

# Blue Jay Ladies win 3A Substate crown

By DICK BOYD

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Defense was the name of the game Saturday evening in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium when coach Kevin Jilka's No.3 seeded Norton Community High School girls basketball team defeated a highly touted No.1 seed Sacred Heart of Salina quintet 40-35 to win the championship and earn a berth in the Class 3A State Basketball Tournament this week in Hutchinson.

Sacred Heart had won their last four substate tournaments and hoped to make it a fifth. Receiving a first round bye this year, they had won 13 consecutive substate games but "13" was unlucky for them on Saturday evening!

In limiting Sacred Heart to 35 points, the aggressive Lady Jay defense caused the Lady Knights to turn the ball over a whopping 23 times! Norton committed only 11 fouls in the game, allowing Sacred Heart to shoot only four free throws. The Lady Jays' defense also allowed only 30 shots by the Lady Knights while Norton put up 50.

Rebounding was even at 20 apiece but the key was that the Norton defense gave up just two offensive rebounds to Sacred Heart.

"With the caliber of the girls they have, we had to play better defense and we did," said coach Jilka. "KaraJo Jones did a great job of guarding Katie Pratt."

Pratt is a 6-foot-1-inch senior who is Sacred Heart's leading scorer.

"We played 32 minutes of great defense. Our rebounding was great, too, only allowing them two offensive rebounds.

"Our student body and crowd were tremendous. We rode the momentum and responded every time Sacred Heart came close.

"This was a huge win over a great program. It's an unbelievable feeling.

"In the middle of the year, if you had told me we'd be here, I'd have said probably not. We weren't playing with much confidence at that time.

"It just shows that anything can happen in athletics."

With Saturday night's victory, the Norton girls extended their season record to 16-7 and Sacred

Heart ended with a 16-6 record.

Three of Norton's area opponents also earned spots in this week's state basketball tournaments. Defending Class 4A girls state champion Colby returns with a 36-35 win over Ulysses in the Russell substate, the Osborne girls, who were third in the state in Class 2A last year, return following a 37-17 win over Washington County in the Brookville substate and the Ellis girls qualified for the Class 2A state tournament with a 51-40 victory over Oakley in the Oberlin substate.

Norton trailed 8-5 after the first quarter but quickly took the lead for good in the second period.

Lady Jay junior guard Laura Lee Baird hit a three-point shot, the first of four by her for the night, and junior post Hayli Bozarth hit a two-point shot for Norton's only first quarter points. Pratt hit her only three-point basket of the night for Sacred Heart in the first stanza.

Baird buried another shot from beyond the arc to start the second quarter and Bozarth scored inside with 6:37 left to put Norton ahead 10-8. Junior post KaraJo Jones stole the ball and drove for two more points. Bozarth scored the next time down the court and was fouled. Her free throw extended the Lady Jay lead to 15-8 with 5:48 left.

Pratt hit two free throws for Sacred Heart's first points of the second quarter with 4:21 left and Alicia Wilkins hit the Lady Knights' first field goal of the period to cut the Norton lead to 15-12.

To the delight of the partisan Norton crowd, Baird stole the ball and drove the length of the court to score. Kaitlyn Schmidtberger hit her only basket of the first half for Sacred Heart with 1:30 left but Bozarth got loose for two more points inside at the 1:05 mark and Norton held a 19-14 half-time advantage.

Abby Wittman hit her first basket of the game for the Lady Knights to open the third quarter but Baird answered with a jumper in the lane. Wittman stole the ball and drove for two points, making it 21-18.

Norton failed to score next time and Sacred Heart took the ball down court. This is where Lady

Jay junior KaraJo Jones made a couple of plays that were real momentum boosters for Norton. Guarding the 6'1" Pratt was the 5'9" junior post's responsibility and she did an outstanding job all night long but at this point she made a real statement. The ball went in to Pratt and she went up for a shot but KaraJo blocked it, bringing a deafening roar from the Norton fans. Then, she got the ball at the other end of the court and swished a running jump shot!

Sacred Heart turned the ball over again and Baird buried another three-point shot to put the Lady Jays ahead 26-18 with 4:25 left. Sacred Heart cut the Norton lead to four points with two more baskets but Baird answered with a base line shot at the 2:42 mark.

To their credit, Sacred Heart wouldn't go away and Tayler Simoneau hit a basket from beyond the arc to make it a 28-25 game. Bozarth did some fancy stepping and shooting at the other end as she hit a reverse layin!

Pratt hit her first basket of the half with a minute left but Baird responded by swishing her fourth three-point basket of the night with time running out to put Norton on top 33-27 with one quarter remaining.

Pratt hit two baskets in a row to start the final stanza, making it 33-31. Bozarth hit the next 5 points on a basket and free throw and another basket to extend the Norton advantage to 38-31. Pratt hit her last basket of the game with 1:50 left on the clock, making it 38-33.

Baird put an exclamation point on the victory when she was fouled with 1:02 remaining in the game and hit nothing but net on two perfect free throws!

Wittman hit a field goal with one second remaining to make the final 40-35 and set off a wild celebration by Norton players, coaches, administrators and fans!

Baird scored 20 points in the game. She hit 4 of 13 trey tries for 31 percent, 3 of 7 from two-point land for 43 percent and 7 of 20 overall from the field for 35 percent. She went to the free throw line only once in the game, when she made the two perfect shots at the end.

Bozarth finished with 16 points on 7 of 11 from the field for an excellent 64 percent accuracy and 2 of 3 from the charity stripe for an equally excellent 67 percent.



"Happy days were here again" on Saturday night in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium after the No. 3 seed Norton Blue Jay basketball ladies upset favored No. 1 seed Sacred Heart of Salina 40-35 to win the Class 3A Substate Tournament championship and advance to the state tourney in Hutchinson this week. There was a whole lot of hugging going on until the announcer cleared the floor for the awards presentation.

-Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Pratt was leading scorer for Sacred Heart with 13 points.

As a team, Norton hit 4 of 22 three-point tries for 18 percent, 12 of 28 two-point attempts for 43 percent and 16 of 50 overall for 32 percent.

The Lady Knights connected on 2 of 8 from beyond the arc for 25 percent, 13 of 22 two-point tries for 59 percent and 15 of 30 overall for 50 percent.

From the free throw line, the Lady Jays hit 4 of 8 for 50 percent and Sacred Heart swished 3 of 4 for 75 percent.

Norton had 9 offensive and 11 defensive rebounds for 20 total and Sacred Heart grabbed 2 offensive and 18 defensive boards for 20 total.

Bozarth led Norton in rebounding with 6, followed by Jones, 4; Taylor Rossi, 3; Katharine Roy, Baird, Megan Kats, 2 each; Courtney Cox, 1.

The Lady Jays had 13 steals compared to just 10 for the Lady Knights. Rossi, Baird and Jones each had 3 thefts, followed by Bozarth, 2; Roy, Ashlie Stewart, 1 each. Norton had just 14 turnovers and Sacred Heart turned the ball over 23 times.

The Lady Jays had 7 assists and the Lady Knights had 8. Rossi led in assists with 5, followed by Cox, Jones, 1 each.

**BOX SCORE**

**Norton girls 40**  
Taylor Rossi 0 0 0-1 0; Laura Lee Baird 3 4 2-2 20; KaraJo Jones 2 0 0-1 4; Hayli Bozarth 7 0 2-3 16; Total 12 4 4-8 40.

**Sacred Heart girls 35**

Taylor Simoneau 1 1 0-0 5; Abby Wittman 3 0 0-1 6; Katelyn Schmidtberger 2 0 0-0 4; Katie Pratt 4 1 2-2 13; Moe Mikinski 2 0 1-1 5; Alicia Wilkins 1 0 0-0 2; Total 13 2 3-4 35.



Senior Megan Kats held up the championship plaque and cheered for her Lady Blue Jay teammates following their win Saturday night in Stull Gym. Also pictured were junior Taylor Rossi and sophomore Amanda Ray (partially hidden).

-Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

## Norton ladies dispose of TMP-Marian 61-47

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After defeating No.6 seeded Belleville 63-35 in the Class 3A Substate Basketball Tournament opener on Tuesday, the No.3 Lady Jays met No.2 Thomas More Prep-Marian of Hays in the semi-finals on Friday in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium and put together a solid 61-47 victory to earn a place in Saturday's championship finals.

Thomas More Prep ended the season with a 14-7 record and Belleville's season ended with a 10-11 record. Norton advanced with a 14-7 mark.

In the other semi-final game on Friday, No.1 seed Sacred Heart of Salina (16-5) outscored No.4 Beloit (14-8) 59-53 to reach the championship finals versus Norton.

The Lady Jays trailed only once in the game. The Lady Monarchs' Kaylee Hoffman hit a three-point basket with 6:08 left in the first quarter but Norton junior post Hayli Bozarth responded with two straight baskets to make it 4-3 and Norton led the rest of the way.

The Lady Jays were on top 15-9 after the first quarter which saw Bozarth hit 4 of 4 free throws in addition to her two baskets. Junior guard Laura Lee Baird hit a basket and 3 of 4 from the charity stripe and junior guard Taylor Rossi hit Norton's other basket in the period.

A 17-14 second quarter in Norton's favor made it 32-23 at half-time. Bozarth hit three more baskets and a free toss in the period and Baird added a basket and two charities. Three other girls also scored for Norton in the second quarter. Junior post KaraJo Jones, senior guard Courtney Cox and junior guard Katharine Roy each hit a basket.

Both teams scored 15 points in the third quarter but Thomas More Prep hit just two field goals

while parading to the line to swish 10 of 11 free throws. Norton shot no charities in the period but Rossi connected on a two-point and three-point basket, Baird and Bozarth each hit two more baskets and sophomore post Amanda Ray connected on one basket.

The Lady Jays pulled away in the fourth quarter, outscoring the Lady Monarchs 14-9 to earn the 14 point victory and extend their season to 15-7.

Baird hit two more baskets, Jones connected on two more shots, Bozarth hit a basket and free throw, Ray hit another basket and Rossi hit a charity for Norton's fourth quarter scoring.

Thomas More Prep hit just three baskets in the final stanza.

"It was a great game," said Norton head girls basketball coach Kevin Jilka. "We played well.

"We held our own on the boards and played aggressive defense. Changing our defense in the fourth quarter helped.

"We got great play off the bench. Our reserves came in and played well.

"Our student body and fan support was awesome. It's nice to be back in the finals."

Bozarth led Norton in scoring with 22 points. She hit 8 of 18 two-point baskets for 44 percent accuracy and 6 of 9 from the charity stripe for 67 percent.

Baird was second high scorer for the Lady Jays. She hit 6 of 12 two-point tries for 50 percent but missed all 8 shots from beyond the arc to finish 6 of 20 for 30 percent. She was 5 of 6 from the charity stripe for 83 percent and finished with 17 points.

Maddy Mall led Thomas More Prep with 14 points, followed by Hoffman with 12.

As a team, Norton connected on 1 of 12 from beyond the arc for 8 percent, 23 of 50 two-point attempts for 46 percent and 24 of

62 overall for 39 percent.

The Lady Monarchs swished 5 of 21 from beyond the arc for 23 percent, 8 of 24 two-point tries for 33 percent and 13 of 45 overall for 29 percent.

From the free throw line, the Lady Jays connected on 12 of 18 for 67 percent and the Lady Monarchs swished 16 of 21 for 76 percent. Norton won the rebounding battle 32-25. The Lady Jays had 15 offensive and 17 defensive caroms compared to 9 offensive and 16 defensive for Thomas More Prep.

KaraJo Jones led Norton in rebounding with 8, followed by Bozarth, 7; Rossi, 5; Baird, 4; Roy, Megan Kats, 3 each; Cox, 2.

Norton had 10 steals compared to 4 for Thomas More Prep. Baird led with 4 thefts, followed by Rossi, 2; Cox, Kats, Jones, Bozarth, 1 each.

Both teams were credited with 11 offensive assists. Baird led Norton with 4, followed by Rossi,

**Battle of the Back Courts**

*Colby*

**3 on 3**

Grades: 3-8

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Kats, Jones, 2 each; Cox, 1.

The Lady Jays had 9 turnovers and the Lady Monarchs turned the ball over 13 times.

**BOX SCORE**

**Norton girls 61**  
Katharine Roy 10 0-2; Taylor Rossi 2 1 1-2 8; Laura Lee Baird 6 0 5-6 17; Courtney Cox 1 0 0-0 2; KaraJo Jones 3 0 0-1 6; Hayli

Bozarth 8 0 6-9 22; Amanda Ray 2 0 0-0 4; Total 23 1 12-18 61.

**Thomas More Prep girls 47**  
Chelsea Fieler 1 2 1-2 9; Shauna Ruder 1 0 0-0 2; Molly Schmeidler 0 1 2-2 5; Sophie Schippers 0 0 1-2 1; Maddy Mall 1 0 12-15 14; Jessa Stramel 2 0 0-0 4; Kaylee Hoffman 3 2 0-0 12; Total 8 5 16-21 47.



The frenzied Norton fans roared their approval as the Norton Community High School girls' basketball team and coaches stood in the center of the gymnasium to acknowledge their substate championship victory. They are, from left: Hayli Bozarth, head coach Kevin Jilka, Katharine Roy, Chantille Campbell, Megan Kats, Amanda Ray, Taylor Rossi, Courtney Cox, Laura Lee Baird, Ashlie Stewart, Shelby Jones, KaraJo Jones, assistant coach George Rossi, assistant coach Joan Bolt.

-Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

**Congratulations!...Blue Jays**

**and Good Luck at State!**

*From the entire community,*

and

**your Norton Telegram staff**