

# Banquet honors Blue Jay wrestling team

By DICK BOYD

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Coach Bill Johnson's Norton Community High School wrestling team was honored for another excellent season during the annual banquet on Sunday evening in the Norton junior high gymnasium.

With 11 returning lettermen and four returning state medalists, the wrestling Blue Jays compiled another impressive record en route to a fourth place finish in the Class 3-2-1A state tournament in Hays.

In his 17th season at Norton, coach Johnson guided his Blue Jay wrestling team to a 9-1 dual record. Their only dual loss was to a strong, talented Kearney, Neb. team.

In the season opener, Norton ran away with their fifth straight Hoxie Invitational championship, beating second place Oakley by 82 points.

Next, Norton placed second in the tough Clay Center Invitational, just nine points behind the host team.

Norton opened the dual season by beating Phillipsburg 46-24 on Fri., December 14. A dual with Stockton that night was canceled due to inclement weather. Norton was scheduled to compete that Saturday in the Goodland dual tournament but did not go due to inclement weather.

The Blue Jays started the new year by winning their fifth straight J.R. Durham Invitational Tournament championship in Norton. Included in the field of teams

were defending co-state champions Smith Center and Beloit and perennial power Scott City. The top four team scores were Norton, 185; Smith Center, 145.5; Scott City, 134; Beloit, 133.

Norton had to face Smith Center in a dual the next Thursday in WaKeeney where the Golden Eagles were also an opponent. The Blue Jays edged the Redmen 30-28 and rolled over Trego 61-18. Norton won six matches and Smith Center won eight in their dual but three Blue Jay wins by falls were the difference.

After the Smith Center and Trego duals, Norton left for Newton for the prestigious Tournament of Champions. The Blue Jays won the championship in 2005 and 2006 but did not compete last year.

In fact, Norton is the smallest school to ever win this tournament. Defending state champions Manhattan, 6A; Wichita Bishop Carroll, 5A and Clay Center, 4A, were all present this year. Norton wrestled well and placed ninth, just two points out of seventh.

Then, it was on to a dual in Hays with Kearney, Neb. and Hays on Tues., January 22. Norton shut-out Hays 82-0 but lost 49-10 to Kearney, one of the top teams in Nebraska.

On Sat., January 26, the Blue Jays hosted the Mid-Continent League Tournament and powered to their ninth straight championship. Norton scored 204 points and second place Smith Center tallied 190.

After easily beating Plainville and Ellis in league duals in Ellis on Fri., February 1, Norton scored 173 team points to win the Panther Classic in Phillipsburg for the fifth year in a row. Phillipsburg was second with 130.5 and Beloit third with 128.5.

Norton won their 13th consecutive Mid-Continent League dual championship by defeating Hill City and Osborne in duals on Thurs., February 7.

The Regional Tournament was held the next two days in WaKeeney and the Blue Jays won their fourth straight regional championship. Norton scored 226.5 points and second place Scott City tallied 160.

Norton qualified 11 of their 14 wrestlers for the state tournament. Blue Jay senior Alex Thomas would have been No. 12 had he not received a season-ending knee injury after pinning his first two opponents in the 185 pound weight class. He finished the season 27-2 after the injury default.

Norton junior Jordan Bebb placed fourth in the regional at 171 pounds and qualified for the state tournament but did not compete due to injury.

"In all my years of coaching, I've never had a team come this close to qualifying all of our wrestlers for the state tournament," said coach Johnson.

Norton regional champions were: freshman Billy Broeckelman, 112; sophomore Kaenon Keiswetter, 125; sophomore Zane Perez, 130 and junior Zach Baint-

er, 135.

The next weekend, the Blue Jays competed in the State Tournament in Hays. Friday was not a good day for Norton wrestlers and they knew they would have to win many matches through the back door on Saturday to finish very high.

They did just that as they scored twice as many points as the leading teams on Saturday and placed fourth. Smith Center won the championship with 127.5 points and Phillipsburg was second with 126.5. Beloit was third with 121.5 and Norton scored 101.5.

State tournament medalists for Norton were: Billy Broeckelman, second; freshman Troy Bainter, third, 103; Kaenon Keiswetter, third, 103; Zach Bainter, third; senior Todd Bolt, fifth, 140; freshman Landon Keiswetter, sixth, 119.

Competing in the state tournament but not placing were: Zane Perez, senior Jeff Soderlund, 152; junior Matt Stanley, 160 and junior Brock Lauer, 189.

Assistant coaches again this season were: Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Chance McKinney. Student managers were: Emily Juenemann, Alyssa Thomson and Shelby Schaefer.

## Individual awards

Following a potluck meal, coach Johnson and his assistant coaches spoke to the wrestlers, parents and fans and presented awards.

The "Most Outstanding Wrestler" award, the most prestigious of all, was presented to Zach Bainter, who placed in every tournament this season and finished third in his weight class in the state tournament.

Zach compiled the second highest winning percentage on the team this season with a 31-3 record and scored 152 points, also second high. He tied for first in the number of major decisions, was third in takedowns and tied for third in falls.

Receiving the "Coach Durham" award was Alex Thomas, who led the team in winning percentage with a 27-2 record, team points with 159 and falls with 19.

The award is based on hard

work, sportsmanship, academics and good citizenship.

Named the "Most Improved Wrestler" of the season was Todd Bolt.

Kaenon Keiswetter received the "Outstanding Sophomore Wrestler" award and the "Most Promising Freshman" award went to Billy Broeckelman.

Recipient of the "Outstanding Junior Varsity Wrestler" award was Kaid McKenna.

"The Most Improved Junior Varsity Wrestler" award went to Austin Brown.

The "Most Exciting Match" award winner was Todd Bolt, who decided eventual state champion Cass Spangler of Beloit, 13-11 in overtime.

The winner of the "Key Match of the Year" award was Matt Stanley, who decided Matt Atwood, Smith Center, 3-1, during Norton's exciting dual win over the Redmen.

The "Underdog Match of the Year" award was won by Landon Keiswetter for two matches in the state tournament when he decided Aaron Geist, Osborne, and Tyrel George, Scott City, both of whom had beaten him earlier.

The "Fan of the Year" award went to Frances and Wes Whitney, who had a long line of grandsons who were state medalists for Norton and who still attend Norton wrestling matches regularly.

"The Whitneys have been a very integral part of wrestling in Norton over the last 30 years," said coach Johnson as they received a standing ovation.

Classroom "Academic Award" winners and their grade point averages were: freshmen Troy Bainter and Spencer Shirk, 4.0; sophomore Zane Perez, 3.48; junior Logan Kelly, 3.89; senior Alex Thomas, 3.85.

Winners of varsity statistical awards for the season were: Alex Thomas, most points, 159; most falls, 19; Billy Broeckelman, most takedowns, 52; most near falls, 2 points, 16; most technical falls, 3; Kaenon Keiswetter, most reversals, 21; most near falls, 3 points, 21; most major decisions, 5; Zane Perez, most decisions, 17

(ties school record); Zach Bainter, fastest fall, 18 seconds.

Receiving junior varsity statistical awards were: Kaid McKenna, most takedowns, 27; most reversals, 20; most near falls, 3 points, 23; most falls, 17; most technical falls, 2; Spencer Shirk, most near falls, 2 points, 14; Brett Terrell, most decisions, 5; fastest fall, 13 seconds; Logan Kelly, most major decisions, 3; Tyler Cook, most technical falls, 2.

Coach Johnson called the seniors forward and presented awards to those who had wrestled all four years. Honored were: Todd Bolt, Aaron Husted, Travis Ray and Jeff Soderlund.

Winners of the "Wrestler of the Week" awards were also honored.

The seniors presented bags of gifts to the three coaches in appreciation for their guidance throughout the season.

"Our wrestlers had 343 individual wins this season," coach Johnson told those present. "Winning the league and dual meet titles each year tends to be taken for granted by many people but it doesn't just happen. We have to make it happen."

"Wrestling teaches a young man a lot about life. Each of you learned from your mistakes and learned that, no matter how good you are, you sometimes have to fight off your back."

"Parents, we appreciate you sharing your sons with us and helping out in many ways. We always have a great year in Norton wrestling because we get so much cooperation from everyone."

Coach Johnson thanked his wife, his assistant coaches, school administration, parents and fans for their tremendous support of the wrestling program.

Coach Johnson also handed out some "fun" awards.

Winners were: Quiz the Coach Award, Robert Derauf; Clock Watcher Award, Kaenon Keiswetter; Six Pound Orange Award, Todd Bolt; Assistant Coach Award, Alex Thomas; Porker of the Year Award, Travis Ray; Leaner of the Year Award, Brock Lauer; Mash Award, Travis Ray.

## Legion baseball readies for '08

By DICK BOYD

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The Norton American Legion baseball players have been practicing for a little over a month in anticipation of the start of the 2008 season.

The Legion will kickoff the new season with a home game versus Alma, Neb. on June 1, followed by another home game versus WaKeeney on June 2 before ending the week with the Goodland Tournament.

"This season, we have picked up a few more games versus Nebraska teams," said Norton head Legion baseball coach Joe Durham. "Nebraska has really been pushing high school baseball. In the past year, 11 smaller schools have added baseball so they will now have a two tier playoff instead of one."

"Every team we played against from Nebraska last year was well coached and prepared."

"Norton still has one advantage that other schools don't have and that is coach Steve Jeltz. Steve played in the major leagues for 10 years and has a no nonsense approach to the game, which the players understand."

"I asked him how far he thought the Blue Jays could go this year and he said having all our players at every game will be the deciding

factor. He said some employers have told our players that they will not let them off for games and that will have a major impact on this team."

"One advantage we have on this team is that every player can play more than one position."

"Pitchers this year are Logan 'Stretch' Keiswetter, followed by Todd Zink, Garrett Tacha, Jordan Durham, Logan Runnion, Brian Spooner, Brian Ulmer, Matt Stanley and Landon Hamel. Working with the pitchers this year will be Chris Davis, who aged out after last year. Having Chris work with the pitchers will give the other coaches time to work with other players on their specific needs."

"Aaron Daniels will be assisting in the fielding and hitting aspect of coaching. Last year, Aaron hit lead off and was one of the better players on our team. Getting Blake Wolf back after losing him for most of the season due to an accident is another big plus for this team."

"Andrew Soderlund, Kaenon 'K-Dog' Keiswetter, Aaron Pulec, Logan Runnion, Jacob Bracht, Shane Stanley, Landon Hamel and Landon 'Tug' Keiswetter are our core infielders with Logan being able to back up Blake at first and Jake being able to play the outfield, giving our team more

flexibility."

"The luxury of having one of the fastest players in the league in Todd Zink means I can plug him into the infield where he is a very good third baseman or play him in centerfield where he covers lots of ground."

"Others in the outfield will be Matt Stanley, Bracht, Ulmer, Durham, Wolf, Hamel, Shane Stanley and Runnion."

"Losing Logan Tuxhorn this year to Smith Center put us down one catcher until Brian Spooner moved here from Denver. Spooner is a player that coaches do not see very often. He loves the game and will do anything to make the team better. His natural position is catcher but he is willing to try to learn other positions. Other catchers on our team are Durham, Stanley, Ulmer and 'Tug' Keiswetter."

"This is one of the most experienced Legion teams Norton has had in a long time. For the first time ever, you might see three brothers play for Norton at the same time. Logan 'Stretch', Kaenon 'K-Dog' and Landon 'Tug' Keiswetter are the three brothers."

"Playing their last season for the Legion nine due to age restrictions will be Durham, Zink, Wolf, Tacha, Logan Keiswetter and Ulmer."

## Two golfers medal at Smith Center

By DICK BOYD

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Two Norton Community High School golfers, senior Andrew Black and freshman Cole Archer, medaled in the Smith Center JV Invitational Tournament on Tuesday.

Black shot a 46 to place third medalist after a card playoff and Archer carded a 51 for 11th medalist.

Also playing for the Blue Jays and their scores were: junior Kyle Mindrup, 54; senior Lucy Ellis, 60; junior Jacob VanSkiike, 62; junior Ashley Colip, 65.

No team scores were kept.

Individual medalists were: Haylen Kuntzsch, Russell, 44; Andrew Black, 46; Adam Waymaster, Russell, 46; Jerred Stritt,

Russell, 48; Cole Smith, Plainville, 48; Brad Eller, Phillipsburg, 48; Derrick Pruitt, Phillipsburg, 48; Jesse Mudd, Smith Center, 48; Cole Werner, Plainville, 50; Garret Kennedy, Phillipsburg, 50; Cole Archer, 51; John Boyington, Phillipsburg, 51; Shawn Marcotte, Concordia, 51; Trever Haas, Smith Center, 51; David Wiesner, Concordia, 52.

"I was pleased with the way we played today," said Norton head golf coach David Stover.

"All of our golfers showed signs of improvement and shot good scores in perfect scoring positions."

"Andrew Black broke out of a recent slump to play quite possibly the best round of his career and Cole Archer continued his steady

improvement with solid play."

"We hope to continue improvement during a very hectic stretch for our junior varsity golfers in the next week."

## Next action

The Norton junior varsity was scheduled to play in the Trego Invitational and the Blue Jay C-team was scheduled to play in the Logan Invitational, both varsity tournaments, on Thursday. Results were not available at press time.

Norton will host the Norton JV Invitational Tournament on Tuesday at the Prairie Dog Recreation Association golf course south of Norton, beginning at 3 p.m.

The Norton varsity will compete in the Thomas More Prep Invitational in Hays on Monday, beginning at 9 a.m.

Please see page 8 for more sports.

Remember our SportsLines:

(785) 877-3361, or (785) 877-6908

## Just A Reminder...



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Dear Editor:

The Community Bankers Association of Kansas (CBA) has designated the last week in April to celebrate communities and the people who live and work across Kansas. Community Bank Week will be April 28th - May 3rd and First State Bank is proud to honor our community and our customers during this celebration.

This year's celebration centers around the theme, "Community Banking...A Timeless Tradition". First State Bank has been owned and operated locally since April 1902. It is our timeless tradition to honor our customers. The deposits entrusted to us augment our ability to reinvest those dollars right here where they can be used to help local businesses, farmers and ranchers, individuals and families. In other words, while the dollars deposited with our bank are working for you - our customers, they are also working for the local economy.

To help celebrate Community Banking Week, First State Bank will be sponsoring a couple different events. Stop by and pick up a coloring page for the kids to enter our coloring contest. Coloring pages can be picked up starting Monday, April 14th and must be submitted to First State Bank no later than 3PM on Friday, May 2nd. First, second and third place winners will be picked (in 2 age categories) the following week and all coloring sheets will be on display in the First State Bank lobby. Great prizes will be awarded ranging from savings bonds, movie passes and tee shirts.

Then be sure to join us on April 29th at 7:00 PM in the basement of Prairie Land Electric for an Identity Theft Seminar. This seminar is packed full of information as to how to avoid becoming a victim of Identity Theft - something that plagues us in everyday life.

Community banks have been a core part of economic development in Kansas for well over 100 years. We have rich history in the time honored tradition of providing local funding for local projects. Therefore, local reinvestment remains our main focus in guiding bank decisions, policies and our employees who serve customers every day.

Yours truly,  
John Engelbert, President  
and Employees of First State Bank

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Chairman of Board  
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