

Five returning lettermen on wrestling team

By DICK BOYD

Beginning his 16th season as head wrestling coach at Norton Community High School, Bill Johnson has welcomed 30 wrestlers to the 2006-07 squad, which includes five returning lettermen from last year's Class 3-2-1A state championship team.

For the first time in Norton's long history of wrestling excellence, the Blue Jays have won the state championship three years in a row. Four of the five lettermen are seniors so they have had the privilege of being on a state championship Blue Jay team throughout their high school career.

Norton graduated five seniors off last year's state championship team. "Those five seniors had won 15 state medals and seven state individual titles," said coach Johnson. "So, to say this year will be a rebuilding year is an understatement!"

The Blue Jays return four state medalists. Senior Nathan Broeckelman was the state champion at 125 pounds last season and will wrestle at 130 pounds this year.

Sophomore Zach Bainter was state runner-up last year at 112 pounds and will wrestle at 125 pounds this season. Senior Kent Mann placed third in the state tournament last season at 130 pounds and will move up to 135 pounds

this season. Senior Blake VanEaton placed third at state last year at 140 pounds but will wrestle at 152 pounds this season.

Broeckelman had a 40-2 record last season, Bainter finished 24-3, Mann was 29-8 and VanEaton compiled a 35-9 record.

The other returning letterman is senior Shane Stanley, who wrestled at 215 pounds last season and had an 18-16 mark.

Three of the returning lettermen are close to breaking the 100 win mark. Broeckelman has 98 wins in three years, Mann has 80 victories in three seasons and VanEaton has 71 wins in two full seasons and only nine matches his freshman year due to an injury.

Broeckelman is a three-time state placer. In addition to winning the championship last season, he placed third in the state his sophomore year at 119 pounds and second his freshman season. Mann and VanEaton are two-time state placers. Mann was fifth his freshman year at 103 pounds and VanEaton was sixth at 145 pounds when he was a sophomore.

The other wrestlers on this year's squad are: Austin Brown, 140 pounds; Jared Bebb, 160; Jordan Durham, 171, seniors; Michael Ward, 135; Bryce Engelbert, 135; Todd Bolt, 135; Aaron Husted, 140; Jeff

Soderlund, 145; Travis Ray, 152, injured; Alex Thomas, 275, juniors; Phillip Becker, 112; Breyer Simmons, 130; Jordan Bebb, 145; Logan Kelly, 145; Brad Nuzum, 152, injured; Matt Stanley, 160; Brock Lauer, 160; Coady McMullen, 189, sophomores; Connor Pfannenstiel, 103; Andrew Soderlund, 103; Kaenon Keiswetter, 112; Zane Perez, 119; Tyler Cook, 152; Casey Robison, 152; Robert Derauf, 189, freshmen.

Assisting coach Johnson with his coaching duties this season will be Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Chance McKinney.

Student managers are Jessica Sprigg, Morgan Kauten and Star Greene. Sprigg and Kauten are seniors and Greene is a junior.

Last year's Norton wrestling team was so dominant that they had enough points at the end of the first day of state tournament competition to win the championship. The Blue Jays scored 186.5 points to easily outdistance second place Smith Center, who scored 110. Norton compiled a 15-3 overall dual record, which included a perfect 8-0 dual record and 11th consecutive dual championship of the Mid-Continent League. In addition, they won their third straight championship of the Hoxie Invitational, placed third in the Goodland Holiday Classic dual

tournament, third in the Clay Center Invitational, won their third straight championship of the J.R. Durham Invitational in Norton, won the Mid-Continent League Tournament championship for the seventh year in a row, won the Panther Classic in Phillipsburg for the third year in a row and won the Regional Tournament for the second year in a row.

Norton's biggest victory prior to the state championship was their second straight championship of the prestigious Newton Tournament of Champions. Until Norton won the title the year before, no team from a school smaller than Class 5A had won the championship in the long history of the tournament.

Seniors Clay Madden, 119; Luke Pfannenstiel, 152 and Lance Roe, 160, were state champions. Senior Jeremy Harding, 145, was second and senior Jon Harding, 135, was fifth in the state last year. Madden became the first Norton wrestler to win four state championships!

"Our strengths this season will be in our returning state medalists in the middle to lower weights," said coach Johnson. "However, we look very thin in the upper weights.

"Obviously, we were hit hard by graduation and look for many new faces in the varsity line-up. Fresh-

NORTON HIGH WRESTLING SCHEDULE	
Tuesday, Nov. 28	- Blue & Yellow Classic, Norton Junior High Gym, 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 2	- Hoxie Invitational at Hoxie, 9 a.m.
Saturday, Dec. 2	- Junior varsity in Alma Tournament, 10 a.m.
Friday, Dec. 8	- Southern Valley Invitational in Oxford, 3:30 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 9	- Clay Center Invitational at Clay Center, 9 a.m.
Friday, Dec. 15	- Phillipsburg/Stockton dual in Phillipsburg, 6 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 16	- V and JV Holiday Classic in Goodland, 9 a.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6	- J.R. Durham Invitational in Norton, 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11	- Trego/Smith Center dual in Norton, 6 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12	- Junior varsity in Elm Creek Invitational in Elm Creek, Neb., 2:30 p.m.
Fri. & Sat., Jan. 12-13	- Newton Tournament of Champions in Newton, 11 a.m. and 9 a.m.
Saturday, Jan. 27	- Mid-Continent League Tournament in Hill City, 10 a.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 30	- Hays/Kearney dual in Norton (Senior Night), 5 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 2	- Plainville/Ellis dual in Plainville, 5 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 3	- V and JV Panther Classic in Phillipsburg, 9 a.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8	- Hill City/Osborne dual in Hill City, 5 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 10	- Colby Junior Varsity Tournament in Colby, 9 a.m.
Fri. & Sat., Feb. 16-17	- Regional Tournament TBA
Fri. & Sat., Feb. 23-24	- State Tournament in Hays

men Connor Pfannenstiel, Kaenon Keiswetter and Zane Perez look to crack the varsity line-up at 103, 112 and 119 pounds, respectively. Juniors Todd Bolt, Aaron Husted and Jeff Soderlund will battle it out for two varsity spots at 140 and 145 pounds. All three of these juniors have had success at the junior varsity level while waiting their turn to break into the varsity line-up.

Junior heavyweight Alex Thomas joins our squad this season. He received experience in USA Wrestling and AAU Wrestling while being home-schooled."

Coach Johnson's career wrestling coaching record is 143-55 and his Norton record is 137-37, a 79 percent winning record.

A graduate of Flinthills High School, Rosalia, Johnson wrestled for Fort Hays State University. In addition to winning the national championship, he was national runner-up twice and placed fourth once.

He was chosen the "Outstanding Senior Male Athlete" at Fort Hays State in 1989. He also placed 10th in the wrestling Olympic trials at 114.5 pounds in 1988.

Coach Johnson was inducted in the fall of 1999 into the Tiger Sports Hall of Fame at Fort Hays State University. He has also been inducted into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame.

In 2005, he was named the Head Coach of the Year in Kansas by the National High School Wrestling Coaches Association.

He was also one of 18 coaches and boosters of high school wrestling named "2005 Man-of-the-Year" by *Wrestling USA Magazine*.

Norton wrestlers open at Hoxie tournament

By DICK BOYD

The Norton Community High School wrestling team will open the season Saturday in the annual Hoxie Invitational Wrestling

Tournament. This early season tournament always proves to be one of the toughest invitationals in Northwest Kansas.

Competing, in addition to teams from Norton and Hoxie, will be teams from Holcomb, Lakin, Oakley, Oberlin, Plainville and Trego Community.

The tournament will begin at 9 a.m. and will be in the Hoxie High School gymnasium.

Trophies will be awarded to the top two teams and medals to the first-fourth place wrestlers in each weight class.

Admission is \$6 for adults and \$5 for students (K-12) for all day or \$4 for adults and \$3 for students (K-12) for the consolation and championship matches. The tournament will run continuously with minimum breaks between sessions, probably 15-20 minutes.

Junior varsity in Alma
The Norton junior varsity wres-

tlers will compete in a tournament on Saturday in Alma, Neb.

Other teams competing will be varsity teams from Alma, Loomis, Overton, Pleasanton, Kearney Catholic, Eustis-Farnam, Wilcox-Hildreth and Wauneta-Palisade.

Competition will begin at 10 a.m. with the second session set for noon and the third for 2:30 p.m.

Admission will be \$6, all day; \$4, final session, adults; \$4, all day, \$3, final session, students.

Plaques will be awarded to the top two teams. Four individual medals will be awarded in each class.

Blue and Yellow Classic on tap tonight

All Norton wrestling fans are invited to the annual Blue and Yellow Classic at 6:30 p.m. this evening in the Norton Junior High gymnasium.

Norton high school wrestlers will compete in some of the ranking matches which will determine

varsity competitors in Saturday's season opening Hoxie Invitational Tournament.

"The public is invited to attend and watch all the new faces that will dot the Blue Jay line-up this season," said coach Bill Johnson. "Many of you know that we gradu-

ated many great wrestlers. We have many holes to fill and this will be the first opportunity to see the team in action."

There is no admission charge. Ranking matches will continue throughout the week during regular afternoon practice sessions.

Little Kids Wrestling sets meeting with all parents

Parents of all youths intending to compete in Norton Little Kids Wrestling this season are asked to attend a meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 4 in the wrestling room.

After the meeting, a beginners practice will be held. Beginners will practice each Monday and Thursday from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. in the wrestling room. Intermedi-

ate and advanced wrestlers will wrestle Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 8 in the wrestling room, beginning on Tuesday, Dec. 5.

For more information, contact Denny or Lari Ann Nickell at 874-4415 in the evening or at 877-3433 during the day.

The first tournament of the season will be on Dec. 16 in Beloit.

'Jay Boosters to meet Wednesday

The Norton Blue Jay Booster Club will meet at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the high school cafeteria.

Wrestling coach Bill Johnson, girls basketball coach Kevin Jilka and boys basketball coach Doug Reusink will preview the upcoming seasons.

The community is invited to attend.

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