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Chelsea

MAGAZINE

NEW ERA ON THE *Sidelines*

Chelsea welcomes
Tad Niblett as new
Head Football
Coach **PAGE 8**

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CRAFT
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF TAD NIBLETT

Veteran Coach Tad Niblett Leads Chelsea Into its Next Chapter

By Loyd McIntosh

The Tad Niblett era has begun at Chelsea High School.

Niblett was named as the 12th head coach in Chelsea High School history in January, bringing with him an impressive coaching pedigree and a resume with a long list of successes. He comes to Chelsea following four seasons as an assistant coach in Gainesville, Georgia, intending to breathe new life into a Hornets' football program that has managed only two winning seasons since 2019.

“Our standard is just chasing our best every day,” Niblett said in late February, just three weeks into his tenure. “Can we be a little bit better today than we were yesterday? It’s all about connection and relationships. The four pillars of our program are person, student, athlete, and football player, in that order. If we’re doing everything we can every day to grow as a person and as a student, the other two things will take care of themselves.”

Niblett brings more than three decades of experience coaching high school football throughout the Southeast. The son of football coach John Niblett, the family lived in nearby Harpersville for a time until the all-to-family coaching traveling carnival took the family all over Alabama—Montgomery, Demopolis, Phenix City, just to name a few.

Specializing at quarterback, Niblett played for Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, from 1988-91, throwing for 4,800 yards and 26 touchdowns. After graduation, Niblett began his career with early head coaching stops at a pair of small Alabama schools: Central Christian in Robertsdale and Springwood in Lanett. He eventually moved on to prominent assistant roles, including offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Oxford High School, before joining the high-flying Hoover Buccaneers staff, working alongside his brother, head coach Josh Niblett.

During his two stints at Hoover, Niblett helped guide the Buccaneers



IMAGE COURTESY OF CHELSEA FOOTBALL FACEBOOK PAGE

The 2026 Chelsea High School Football schedule.



to four state championships and multiple title game appearances, cementing the program as one of the nation’s premier high school football dynasties.

He later returned to the head coaching ranks at Foley High School before spending the past several seasons in Georgia as assistant head coach and offensive coordinator at Gainesville High School, helping the Red Elephants make several deep postseason runs.

Now back in Shelby County, Niblett arrived at Chelsea High School with a reputation for building strong relationships and developing players, both on and off the field. And while he only lived in north Shelby County briefly as a child, his career has taken to different places, but he said Chelsea feels like home.

“I’ve grown up in Alabama, and I’m very familiar with the Shelby County area, so in a sense it feels like coming home, especially after being over in Georgia for four years,” Niblett said, speaking not only for himself but for his wife Paige. A native of Missouri, Paige has ridden the coaching roller coaster for his entire career and 30-plus years of marriage. Before accepting the position, Niblett made sure he got Paige’s seal of approval.

“She is my best friend. I’m just very blessed, especially being a coach’s wife, which is not always the easiest,” said Niblett. “She’s been there through the highs and lows. I just could not do this without her, and she has played a big part in the decision-making of coming here.”

He takes over at Chelsea for former head coach Todd Cassidy, who stepped down in January after four moderately successful years at the

helm, posting a 5-5 record in 2025. During those years, Chelsea and school leadership funded upgrades to the stadium, weight room, and locker room, among other improvements.

Niblett said the vision and leadership of Principal Dr. Brandon Turner and Athletics Director Michael Stallings were also major factors in his decision to pursue the head coaching position, and he believes their support is crucial to creating a winning culture at Chelsea High School.

“At Hoover and any successful program, there’s a real strong commitment and belief in what you’re doing,” said Niblett. “Everything starts there. Don’t get me wrong, you’ve got to have some players. You’ve got to have people who can go out there and perform, but it starts with that belief. Believing in yourself and believing in each other. You build that belief on a daily basis by how you show up and how you work every day.”

Niblett spent his first few weeks working with the players in their off-season conditioning program and putting his coaching staff together. While it’s early in the process, he’s encouraged by what he sees.

“It’s been great. They’ve really bought in, and they’ve been working hard, and I’ve been impressed with how they’ve responded to what we’re doing,” Niblett said. They want to do well, and they want to give themselves the best chance possible personally and as a team, and we’ve got to work every day to make sure that we’re giving them those opportunities.

“There’s no better profession in the world,” Niblett added. “You get to wake up every day and have an opportunity to make a positive impact.”