



Game 34, May 1, 2024  
**Pope Greyhounds 5, East Paulding Raiders 1**  
Weather: 79 degrees, 1 mph winds  
Played at Jeff Rowland Field at Pope High School  
Overall Record 22-13  
**GHSA Playoffs SWEET 16, Game Two, Best 2-of-3 Series**



## POPE BEATS EAST PAULDING TO FORCE GAME THREE HOUNDS LED BY JUNIOR TRIO OF GARRETT, STUETZER, AND MORNEAU



Ethan Garrett pitched a complete game to notch his seventh win of the season. He allowed just one run, five hits, and struck out five. He also started a 1-3-6 triple play.

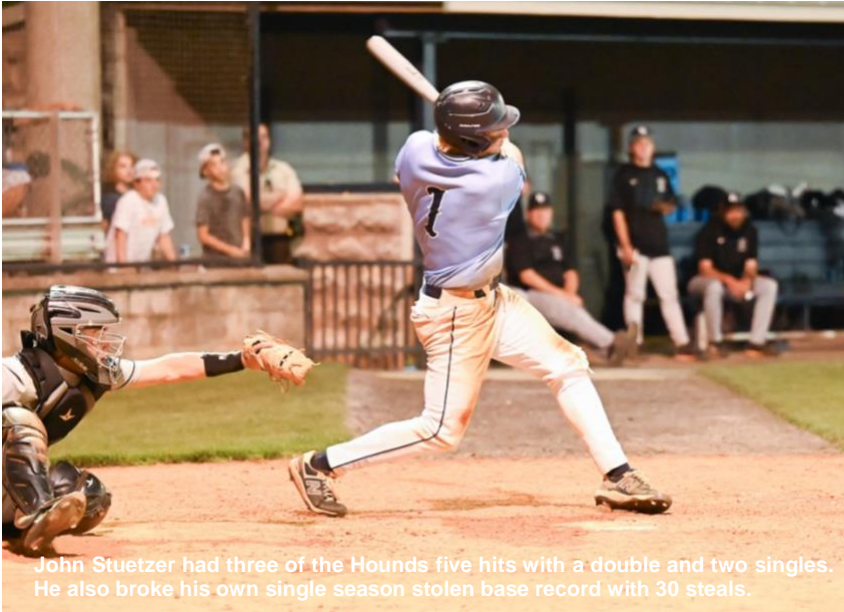


Pope faced their third elimination game in the past two playoff series Thursday night in game two of the GHSA Sweet 16 round of the state playoffs. The Hounds relied on the junior trio of **Ethan Garrett, John Stuetzer, and Tanner Morneau** to help grab an early lead and hold on for a 5-1 victory at Jeff Rowland Field.

Pope had stellar pitching and defense – and just enough hitting to prevail in the 2½ hour game. The victory evened the series at one game each and set up the deciding third game on Thursday night at 6:00 at Pope. The Hounds were the two seed out of region seven and the Raiders were the four seed out of region six. Pope's overall record is 22-13 and East Paulding is 20-14.

The game featured Pope turning a triple play, a double play, throwing out two runners at home plate, executing a double steal that scored a run, and Stuetzer breaking his own single season **stolen base record** with his 30<sup>th</sup> steal of the season. Stuetzer set the stolen base record last year with 29 steals.

Garrett (7-2) started on the mound for Pope and pitched a complete game gem to earn his seventh win of the season. Garrett gave up only one run, struck out eight, scattered five hits, and walked just three in a 103 pitch effort. Garrett struck out the side in the sixth inning.



John Stuetzer had three of the Hounds five hits with a double and two singles. He also broke his own single season stolen base record with 30 steals.

Stuetzer powered Pope's offense with three of the Hounds five hits. Stuetzer had a double, two singles, one RBI, scored one run, and stole two bases. The first steal was Stuetzer's 30<sup>th</sup> of the season and set a Pope Baseball single season record. Morneau threw out two Raider runners at home plate from his center field position in dramatic fashion.

Pope had five hits, five runs, one double, and walked six times. In addition to Stuetzer's three hits, Morneau had an RBI

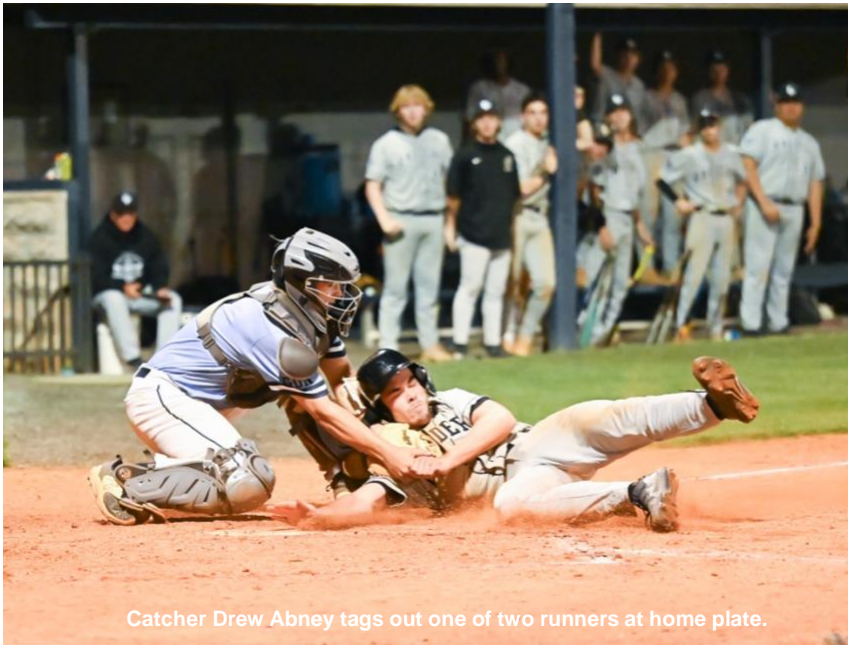
single and stole two bases. **Ben Hill** beat out an infield single, walked one time, stole one base, and scored one run. **Luke Winbush** walked one time, stole one base, scored one run, and reached base by an error. **Andrew Nelms** walked one time and scored one run. **Carter Joachim** walked one time and scored one run. **Drew Abney** walked one time.

In the top of the first inning, Pope scored two runs on two hits to take a 2-0 lead. Stuetzer led off and hit a two strike line drive single past the third baseman into left field. Two pitches later, Stuetzer stole second base for his record setting 30<sup>th</sup> steal of the season. Nelms walked on a 3-1 count. Two more pitches later, Stuetzer stole third base. The catcher's throw got past the third baseman and Stuetzer raced home with the first run of the game. Nelms moved to second base on the play. Morneau hit a line drive single to center field that scored Nelms from second. Morneau stole two subsequent bases, but was stranded at third.

In the bottom of the first inning, Pope's defense turned a **triple play** in spectacular fashion. The first two East Paulding batters reached base. The third East Paulding batter worked the count full. Garrett threw a strike. The batter hit a line drive right at Garrett and appeared to be heading into center field for a run scoring hit. The ball hit the outside part of Garrett's front land foot, bounced up before touching the ground, and fell into Garrett's glove for one out.

The runners from first and second base thought the ball was heading into center field. After Garrett's kick save catch, with both runners way off base, Garrett threw to Nelms at first base for the second out. Nelms then threw to Stuetzer covering second base for the third out and completed one of the most improbable triple plays you will ever see – and retired the side in order.

In the top of the second inning, Pope scored two runs on two hits to take a 4-0 lead. With one out, Hill hit a ground ball deep in the hole to the shortstop and beat the throw for an infield single. Hill advanced to second base on a wild pitch. Winbush walked on a full count. On ball four, the pitcher threw a wild pitch and Hill moved to third base. Winbush stole second base. On the play, the catcher threw to second base. Hill had a delayed break to home. The East Paulding second baseman cut the ball and threw home, but the pitcher cut the throw, and Hill slid in safely with a stolen base and the Hounds third run. With two outs, Stuetzer hit a two strike opposite field high pop double to right field that fell just inside the foul line. Winbush scored from second base on the hit.



Catcher Drew Abney tags out one of two runners at home plate.

In the bottom of the third inning, Abney at catcher took center stage. With one out and no runners on base. The East Paulding batter hit a high pop behind home plate towards the backstop net. Abney raced back to the wall, zeroed in on the ball, and made the catch inches from the net for the second out. After the next batter was hit by a pitch, four pitches later, he tried to steal second base. Abney caught the pitch, fired to second base, and threw to Stuetzer covering the base to nail the runner for the third out of the inning.

In the bottom of the fourth inning, the East Paulding leadoff batter hit a ground ball up the middle, just to the right of the second base bag. Stuetzer at shortstop raced to his left, somehow fielded the ball, and threw to Nelms at first base. Nelms caught a one hop bounce to secure the impressive out.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Pope's defense rose to the highest levels of grit and determination. The inning started with a double, single, and East Paulding runners on first and third base with no outs.

The next batter hit a hard line drive to medium center field. Morneau raced in a couple of steps to make the catch for one out. The runner at third tagged up and sprinted towards home. Morneau reared back and threw a laser in the air to Abney at home plate. Abney caught the ball, applied the tag, held on following the expected collision with the runner, and completed the highlight reel double play. The runner from first tagged and advanced to second base on the play.



Tanner Morneau was phenomenal in center field with two throw outs at home plate, to add to his throw out at home in the first game. It was one of the most impressive defensive efforts you will ever see.

The next batter walked on four pitches to put East Paulding runners on first and second base with two outs. Three pitches later, the Raider batter hit a ground ball up the middle to Stuetzer at shortstop that bounced off his glove, sneaked past Joachim backing up the play, and into shallow center field. The runner from second base did not slow down, rounded third base, and raced towards home. Morneau in center field collected the ball and came up firing. He threw another laser in the air to Abney that was a little high. Abney caught the ball, redirected into the

runner, applied the tag, held on, and completed another highlight defensive play for the third out to keep East Paulding off the scoreboard.

In the top of the seventh inning, Pope added one final run on one hit to take a 5-1 lead. With two outs, Joachim walked on four straight balls. Stuetzer hit a 3-2 line drive single to center field and advanced Joachim to third. Stuetzer took second base on the throw to third. Three pitches later, Joachim scored on a wild pitch in the dirt.

