Ethan Greene earned his way into Pioneer lore Saturday night.

He'll be the guy that may have saved the Watauga High baseball team's disappointng 2011 season. Afterall, he was the guy the PIoneers looked to for help in their semifinal match-up with Alexander Central in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference tournament in Granite Falls. Greene beat the Cougars, and the Pioneers, thanks to his finishing touch on Saturday, won their first NW3A/4A tournament championship in 11 years. For his efforts, Greene was also named the tournament's Most Valuable Player.

"It hasn't sunk in just yet," Greene said, with a shy grin on his face after Saturday's championship game. "But I couldn't do this without the help of my teammates. They make a lot of plays behind me."

And the Pioneers, a pre-season favorite who came into tournament play practically a forgotten team, are up and swinging again, thanks to Greene. The Pioneers beat the top two seeds in the field----South Caldwell and the Cougars---- in claiming their first tournament championship since the 2000 season.

Greene turned the tide on Friday night by handcuffing, arguably, one of the hottest-hitting teams in the league. The Cougars, who pounded out 17 hits in the last meeting (April 15) against WHS, were limited to just four hits..

With his team trailing 3-0 in the first inning, Greene, despite an infield error, put out the fire in a hurry. From there, he was in complete control.

"What more can I say about that guy," WHS coach Pete Hardee said, after the Alexander Central game. "The guy starts in the outfield, and in just a matter of moments, he's on the mound with his team trailing big, That's real tough on your concentration, moving around like that. But the guy comes in and shuts them down. That's a great effort."

And David Martin, who aided the cause with a grand slam against the Cougars, was impressed with Greene's velocity.

"(Ethan) did a great job moving the ball around," Martin said. "He really kept them off balance. They're a good hitting team, and Greenie shut them down."

In his two appearances at the tournament, Greene threw 7 1/3 scorless innings. He gave up four hits, walked one and struck out seven. His biggest strikeout came against Josh Murphy of South Caldwell in the championship game.

With WHS leading 8-7 in the bottom of the eighth, the Spartans were threatening. With the tying run at third and two outs, Greene came on and replaced (winning pitcher) Tyler Jones. Following an intentional walk to Blake Johnson (who was hitting .727 against the PIoneers) that put runners on at first and third, he proceeded to strike out Murphy to end the game.

That effort also handed WHS the final playoff spot in the NW3A/4A. And the win guarantees WHS a home game in the opening-round of the state playoffs, which begin Friday night (pairings are due out Tuesday). It was also a much-needed effort, considering Greene had lost

his last two starts.
"Ethan has gone through the ups-and-downs of pitching this season," Hardee said. "But he's always around the plate. I wish he would a little wild some times, because his throws so many strikes. He'll learn. He's only going to get better."
Greene has given up 62 hits in the 47 1/3 innings this season. But he's also has 45 strikeouts, and he's onlygiven up seven walks. And he's lowered his earned-run -average to 3.29.
"I just worked at it this summer," Greene said. "I was really concentrating on pitching, throwing to spots, just kept at it all the time. I'm just thankful I can help us win, I'm also thankful to my teammates and coach Hardee for believing in me."
And I'm sure the feelings are mutual.