

Norton Lady Jays' season wrap-up

By DICK BOYD

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Coach Kevin Jilka lost all starters off last season's Norton Community High School girls basketball team but used a nucleus of five returning letter winners to build an outstanding team which provided many exciting moments for fans in the 2010-11 season.

The Lady Jays' games included a 50-49 win over Osborne on a shot at the buzzer, handing No. 1 seeded Smith Center their first loss of the season by a 39-32 score in the semi-finals of the Mid-Continent League Tournament where Norton finished runner-up, beating Goodland after an earlier loss in the Topside Tip-Off Tournament and taking No. 2 state ranked Hill City down to the wire before losing a close game.

Returning letter winners for Norton were 5'5" senior guard Kaylen Rossi, 5'9" senior guard Dustyna Sprigg, 5'10" junior post Erin Terrell, 5'8" junior post Caren Thomson and 5'8" sophomore forward Kamilla Jones.

A transfer who became a mainstay was 5'4" sophomore point guard Tawni Griffey.

Terrell was second high in rebounds for Norton last season with 80 total and averaged six points per game for fourth best on the team.

The Lady Jays opened the season in the 22nd annual Topside Tip-Off Tournament in Goodland on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Dec. 9-10-11.

In their opening contest, Norton played a close game with McCook which could have gone either way. The Lady Jays missed a last second shot and lost 33-30. Sprigg led Norton in scoring with 12 points and Griffey added 8.

In the consolation bracket, they defeated Sharon Springs 53-44. Norton led all the way and held off a Sharon Springs fourth quarter rally. Griffey tallied 16 points and Terrell hit 14.

On Saturday, Norton played Goodland in the fifth place game. Norton trailed 17-14 at halftime but Goodland extended their lead in the third quarter and held off a furious fourth quarter rally by Norton to win 39-31. Sprigg hit 12 points for Norton and Griffey added 10.

Dustyna Sprigg was named to the All-Tournament Team.

On Thursday, Dec. 16, Norton opened Mid-Continent League play with an impressive 48-18 victory over Stockton on the Lady Tigers' home court. The aggressive Norton defense had 27 steals in the game. Terrell led Norton with 18 points; Griffey added 12.

The Lady Jays didn't have much rest before hosting longtime rival Phillipsburg on Friday, Dec. 17 and a low-scoring third quarter led to a 42-37 league loss. Griffey led Norton in scoring with 11 points; Thomson added 8.

Norton began the new year on Tuesday, Jan. 4 with a big 59-35 win over a visiting Oberlin quintet. Norton dominated Oberlin in every category - shooting, rebounds, steals and assists. Terrell hit a career high 28 points as she swished 73 percent of her field goal tries! Griffey added 12 points.

On Friday, Jan. 7, the Lady Jays traveled to Osborne for more Mid-Continent League play and returned with an exciting 50-49 victory. Norton won on a three-point basket by Griffey at the buzzer! Griffey hit a career high 26 points in the game.

Norton hosted Plainville in yet another Mid-Continent League contest on Tuesday, Jan. 11. The Lady Jays finally slowed down the Lady Cardinals' 5'11" senior post player Dani Winters in the fourth quarter and won 46-40. Winters was unstoppable for three quarters when she scored 27 points but she hit just two baskets in the crucial fourth quarter. Terrell ended with 11 points, Rossi and Griffey tallied 9 each. Norton's three-point shooting made a lot of difference in the outcome of the game; the Lady Jays hit 7 of 14 shots from beyond the arc.

On Friday, Jan. 14, Norton traveled to WaKeeney for more Mid-Continent League action. The Lady Jays led all the way in a 52-37 victory. Terrell hit 16 points and Griffey added 14.

Mid-Continent League Tour-

namment play began on Tuesday, Jan. 18 when No. 4 seeded Norton defeated No. 5 seeded Ellis 60-46 in the first round game in Norton. Again, the Lady Jays led the entire game and Terrell threw in 19 points and Griffey connected for 14.

On Friday, Jan. 21, Norton played No. 1 seed, No. 2 state ranked and unbeaten Smith Center in the tournament semi-finals at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays. The Lady Jays were equal to the occasion and prevailed 39-32 to hand the Lady Redmen their first loss of the season! Norton defense, especially in the second half, was the key to the win. Griffey scored 19 points and Sprigg hit 11.

The upset over Smith Center propelled Norton into the tournament championship game on Saturday night in Hays against No. 2 seed and No. 1 state ranked (Class 2A) Hill City. The Lady Blue Jays were not capable of a second upset in 24 hours and the Lady Ringnecks won 55-44. Treys and free throws made the difference along with rebounding. Freshman guard Katelyn Engelbert led Norton in scoring with 13 points, which included three baskets from beyond the arc! Sprigg hit 12 points and Griffey added 10.

On Tuesday, Jan. 25, Goodland, who had beaten Norton 39-31 in the Topside Tip-Off Tournament at the start of the season, arrived for a return contest in the NCHS Stull Gym and found a different Lady Jay team waiting for them. The final score was 39-29, almost the same as before, but this time the Lady Jays were on top! Norton never trailed in the game. Griffey scored 12 points each and Sprigg hit 11.

Norton was scheduled to play at Smith Center on Tuesday, February 1 but inclement weather postponed the contest to Thursday. The Lady Redmen could not forget their first loss of the season in the league tournament to Norton and the now No. 8 state ranked Smith Center five avenged the earlier defeat with a 60-44 victory. Griffey and Terrell led Norton scoring with 14 points each.

On Friday, Feb. 4, Norton played No. 2 state ranked Hill City again and this time in the NCHS Stull Gym. The results were the same but the Lady Jays took the Lady Ringnecks down to the wire before losing 47-42. Rossi buried a basket from beyond the arc with 1:58 left in the game which cut the Lady Ringnecks' lead down to 43-42 but Hill City hit four free throws to extend the final margin of victory to five points. Norton actually hit one more field goal than Hill City in the game but the Lady Ringnecks swished four more free throws than Norton. Terrell scored 19 points and Griffey added 14.

Norton was scheduled to play Oberlin in Oberlin on Tuesday, Feb. 8 but the contest was canceled due to inclement weather.

On Friday, Feb. 11, Norton traveled to Atwood to play the Lady Buffaloes. Norton was unable to stop 6'2" junior post Hillary Chvatal, who dominated around the basket and scored 32 points. The Lady Jays lost 46-38. Griffey led Norton in scoring with a career high 27 points. The loss dropped Norton to 9-7 for the season.

The Lady Jays had played some excellent, state ranked teams already and held their own with them but they were dominated on Tuesday, Feb. 15 by the No. 2 state ranked (Class 1A, Division I) Hoxie Lady Indians on their home court. Norton was defeated 61-29. Sprigg was scoring leader for Norton with 12 points. Hoxie continued on to place runner-up in the state tournament after a loss to unbeaten Olpe.

Friday, Feb. 18 was "Senior Night" for Norton in the NCHS Stull Gym. The Lady Jays hosted Ellis and played on even terms with the Lady Railroaders until Ellis pulled away with a series of field goals and free throws to win 44-33. Norton had a cold night from the field, hitting just 20 percent of their attempts. Sprigg led Norton with 10 points.

Prior to the game, Norton seniors Dustyna Sprigg and Kaylen Rossi and their parents were honored along with senior cheerleader Kelsie Griffith and senior dance team members Rachel

Shepard and Rebekah Streck and their parents.

On Tuesday, Norton completed the regular season with a trip to Colby to take on the No. 4 state ranked (Class 4A) Lady Eagles. Norton played well but still lost 46-30 to the outstanding Colby quintet. The Lady Eagles later qualified for the state tournament, lost their first game and ended the season 22-3. In the loss to Colby, Griffey scored 13 points and Sprigg hit 9 to end the regular season 9-10.

Norton was seeded No. 7 in the Class 3A Sub-State Tournament and traveled to No. 2 seed and No. 3 state ranked Riley County for the first round game on Monday, Feb. 28. The Lady Jays hit only 17 percent of their field goal tries in a 52-14 loss which ended their season. Riley County won the tournament and continued on to the state tournament where they lost in the opening round to eventual state champion Wichita Collegiate.

Coach Jilka thanked his players, the Norton fans, his assistant coaches George Rossi and Joan Bolt and student manager Bryan Henry for all they did for the team this season.

Season statistics

As a team, Norton averaged 40.9 points per game compared to an average of 42.8 points for opponents.

The Lady Jays hit 35.8 percent of their field goal attempts while opponents averaged 40.4 percent. From the free throw line, Norton hit 47 percent compared to 59.2 percent by opponents.

Norton had 197 steals on defense for an average of 9.9 thefts per contest. The Lady Jays' aggressive defense caused 398 turnovers by the opposition for an

average of 19.9 per game.

On offense, Norton had 164 assists for an 8.2 average per game. The Lady Jays had 465 total rebounds for an average of 23.3 per contest.

Tawni Griffey was leading scorer with an average of 12.6 points per game. She led in three-point shooting with 32.7 percent and second in two-point field goal shooting at 39.1 percent. She led Norton in free throw shooting with 69 percent. Tawni was also assists leader with 44, second in steals with 37 and fourth in rebounds with 45.

Erin Terrell was second leading scorer with an average of 11.6 points per contest. She led in field goal shooting percentage by hitting 49.7 percent of her shots. Erin was also rebounds leader with 127 total caroms for an average of 7.9 per game and was steals leader with 54 total thefts.

Dustyna Sprigg was third high scorer with an average of 7.2 points per game and third highest in two-point field goal percentage with 38.8 percent successful shots. Dustyna was also second best in free throw shooting, hitting 57.6 percent. She was also second high in rebounding with 98 total for an average of 4.9 caroms per contest, third high in steals with 36 total and third in assists with 28.

Caren Thomson was third high in two-point field goal percentage, connecting on 37.9 percent of her shots. She was also fourth leading scorer with an average of 4.3 points per game and third leading rebounder with 91 total for an average of 4.6 caroms per contest.

Kaylen Rossi was second in offensive assists with 34 total.



Dustyna Sprigg, Norton's 5'9" senior guard, shot over Ellis defenders in the paint during the Lady Jays' impressive 60-46 win over the Lady Railroaders during the first round of the Mid-Continent League Tournament on Tuesday, Jan. 18 in the NCHS Stull Gym. Norton upset state ranked Smith Center in the semi-finals in Hays and finished runner-up after a loss to state ranked Hill City in the championship game in Hays. - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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