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Hunter-Kinard-Tyler Welcomes Washington, D.C.'s Calvin Coolidge High School for Unique Interstate Football Matchup

Orangeburg, S.C. – Thursday night football will take on a special meaning in Orangeburg County School District as Hunter-Kinard-Tyler High School (HKT) welcomes Calvin Coolidge High School of Washington, D.C., for a unique interstate matchup that connects two communities more than 500 miles apart. Kickoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., and Head Coach Jermaine Derricott and the HKT Trojans will host a Coolidge program led by Head Coach Kevin Nesbitt.

For the HKT head coach, however, Coolidge is much more than an out-of-state opponent. The Washington, D.C., community surrounding the school is part of his own story. Derricott spent significant time in the area growing up, including summers with his father and family members. When asked about tonight's game, Coach Derricott expressed, "It's definitely a good feeling, especially since my nieces attended the school. I've been around the school a lot throughout my lifetime, so it's really kind of surreal." While watching Coolidge film, Coach Derricott recognized a place from his own childhood, a neighborhood swimming pool he visited as a young boy.

The matchup came together this summer when he traveled to Rock Hill to watch his niece compete in an AAU basketball tournament. There, a conversation with a Coolidge athletic administrator and longtime family friend revealed that both football programs had an open date on their schedules. Coolidge had previously traveled to North Carolina for competition and was interested in providing its student-athletes with another opportunity to travel, compete and experience life outside of Washington, D.C. After several weeks of conversations and planning, the two programs finalized the South Carolina matchup.

The trip, however, is about more than football. As part of the experience, Coolidge's student-athletes are scheduled to participate in a South Carolina State University campus tour. HKT's coaching staff believes that same spirit of exposure extends to its own student-athletes. "I think this opportunity really exposes them to a new perspective on sports. It's a great opportunity for our kids," the head coach shared.

The matchup also brings together two distinctly different communities. For Coolidge's student-athletes, the change of scenery offers an opportunity to experience a community and culture much different from their own. Despite the distance between the two schools and the personal significance surrounding the game, Derricott's message to the Trojans remains consistent: prepare, play together and approach the matchup one play at a time. "We're going to approach every game pretty much the same. We've got to do what we're supposed to do, try to play together and win one play at a time," he expressed.

Hunter-Kinard-Tyler enters the matchup after opening its season against defending state champion Bamberg-Ehrhardt. With the Trojans navigating early-season injuries to some of their veteran players, younger athletes were called upon to gain valuable varsity experience against a championship-caliber opponent. Those early challenges could ultimately strengthen the team as the season progresses and players return to the lineup. The Trojans have established postseason momentum in recent years, advancing to the third round of the state playoffs in each of the past two seasons.

Orangeburg County School District's Superintendent Dr. Shawn D. Foster expressed his excitement about the game. "This matchup represents what we want athletics to be about in Orangeburg County School District, opportunity, exposure and experiences that extend beyond the field. Our student-athletes will have the opportunity to compete against a program from our nation's capital, and while welcoming those students into our community, we are introducing them to what makes Orangeburg County School District special. This is bigger than football, it's about creating experiences our students will remember long after the final whistle," Dr. Foster stated.

Now in his second stint at Hunter-Kinard-Tyler with a combined 11-year program career, Derricott hopes this matchup can establish a relationship that extends beyond tonight, including the possibility of HKT making the trip to Washington, D.C., for a future game. For one night, a small-town South Carolina football program and a team from the heart of Washington, D.C., will share the same field, bringing together different communities, cultures and experiences through high school athletics. And, for HKT's head coach, it will represent a full-circle moment, which is welcoming a piece of his hometown to the community and football program he now calls home.

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Orangeburg County School District

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