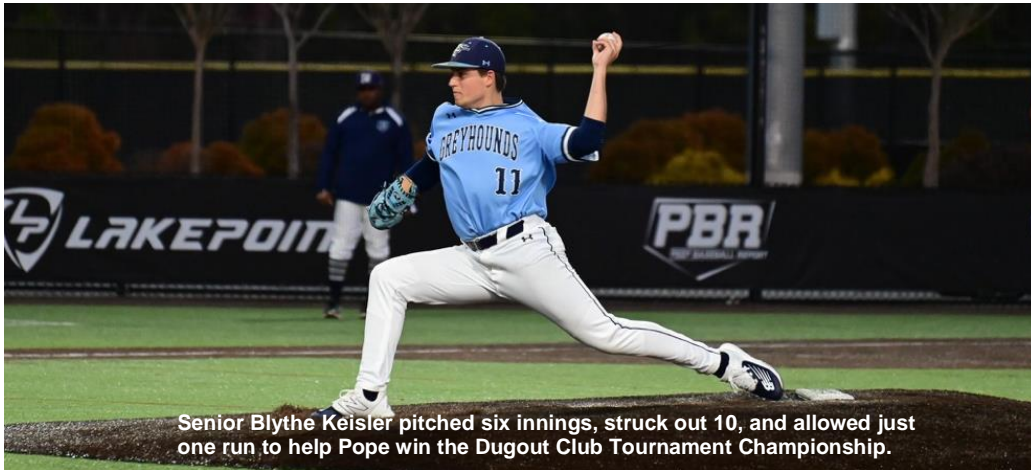




POPE BEATS NORCROSS, 2-1 KEISLER WINS PITCHING DUEL TO HELP HOUNDS WIN CHAMPIONSHIP



Senior Blythe Keisler pitched six innings, struck out 10, and allowed just one run to help Pope win the Dugout Club Tournament Championship.

Senior lefthander **Blythe Keisler** used an arsenal of four different pitches, ranging from 62 mph to 80 mph, painted both corners of the plate all night long, and pitched an overall masterpiece to carry Pope to a **pressure-packed 2-1 victory** over the Norcross Blue Devils Saturday night in the championship game of the Georgia Dugout Club Tournament, Rob English Division. The Hounds went 3-0 in the tournament and improved their overall record to 4-1.

Keisler (2-0) pitched six innings, struck out 10, scattered four hits, gave up one run, and walked two to earn the win. He threw 82 pitches with 13 fastballs, 69 off-speed or breaking pitches,

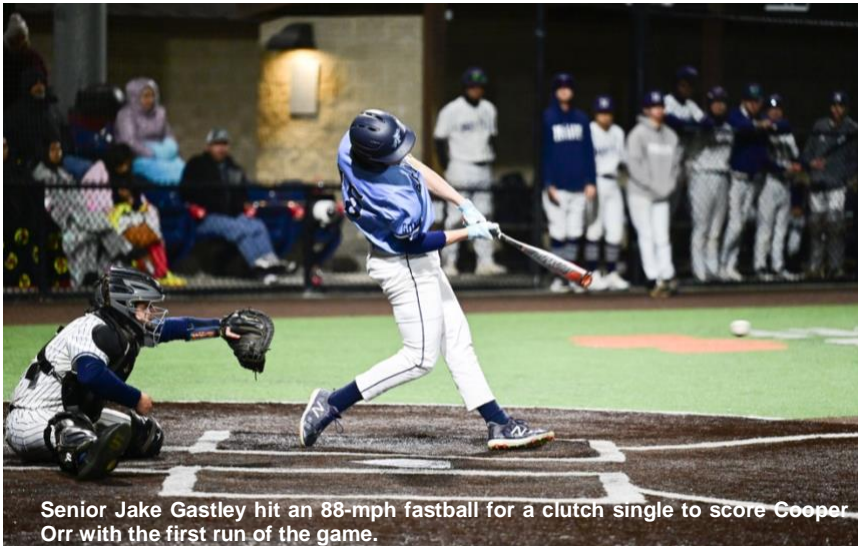


Freshman Drew Abney started his first game for the varsity and did a nice job managing the two senior pitchers.

and nibbled at the corners for 63% strikes (52-82). Keisler's mix of off-speed pitches was quite the contrast when compared to the Norcross starting pitcher, who threw in the upper 80's and topped out at 90 mph. Senior righthander **Carson Kerce** closed the game in the final inning and retired 3-of-4 batters with no runs and one strike out to earn his second save in two consecutive days. Kerce threw 10-of-12 pitches (83%) for strikes. Freshman catcher, **Drew Abney**, started his first varsity game, caught all seven innings, and had an excellent game managing the two senior pitchers.

Pope had three hits and took advantage of two costly Norcross errors. **Cooper Orr** led Pope's offense with the game-winning sacrifice fly, a single, and scored one run. **Jake Gastley** had an RBI single that scored Pope's first run of the game and stole one base. Kerce added a single

and stole one base. **Kent Schmidt** reached base by a HBP. **John Stuetzer** pinch ran for Schmidt and scored the winning run. Stuetzer also stole two bases for the Hounds.

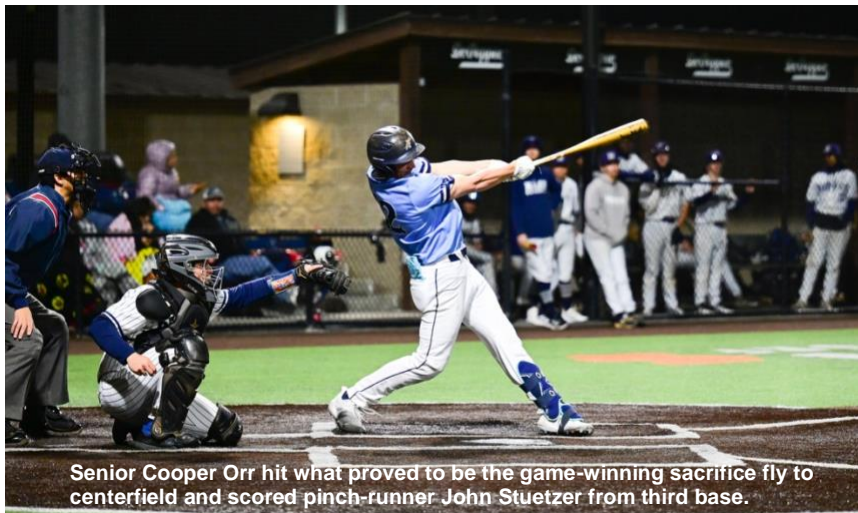


Senior Jake Gastley hit an 88-mph fastball for a clutch single to score Cooper Orr with the first run of the game.

In the bottom of the fourth inning, Pope scored one run on one hit to take a 1-0 lead. With two outs, Orr hit a slicing fly ball deep to the right field corner that the right fielder misplayed. Orr hustled to second base to put himself into scoring position. Gastley followed and slugged an 88-mph fastball between third base and the shortstop into left field for a clutch single that scored Orr from second base.

In the top of the fifth, Keisler retired the side in order. He had his most impressive pitch sequence of the game against the first batter of the inning. After falling behind 3-0, Keisler threw a 63-mph strike looking, a 71-mph strike swinging, a 71-mph strike that was fouled off, and a 64-mph strike on the outside corner that the batter watched for strike three.

In the top of the sixth inning, Norcross scored one run on two hits to tie the score, 1-1. With two outs and go-ahead runners on first and second base, Keisler struck out the next Norcross batter for his tenth strikeout of the game and kept the score tied.



Senior Cooper Orr hit what proved to be the game-winning sacrifice fly to centerfield and scored pinch-runner John Stuetzer from third base.

In the bottom of the sixth inning, Pope immediately responded and scored one run to retake the lead, 2-1. Schmidt led off with a HBP on a 2-1 count. Stuetzer pinch ran for Schmidt. **Eli Overstreet** followed and on the first pitch squared to bunt. Stuetzer broke for second base. The pitch got past the catcher and went to the backstop. Stuetzer slid into second base with no throw as the catcher chased

down the ball. On the play, the Norcross shortstop faked the tag and put his glove on top of Stuetzer. The umpire called defensive interference and Stuetzer was awarded third base. Overstreet was unable to reach base. With one out, Orr hit a 2-1 pitch to centerfield for a sacrifice fly that scored Stuetzer with what proved to be the winning run. It was only fitting that the Hounds scored in the bottom of the inning to preserve the win for Keisler.

In the three-game tournament, Pope pitchers allowed only three runs and 12 hits. The Hounds were well represented on the all-tournament team as voted by the coaches with Kerce, Keisler, **Jack Myers**, and **Ethan Garrett**. Pope's next game is Monday afternoon at 3:00 vs. the Kell Longhorns at Pope High School's Jeff Rowland Field.