

# Chelsea Core Six to Play Ball in College



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BY LOYD MONTGOMERY

January is an odd time of year to discuss baseball, but, when it comes to Chelsea High School, every day brings a good season to focus on the Hornets baseball team. While the first pitch of 2025 won't be thrown for a couple of months, Chelsea baseball is busy making news away from the diamond.

During a ceremony held at Chelsea High on December 13, six Hornets - Payton Hunsaker, Chase Lackey, Aiden Hughes, Paxton Stallings, Cade Mims, and Mack Breazeale - signed letters of intent to play baseball in college, the second largest group of signees in the school's history.

This core group of guys has been the heart and soul of the Hornets baseball team since their sophomore season. Chelsea High School Athletic Director and Head Baseball Coach Michael Stallings says the boys have a special bond on and off the diamond that, for most of them, started in kindergarten.

"They've been very fortunate to play together for a long time and I've been able to watch that, pretty much, ever since they were about five years old," says Stallings.

**Payton Hunsaker**, the only player in the group to sign with a four-year university - the others are going the junior college route with some of the best baseball programs in the Southeast - signed with Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana. The Colonels have been reasonably successful in recent years, advancing to the NCAA Tournament in 2023 and 2024, although failing to advance from the first round each year.

At six feet, four inches tall, Hunsaker is a left-handed,

hard-throwing pitcher with a fastball averaging 88 MPH. Stallings says Hunsaker casts a commanding presence on the mound and is poised to be a major factor for Chelsea this season and for Nicholls State.

"He's got a big frame on him," says Stallings, adding that Hunsaker has focused on improving his physique in the weight room, bulking up to between 185 and 190 pounds. Hunsaker didn't grow up with the other guys, so Stallings was unfamiliar with him when he joined the team as a freshman. Now one of the team's leaders, Stallings says it has been rewarding to see his growth over the years.

"He was kind of new to us when he came into high school, and just being able to see him grow, develop, and get bigger to where he's at today, to see that transformation, has been really nice," Stallings says. "His size projects and being a lefty, he has the ability to run it up there pretty good."

Hunsaker initially was interested in playing at EYU after being recruited by Brent Hasing, then the associate head coach for the Cougars. Hasing was named head coach of Nicholls State in June 2024, prompting Hunsaker to rethink his college plans.

"When (Hasing) took the job at Nicholls, I thought, 'well, maybe I should go check this place out,'" explains Hunsaker during a phone interview after returning home from a short camping trip. He continues, "Once I went there, I just fell in love with the place, and I love what he's doing there. So it's just a good opportunity."

**Chase Lackey**, infielder and pitcher for Chelsea, will attend Gadsden State Community College following his senior year.

Listed on Prep Baseball ([prepbaserballreport.com](http://prepbaserballreport.com)) at 5 feet, 7 inches, 145 pounds, Lackey played shortstop, led the team in batting, and earned All State honors in 2024. Additionally, Stallings says Lackey is one of the most reliable players on the Hornets' roster.

"He is our Mr. Dependable on defense," Stallings says. "I think throughout the course of the year, he only made two errors in the field. He has a really good glove and we're expecting big things out of him again."

**Mack Breazeale**, a corner outfielder for Chelsea, signed with Southern Union State Community College in Wetley, Alabama. Stallings says Breazeale had a great summer playing with his club team and is a player Stallings is relying on to drive the offense in 2025.

"He has the ability to be one of the bigger sticks in our lineup and he has really been working hard to improve his offensive game," says Stallings. "I've been able to be around him since he was really young and have been able to see him grow and develop and be a part of his journey for many years."

Stallings' son **Paxton Stallings** and **Aiden Hughes** signed with Coastal Alabama Community College South in Bay Minette, Alabama. Paxton Stallings has been the Hornets' starting third baseman since his sophomore year and also spends time on the mound as a right-handed pitcher.

"He is a very competitive, hard-nosed player. He really gets after it in practices and games," Stallings says. "He also brings a lot of experience and a lot of leadership and you know those are qualities that hopefully will pay dividends for this group."

Hughes is another lefty pitcher with a big arm. At five feet, ten inches, and 150 pounds, Hughes' fastball averages 85 MPH and delivers a curveball ranging from 75-77 MPH.

**Cade Mims** signed with Georgia Highland Community College in Rome, Georgia. Primarily a catcher, Mims has also spent time on the mound for the Hornets and is another player Stallings relies on for his experience and leadership. He also believes Georgia Highland, which has success in post-season tournaments in recent years, is a great spot for Mims.

"I think (Georgia Highland) will be a great fit for Cade to experience a good, quality program and have an opportunity to help them continue their success," Stallings says.

**James Williams**, Pitching Coach and Recruiting Coordinator, for Georgia Highlands, says he recruited Mims due to his solid character as well as his skills on the diamond.

"For us, Cade does more off the field than he does on the field, but that doesn't mean he's not a good baseball player. He is a very good baseball player," explains Williams.

"I think he does all the things that make someone a



Payton Hunsaker signed with Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana.

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good player but the person is really what attracted us to him," adds Williams. "He's a really good leader and has a good work ethic. He's just the guy that you want in your program."

Good character is a trait Stallings says all six of these guys share, stating "As this core goes, to the team goes." He adds that he believes this core can lead the Hornets to a deep playoff run in their first season in 6A since 2021-22. However,

regardless of the final win-loss record this spring, these young men set good examples in Chelsea and beyond.

"They're a very tight group. They spend a lot of time together away from school, outside of baseball, and are really good kids," Stallings says. "They try to do their best to represent our program and their families in a respectful way and they do a really good job of that in my opinion."