

# Piner Hurls 2-Hit 3-1 Win Over Vanceboro in Playoffs

## John Hill's 3-Run Blast Provides All Smyrna Runs

The Smyrna Blue Devils Monday combined the masterful two-hit pitching of southpaw Braxton Piner and a bases-loaded single off the bat of John Hill to score a 3-1 win over Vanceboro in the opening round of play for the state Class A baseball title at Smyrna.

**Piner was in control** of the game all the way as he limit-

ed Vanceboro to only two hits, both singles, and struck out seven batters. Only six men reached base against the Blue Devil ace and only one advanced as far as third base after Vanceboro had scored their unearned run in the bottom of the fifth inning.

The Blue Devils threatened early in the game as they had two men on in the first inning and loaded the bases in their half of the second inning. They failed to score on both occasions, however.

In the fourth inning, leadoff hitter Curt Nelson reached base on an error on the Vanceboro shortstop. With Braxton Piner at the plate Nelson attempted to steal second but was called out on a close play at the keystone sack.

Piner then popped up to the shortstop for the second out of the inning. Dale Lewis followed with the Blue Devils' first hit of the game, a single. The next hitter, A. C. Davis, was also safe on an error on the shortstop and James Mears drew a base on balls to load the bases and set the stage for John Hill's base clearing blow, a blue darter that dropped in right center field between the right and center fielder.

Lewis, Davis and Mears scored on the hit and Hill held up at first base. Grady Davis ended the rally by popping up to the shortstop.

In the bottom of the fifth inning Vanceboro got their only run of the game when they put together a pair of Smyrna errors and a single for the lone tally. With two men

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The Blue Devils threatened again in the sixth inning, when they had two men on with two outs. The rally ended when Dale Lewis was called out at the plate on an attempted steal from third base. Lewis had reached base when he was hit by a pitched ball.

With a 3-1 lead in his favor and just three outs from the win, Piner went out and struck out the side in the bottom half of the seventh inning.

The win advances the Blue Devils into the second round of the playoffs and drops Vanceboro from contention. Smyrna now plays Camp Lejeune, winners of the Onslow county championship.

### BOX SCORE

Smyrna	ab	r	h	e
Davis, W., cf	4	0	1	0
Jones, 2b	3	0	0	0
Nelson, c	2	0	0	0
Piner, p	4	0	0	0
Lewis, ss	4	1	1	1
Davis, A. C., 3b	3	1	0	2
Mears, lf	1	1	0	0
Hill, 1b	3	0	1	0
Davis, G., rf	3	0	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Vanceboro	ab	r	h	e
McLamb, 2b	3	0	0	0
Whitford, p	3	0	0	0
Gaskins, 1b	3	0	0	0
Heath, ss	2	0	1	2
Nobles, c	3	0	0	0
Kutchins, rf	3	0	0	0
Willis, 3b	3	1	0	2
Sawyer, lf	3	0	1	0
Pollard, cf	2	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>