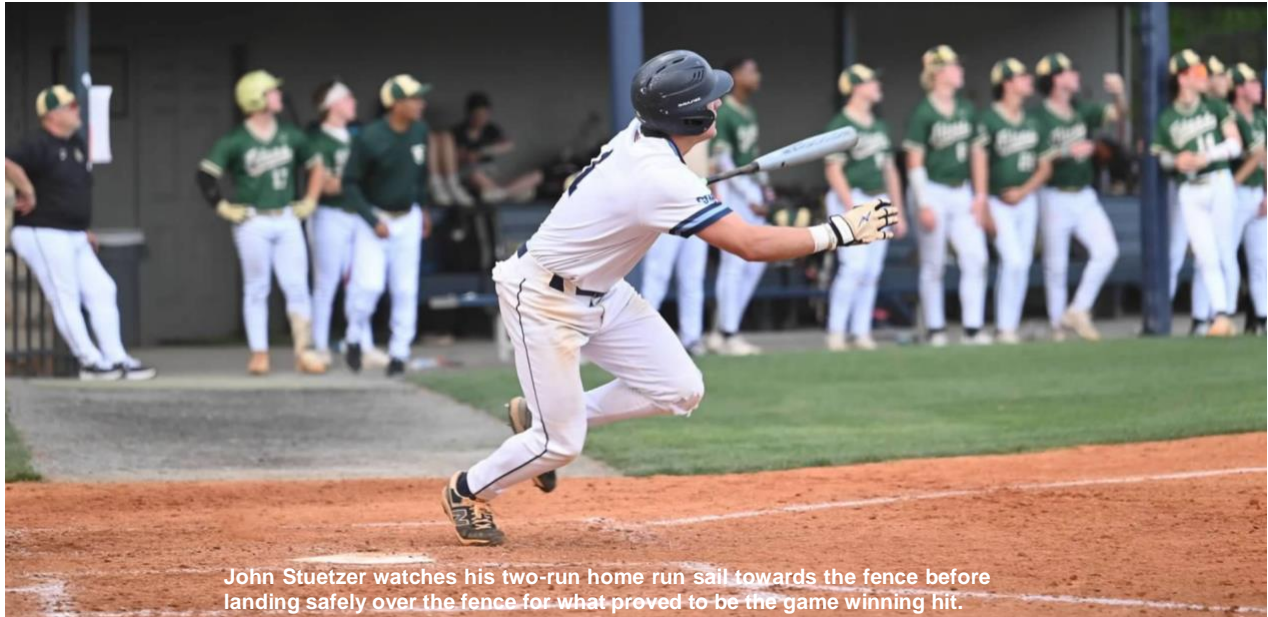




Game 28, April 16, 2024
Pope Greyhounds 3, Blessed Trinity Titans 1
Weather: 83 degrees, 7 mph winds
Played at Jeff Rowland Field at Pope High School
Varsity Record: Overall 18-10, Region 12-4
Game 1 of Best 2-of-3 Region Series



**POPE BEATS BLESSED TRINITY
HOUNDS WIN GAME ONE OF SERIES
STUETZER'S BAT AND GLOVE AND JONES' ARM KEY THE VICTORY**



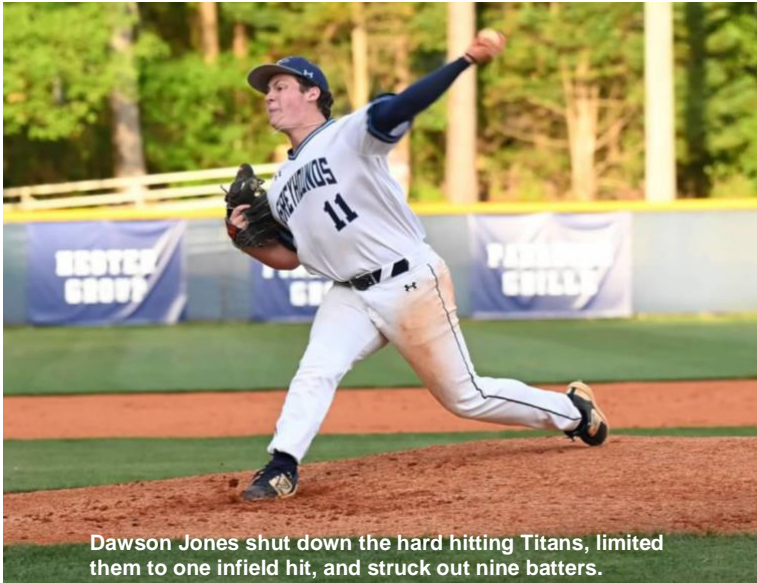
John Stuetzer watches his two-run home run sail towards the fence before landing safely over the fence for what proved to be the game winning hit.

The highly anticipated three-game showdown between Pope and Blessed Trinity, the top two teams and powerhouse programs in Region 7, did not disappoint. In game one, as expected, hits were at a premium with high-level pitching by both teams. The Hounds out hit the Titans, 5-2, and made all five hits count. The biggest hit was **John Stuetzer's** two run home run in the third inning that proved to be the difference in the Hounds 3-1 win Tuesday night at Jeff Rowland Field.

Pope's region record improves to 12-4 and overall record to 18-10. Blessed Trinity's region record falls to 13-3 and overall record to 21-7.

In the bottom of the third inning Pope trailed 1-0. The first eight Pope batters of the game had been retired in order. With two outs and two strikes, **Carter Joachim** was hit by a pitch in the ear hole of his helmet and was awarded first base.

Stuetzer followed and worked the count to 2-2. The next pitch was a ball in the dirt and Joachim stole second base without a throw. With a full count, Stuetzer saw a fastball down in the zone. He drove through the ball and blasted a clutch line drive home run 345-feet over the left center field fence that sent Pope Nation into a frenzy. Joachim scored on the hit. It was Stuetzer's third home run of the season and Pope gained a 2-1 lead that they would not relinquish.



Dawson Jones shut down the hard hitting Titans, limited them to one infield hit, and struck out nine batters.

Senior southpaw starter **Dawson Jones** (5-2) pitched five impactful innings and 102 pitches. He allowed just one run, one bunt single, one ball hit to the outfield (a flyout), struck out nine, and worked around five walks and two hit batters. Jones struck out the side in the first and second innings. He struck out at least one batter in each inning he pitched with a full complement of nasty breaking pitches.



Matt Levinson celebrates the final out of the game, a strike out. Levinson pitched two innings to earn his fourth save of the year.

Junior right hander **Matt Levinson** pitched the final two pressure packed innings in relief to earn his fourth save of the season. Levinson held the Titans scoreless, struck out two, and allowed one hit. Levinson's save moved him into a seventh place tie in the Pope Baseball record book for single season saves with **Scott Leieur** (2018), **Reid Robertson** (2017), and **Brandon Teague** (2004 and 2005).

Junior **Tanner Morneau** had two singles his first two at bats. The two hits increased Morneau's consecutive hit streak to six in a row over the past two games. Morneau also scored one run. In addition to Stuetzer's two-run home run, he was also intentionally

walked one time. Sophomore **Ben Hill** hit a key infield single that scored one run. Freshman **Luke Winbush** had a line drive single to right center field. Joachim reached base by a HBP, stole one base, scored one run, and had a sacrifice bunt that advanced a runner. Sophomore **Drew Abney** walked one time. Senior **Griffin Tamucci** had a successful sacrifice bunt that moved a runner into scoring position and later scored. Senior **Regan Cochran** stole one base.

In the bottom of the fourth inning, Pope scored one run on two hits to take a 3-1 lead. The inning was a teaching class in baseball on fundamental small ball. Morneau led off with a two-strike line drive single to right field. Tamucci executed a first pitch sacrifice bunt to third base and advanced Morneau to second base. With one out, Abney hit a two-strike ground out behind the runner to the shortstop and advanced Morneau to third base. With two outs, Hill hit a high one bounce chop single off the lip of the infield grass over the third baseman deep in the hole to the shortstop. Morneau scored from third on the hit.

Pope's defense was outstanding and came up big when needed the most.

In the top of the third inning, the BT leadoff hitter walked. The next batter bunted down the first base line. Jones picked up the ball and threw wide to **Andrew Nelms** at first base. The runner at first advanced all the way to third. When the ball got away, the BT runner ran to second base. Nelms threw to Stuetzer, who was covering second base. Stuetzer caught the ball and

ran the runner back towards first base. The runner at third took off towards home. Stuetzer stopped, pivoted, and threw across his body to Abney at catcher. Abney caught the ball, absorbed the slide from the base runner, held on and made the out.

In the top of the fourth inning, Pope led 2-1. With two outs and BT runners on first and second base, the BT batter hit a slow rolling ground ball up the middle. Stuetzer charged the ball, scooped, and threw to first base. Nelms made a nice one hop pick to complete the out and end the inning with no runs.

In the top of the fifth inning, Pope led 3-1. With two outs and a runner on first base, the BT batter hit a line drive down the third base line. Winbush backhanded the ball, knocked it down, picked it up, and threw a strike to Nelms at first base to record the out and end the inning with no runs. Winbush led off the bottom of the fifth inning for the Hounds and singled to right field, but was unable to advance.



In the top of the sixth inning, Pope still led 3-1. With no outs and BT runners at first and second base, the BT batter hit a ground ball deep into the hole between shortstop and third base. There was little doubt that the ball was heading into left

field for a hit and would score a run. Stuetzer got a great break on the ball at shortstop. He raced to his right, backhanded the ball, and made an off balance desperation throw to third base. Winbush scrambled back to third base, caught the ball, and recorded the out to complete one of best defensive plays you can make at shortstop.

Three batters later, with two outs and runners on first and second base, it was only fitting that Stuetzer fielded a ground ball at shortstop and threw to Nelms at first base to end the inning with no runs allowed.

Before the game, the Pope Baseball Diamond Girls were recognized and honored for their wonderful support of the program. Pope travels to Blessed Trinity on Thursday for a 6:00 game in game two of the series. Game three is on Friday at Blessed Trinity with a 6:00 start time.

