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FAVORITE HOBBY

Pope honors memory of Matt Hobby with naming of athletic field

By Jack Martin MDJ Sports Correspondent
Sep 20, 2025



Special — Mark He

Pope football players celebrate the memory of Matt Hobby during a parade before Friday's game.



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MARIETTA — Pope marked the 20th annual Matt Hobby Classic by ensuring the late Greyhound football player would forever be memorialized.

It was announced before Friday's game with east Cobb rival Lassiter that the field within the Pope Multi-Sport Complex, where the Greyhounds' football, flag football, soccer, lacrosse and track and field teams compete, would be named Matt Hobby Field.

The Matt Hobby Classic honors the former Pope student and football player, who was diagnosed in 2003 with Ewing sarcoma, a rare and aggressive bone cancer, and died from the disease in 2006.

Before his death, just days after graduating from Pope, Hobby asked that research funding continue so "the little kids with cancer get a chance to live."



Hobby's family, Rally Foundation founder Dean Crowe and the Pope community honored that request by hosting the first 4 Quarters 4 Research game in 2005, which became the foundation's first fundraiser. This game would later become the Matt Hobby Classic.

The Rally Foundation was founded in 2005 with the goal of raising funds for childhood cancer research. With a record-breaking \$5.5 million raised in 2025, the foundation has gone far in advancing treatment for childhood cancer.

The 4 Quarters 4 Research idea has also spread to schools across the country, making Hobby's legacy known by supporting childhood cancer research nationwide. Over the past 20 years, Pope has raised \$450,000 for the Rally Foundation, which is more than any high school in the United States.

Pope held a ceremony before Friday's game to honor Hobby's legacy.

The ceremony included a speech from Hobby's father, Jud, who shared Matt's story. Then, Pope coach Sean O'Sullivan, who was a teammate of Matt Hobby's, spoke about Hobby's character and announced the field's naming.

"He was a fierce competitor on the field and a great human being off it," O'Sullivan said in his message. "His smile could light up a room."

The ceremony also included former Pope players who have worn No. 70 in Hobby's honor, including this year's recipient of No. 70, senior offensive lineman James Burns.

Burns said wearing the number is a huge honor.

“It means I can play football like Matt did,” he said.

Another former recipient of No. 70, Connor Patterson, said Hobby remains a prominent figure for the school, players and community.

“Every single person bands together to support the cause,” said Patterson, who wore the number as a senior in 2020. “They’re able to consistently raise significant amounts of money for the Rally Foundation and support the fight against childhood cancer.”

Patterson believes Hobby’s legacy has impacted Pope in a significant way.

“The Hobby family was able to turn a tragedy into a continued tradition that supports the Rally Foundation,” Patterson said. “The Matt Hobby game is always a huge deal to the players each year. Everyone is fighting for something bigger than themselves. It was an amazing experience to be present at the 20th anniversary and the renaming of the Pope field to Matt Hobby Field.”

Patterson said wearing Hobby’s number was a huge honor.

“It was an amazing opportunity to try and show his character and heart, on and off the field,” Patterson said. “It pushed me to become a better football player and a better person, to not let Matt’s family or the recipients before me down.

“It was a bit overwhelming at first. I was very thankful for my teammates and coaches who decided that I portrayed his character traits to the level of being able to represent him that season. Every time I stepped onto the field and wore (No. 70), I gave 110 percent effort. I knew that I was representing something larger than me and fought to show that my teammates and coaches had not made a mistake by giving me that honor.”

Patterson said he believes Hobby’s spirit runs through the football program.

“I think we all did our best to honor Matt and his number every time we played,” Patterson said. “Playing with integrity and grit, having our teammates’ backs and just doing my best personally to uphold his name. Of course, Matt Hobby night is special, but I think our group of players did a great job upholding the tradition and respect behind his name.”

