region championship four of the last five seasons plus it has had an impact on the two-seed for the region all five years. Deshler was the five-seed entering the 2024 game, and a win would have boosted Deshler to the 2-seed. However, Deshler does not see it as bigger or anything different. Coach Malone said, "I wouldn't say this week has been any different than any other week. Our team will be locked in because it's the next game. It doesn't matter who the opponent is; you play to the standard. I would think the same would be true for our fans and our student body. They don't care who we play; they just know it's Friday night and plans have been made to show up and be loud." It will probably decide the region championship again this season despite being played in week seven and not week eleven. Deshler has head-to-head tiebreakers over Priceville and Hamilton (current three and four seed). West Morgan still has to play both.

The last two meetings have been dramatic, to say the least. Two years ago at Deshler, West Morgan survived a double overtime thriller. Deshler led by seven entering the fourth quarter and lost 36-35 on a failed two-point conversion in the second overtime. Last season, it was two 9-0 teams where West Morgan led 13-0 at halftime, then Deshler did not score until late in the third quarter, making it 13-7. Then Coach Malone dove into his bag of tricks and pulled an onside kick, and Deshler recovered. The score would remain 13-7 as it was a defensive battle. Coach Malone said this about what they expect come Friday: "More of the same. They are very talented and well-coached. I have a lot of respect for Coach Phillips and his staff. They do a very good job of putting a quality team on the field each and every night. I think this game will come down to who can execute at the highest percentage. They play very well at home and have a tremendous following. For us to have a chance to win, we need to play to the standard of Deshler football."

Now let's address the elephant in the room. Rock The South began in 2012, a year after the 2011 Tornado Outbreak. It has taken place in Cullman, one of the cities affected by the tornadoes, from its inception until 2025. Now it has moved to Decatur. West Morgan is in Trinity, AL, and across the road from where Rock The South is set to take place this weekend. Rock The South was originally scheduled for June, but construction delays due to weather forced it to be moved, and now this weekend, on top of Deshler-West Morgan and other events in the area, you have Rock The South. West Morgan is going to a virtual school day on Thursday and Friday to avoid the traffic that will come with the festival.

Friday is going to be wild in Trinity/Decatur with the game plus traffic from Rock The South and weekend traffic in general. West Morgan does not have a lot of bleacher space on the away side. We can remember from last year that by 6:30 pm it was nearly full and shoulder to shoulder. Our suggestion is to leave as soon as you can to get there, and if at all possible, avoid Highway 24, as that is running right between West Morgan High School and the Rock The South

site. We leave you with this quote from Coach Malone about how Deshler travels: “Our fans always show up and support us. I can't tell you how many times people talk about the following that Deshler has. Our kids appreciate that so much. They thrive off of that support, and I know they want to put on a good show for our fans. There is nothing like driving down the road and seeing Deshler tags and Flags headed in the same direction. You can almost bet that our fans will outnumber theirs.”

Zack Pounders,
Shoals Sports Report