

Pope wins the 2014 AAAAA State Softball Championship

The third time is the charm for the Greyhounds as Pope is able to capture the program's first state title in their 3rd consecutive attempt at the State Finals tournament in Columbus Georgia by defeating Hillgrove High School 4-0 in the State Championship game played on 11-1-14.

In Pope's two previous attempts, Pope finished 2nd and 4th. In 2012 Pope qualified for the AAAAA State Finals progressing all the way to the State Championship game before falling to Union Grove, 1-0 and 4-3 in the championship game(s) and in 2013 the Hounds qualified once again for the AAAAA state finals tournament but suffered a minor setback finishing 4th after losing to eventual state champion Ola High School in the semi-finals.



In 2014, the Hounds would not be denied as they steamrolled through the championship series outscoring opponents 17 – 2 in the 4 games played in Columbus and outhitting opponents 32 – 4 in the 4 games of the Championship series.

In the three games, Pope defeated three separate region champions in Harrison High School from region 4, Brookwood High School from Region 8, and Lassiter High School from region 5. Pope also matched up with and defeated 3 fellow Cobb County schools in their wins against Harrison, Lassiter and State Runner up Hillgrove. The State Championship for Pope is the 1st Softball State Championship for a Cobb County School in any division since Lassiter last won the title in 2007.



Kelly Barnhill ended her record breaking career by posting a 4-0 record in Columbus with 70 strikeouts in the 4 games and fittingly tossing a no-hitter in the State Championship game which was the 22nd of her career.

Barnhill also broke the single season strikeout record during the tournament surpassing Jessica Coan's 497 strikeouts during the Brookwood game. At the end of the tournament, Barnhill's strikeout total for the season would stand at 534 making her the only pitcher in Georgia history to have more than 500 strikeouts in a season.

Offensively, the Greyhounds were led by the 1-2 punch of senior Megan Metzinger and freshman Hannah Rogers who secured 13 hits between the pair. Metzinger had 6 hits in the tourney enroute to a .462 tournament average blasting 2 homeruns, 1 against Brookwood and 1 against Lassiter. Rogers secured 7 hits

in the tourney enroute to a .583 tournament average with 3 extra base hits, 2 doubles and a triple. Each player drove in 4 runs during the 4 games.

Game 1: Pope 6 – Harrison 2

Pope faced a familiar foe in game 1 of the championship series in the Harrison Hoyas as Pope had played Harrison in their scrimmage game as well as on senior night in 2014. The Pope offense pounded out 6 runs on 13 hits in the opener rallying for four 2 out runs in the 3rd inning where a 2 out single and stolen base by Lauren Palace turned into the 1st Greyhound run when Samantha Crabtree singled Palace home. Crabtree's hit was followed up by singles by Megan Metzinger and Hannah Rogers to complete the scoring.

Metzinger, Lea McFadden and Hannah Rogers all had multiple hits for the Hounds with Metzinger securing 3 hits and McFadden and Rogers securing 2 a piece.

Kelly Barnhill starred in the circle surrendering 1 hit and striking out a whopping 19 batters while walking only 1.

Game 2: Pope 3 – Brookwood 3

Pope made the most of 5 hits against Brookwood ace Amanda Ablan as the Hounds managed to pound out 2 homeruns in the contest coming off the bats of Megan Metzinger and Kelly Barnhill.

Metzinger blasted her 3rd homerun of the season in the 3rd inning to give the Hounds a 1 – 0 lead. That homerun was followed up by a team leading 9th homerun from the bat of Kelly Barnhill where her solo homerun made the score 2 – 0. The 9th homerun from Barnhill also ties the Greyhound career homerun record of 9 held by Jenna Reilly.

Hannah Rogers capped off the scoring with a 2 out RBI single that scored Metzinger as Megan had reached on an error.

Barnhill shone bright in the circle surrendering only 2 hits and striking out 15 batters.

On Barnhill's 13th strikeout, she tied the state record for strikeouts in a season with her 497th strikeout, and on her 14th strikeout, Barnhill became the states all – time single season strikeout record holder with 498 K's (and counting).

Game 3: Pope 4 – Lassiter 0

When Pope and Lassiter met in the winner's bracket final of the State Finals tournament, one thing was clear, a team from region 5-AAAAAA would be qualifying for the state championship, but the question remained of which team that would be. Lassiter held the advantage in the season series with a 2-1 record vs. Pope, but the Greyhounds would avenge their 2 consecutive losses to the Trojans to even the at 2-2 and punch their ticket to the state championship.

In the top of the 1st inning, the Hounds would strike early with Megan Metzinger blasting her 2nd homerun of the day, a two run shot to give the Greyhounds an early 2-0 lead. The Greyhounds would eventually tack on 2 more runs on 10 total hits.

Quentin Staton drove in Hannah Rogers with a squeeze bunt and then she would come around to score on a head first dive into homeplate after a throwing error sailed the ball into right field where the Trojan outfielder attempted to throw Staton out at the plate in the 5th inning.

Rogers also starred for the Hounds blasting a double and triple in the contest to continue her hot hitting for the tournament and Lauren Palace also had a multi hit game, going 2-3 in the contest.

The pitching duties were handled masterfully by Barnhill who tossed a complete game 1 hitter striking out 19 Lassiter batters to secure her 28th win of the season.

The win qualifies the Hounds for the state championship for the 2nd time in 3 years and the win also sets a new single season wins record for Pope as the old mark of 30 wins is eclipsed by the 31st victory of the season.

Game 4: Pope 4 – Hillgrove 0

Pope would face a fellow Cobb County team in the AAAAAA state softball championship guaranteeing the county a state champion and ending a 7 year softball championship drought for the county.

After giving up a leadoff walk and then quickly picking up 2 strikeouts, Barnhill faced the Hillgrove cleanup batter who hit a rocket shot back up the middle. Out of nowhere, Pope shortstop Quentin Staton makes a full extension diving play up the middle and crawls to 2nd base to force out the runner from 1st. That opportunity would be the best scoring chance that Hillgrove would have all day as Barnhill, on the strength of spectacular infield defense and superb pitching, would go on to no hit the Hawks en-route to the state title.

In the bottom of the 1st, Hannah Rogers would drive in the 1st of 4 Greyhound runs, and Pope never looked back as they would win the game going away 4-0.

The no hitter is the 2nd no hitter that Barnhill has thrown in a state championship game as she no hit Union Grove in 2012 in the championship but lost the game in ITB on a passed ball 1-0.

The 2014 result is much sweeter nad it marks the 22nd no hitter of Kelly Barnhill's illustrious career.

In the championship game, Rogers and Samantha Crabtree would each secure 2 hits a piece and Megan Metzinger would secure the 5th hit for the Hounds. Metzinger ends the tournament hitting at a .462 clip and freshman Hannah Rogers would end the tournament securing a .583 batting average over the 3 day span.

