

# Blue Jay football highlights of 2012



Norton senior tailback Jacob Brooks, No. 6, followed an excellent block from senior wide receiver Andrew Ellis, No. 21, to sprint into the end zone to score one of his four touchdowns in the 41-20 District victory at Minneapolis on Friday, Oct. 12. - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

By Dick Boyd

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The 2012 Norton Community High School football team was honored by parents and fans for their excellent season during the annual banquet sponsored by the Blue Jay Booster Club on Sunday, Dec. 16 in the high school cafeteria.

Under the guidance of seventh year head coach Lucas Melvin, this year's Blue Jay squad compiled an outstanding 7-3 season, won the Mid-Continent League championship and made the Class 3A state playoffs.

## Smith Center

Norton opened the season on a positive note on Friday, Aug. 31 by upsetting state-ranked Smith Center 34-13 in Norton. The Blue Jays took advantage of three Redmen fumbles to lead 14-7 at halftime. After intermission, Norton shutout Smith Center until the final five seconds while scoring four more touchdowns.

"We prepared well and came out and played hard," said coach Melvin.

Senior tailback Jacob Brooks gained 96 yards on 22 carries for a 4.4 yard average. Senior quarterback Dalton Miller completed 11 of 17 passes for 65 percent accuracy and 141 yards.

## Goodland

On Friday, Sept. 7 Norton traveled to Goodland where it was payback time. Norton lost 17-0 to Goodland in District play at Travis Field last season. This time Norton prevailed 22-7. At the end of a penalty-filled first half, Norton trailed 7-3. The Blue Jays' rock solid defense dominated in the second half and the Norton offense scored three touchdowns. Norton held Goodland to minus three yards rushing while gaining 280 yards and averaging 5.6 yards per carry. Brooks gained 174 yards on 29 carries for a 6 yard average.

## Plainville

Norton battled Plainville, another outstanding Mid-Continent League team, on even terms in Norton on Friday, Sept. 14 until the Cardinals scored with 40 seconds remaining to escape with a 22-14 win. "Turnovers hurt us," said coach Melvin. "We gave the ball away three times."

Norton had 301 total yards of offense and Plainville had 294 yards. Miller completed 8 of 18 passes for 137 yards. Junior cornerback Austin Hager was leading tackler with 13 total stops.

## Oberlin

On Friday, Sept. 21, Norton traveled to Oberlin to play their longtime rival Red Devils and took advantage of Oberlin fumbles in a 35-2 victory. "Defensively, we played very well," said coach Melvin. "We got a lot of turnovers and converted them to scores." Senior end Eli Bozarth led in tackles with 11 total.

## Ellis

The Blue Jays extended their record to 4-1 with an impressive 39-8 win over Ellis on the Railroaders' home field on Friday,

Sept. 28. Norton rolled up 317 yards on the ground and 161 through the air for 478 yards of total offense! The Blue Jays averaged 7.2 yards per play.

Brooks gained 166 yards on 21 carries for a 7.9 yard average and Miller rushed 14 times for 114 yards and an 8.1 yard average.

"Both offensive and defensive lines dominated the line of scrimmage," said coach Melvin. "We played hard and got better as a team." Senior linebacker Jared Bohl led in tackles with 9 total.

## Colby

On Friday, Oct. 5, the Class 4A visiting Colby eleven did all they could to spoil Norton's Homecoming until the Blue Jays pulled out an exciting 26-23 victory. Norton led 13-0 at halftime and 20-6 after three quarters. Colby did all the scoring in the fourth quarter. After the Eagles tied the score at 20-all, Brooks blocked the extra point kick to keep them from taking the lead and the game went into overtime. The Blue Jay defense limited the Eagles to a 31-yard field goal in the extra period and, on Norton's possession, Brooks got great blocking and scored the winning touchdown from the 4-yard-line!

Brooks gained 103 yards on 20 carries for a 5.2 yard average. Senior linebacker Treven Rossi led the defense with 15 total tackles. "They had the momentum when the overtime began but we overcame adversity by limiting them to a field goal and scoring the touchdown," said coach Melvin.

## Minneapolis

Norton traveled to Minneapolis for the Blue Jays' first District contest on Friday, Oct. 12. Norton saw a 19-7 halftime lead vanish on the first play of the fourth quarter before rallying with three touchdowns to win 41-20. "Rain made the field slippery," said coach Melvin. "We missed too many tackles that kept them in the game. It was a good thing that every time we needed to answer their scores, we did."

Norton had 145 rushing, 188 passing for 333 total yards of offense. Minneapolis had 109 rushing, 191 passing for 300 total yards. On the first play of the fourth quarter, Minneapolis scored on a pass play and led 20-19. Two minutes later, Norton regained the lead for good when Brooks scored his third touchdown of the evening, Miller passed to John Risewick for two extra points and Norton led 27-20. Brooks intercepted a pass and sprinted 16 yards for his fourth touchdown of the evening. Austin Hager's extra point kick made it 34-20. After the kickoff, Norton held and Miller dented the end zone for the last Blue Jay touchdown. Hager's kick made the final 41-20.

## Beloit

On Friday, Oct. 19, Norton hosted the powerful Beloit Trojans in their second District contest. Beloit used a quick score offense beginning with the first

play of the game to hand Norton only their second loss of the season. After scoring on the first play, the Trojans' offense was so efficient that they did not punt and won 56-9. The Trojans led 34-3 at halftime and Norton's only touchdown came on a 64 yard pass from Miller to Brooks. "They haven't punted all season and, like other teams, we couldn't stop them," said coach Melvin. "We had opportunities. We were inside their 20-yard line three times and couldn't score."

Norton still totaled 262 yards of offense compared to 305 for Beloit.

## Phillipsburg

The Blue Jays' final District game was at Phillipsburg on Thursday, Oct. 25. In another traditional rivalry, Norton dominated a favored Panther team in a 20-7 win. Phillipsburg had lost only to unbeaten Beloit 32-27. The victory ended Phillipsburg's season and won the Mid-Continent League championship for Norton!

Norton dominated both sides of the ball. The Blue Jays rolled up 347 yards of total offense, averaging 6.9 yards per play. Norton stuck mainly to the ground game while Phillipsburg concentrated on passing and had 185 total yards and a 3.1 yard average per play. The Blue Jay defense was overwhelming, sacking the quarterback six times and making six other tackles for losses!

"We prepared, focused and really wanted this game," said coach Melvin. "We still had some mistakes but played hard the whole game. Our offensive and defensive lines owned the line of scrimmage."

Brooks amassed 199 yards on 23 carries for an 8.7 yard average. Rossi led in tackles with 9 total.

## Salina Sacred Heart

As the second place finisher to Beloit in the District, Norton played Salina Sacred Heart in Salina on Tuesday, Oct. 30 in the Bi-District game. Sacred Heart was the champion of their District and was coached by former Norton head coach Bruce Graber. Norton won the battle of the statistics but lost the game by a 21-19 score to end their season at 7-3.

The Blue Jays rushed for 237 yards on 48 carries for a 4.9 yard average. Sacred Heart gained 139 yards on 34 carries for a 4 yard average. Norton also had an edge in passing. Miller threw for 134 yards and Sacred Heart had just 75 yards through the air. Norton also had 12 first downs compared to 7 for Sacred Heart.

An apparent 55 yard touchdown run by Brooks would have won the game for Norton but it was nullified by the officials.

"We played hard to the very end and played well enough to win," said coach Melvin. "We just didn't get any breaks." Without the 55 yard run, Brooks still had a great rushing night. He gained 207 yards on 22 carries for a 9.4 yard average. Bohl led in tackles with 14 and Lane

Bigge added 11 tackles.

Sacred Heart (9-1) played eventual state champion Scott City in the next round and lost to also end their season.

## Coach's comments

"There is not doubt our young men played very hard and accomplished some great goals this season," said coach Melvin.

"We are very proud of them. Several teams have already said they are going to beat us next year. That to me adds fuel to my motivation and it should to all our players coming back. Those people have no idea what you guys are capable of. We will need to work for it; in fact, we will have to work harder than ever. If you have not been doing extra yet, you need to start now."

"The other part of that though is believing in ourselves also. I know if you work hard enough, anything is possible. We all need to be willing to work harder in the weight room, participate in track, go to our summer camp, do extra summer practices and go to our team camp. A lot of our young men say they are willing to do that but now it is time to walk it, not talk it."

"I am very excited about our future. The summer weight room is vital. I know it helps prevent injuries but it also prepares athletes mentally as well as physically."

"If we learn to be more physical and aggressive and limit mistakes, good things will happen."

"For all those 'graduating parents', you are still part of this family and always will be. Working with all of your sons this season was such a blessing. I truly hope they have all learned more than just football but also how to deal with adversity, to be better people and eventually good fathers."

"Our junior varsity had a 5-2 season with their two losses being close games. They improved throughout the season. Several of them played varsity on special teams and showed lots of potential."

Coach Melvin called each

player from freshman to senior forward and made positive comments on each. He focused especially on the senior members of the team. "This senior group did a fantastic job of leading and being brothers to the underclassmen," said coach Melvin. "They wanted to have a better season than last year and they went out and did it with hard work and determination. This is a great group of young men. I have watched them a lot over the years and they will be missed."

"This class was 29-14 through their high school career. They won one District championship, two Bi-Districts, one Regional and one Sectional championship."

"We had a great season. I'm very proud of these young men and hope they grow from their experiences."

Senior members of this year's team were: John Risewick, Jacob Brooks, Dalton Miller, Andrew Ellis, Carson McKenna, Jared Bohl, Treven Rossi, Eli Bozarth, Lane Bigge, Lucas Engel and Dylan Sprigg.

## Thanks, supporters

For all their support during the season, coach Melvin thanked his wife and family; all the players; assistant coaches Tony Fiscus, Jeremy Hawks, Ben Gordon and Kendall Fiscus; managers Jarrett Wente and Dustan Daniels; filmers Connor Griffey, Tyus Henson and Jacob Green; school faculty and administration; the cheerleaders; the grounds keepers and chain gang; Rick Green, statistics; Dorla Jones, coordinating; Jordan Kinsey and the NCHS marching band; Blue Jay Booster Club; field painters Brian McKenna, Jerry Darling, Jon Rowh, Nancy Hager, Steven Whitney, Mike Terrell, Lamont Shirk, Dale Carlson, David Davis and others who helped paint the Blue Jay on the field; parents and families of the players; news media Dick Boyd of the Norton Telegram and KQNK Radio Station and the entire community for contributing to the successful season.

Coach Melvin presented a

miniature Norton football helmet to each of the senior players.

The senior players presented a picture poster of themselves to coach Melvin and the assistant coaches.

## State of the program

"The state of the Norton football program is good," said coach Melvin. "We need to continue to work hard in this offseason; we need young men to compete hard and push each other more for spots."

"In reading their winter goals, almost everyone said they want more and are willing to work for it. We have a good number of football underclassmen who are in winter sports. Hard work, dedication, sacrifice and a selfless attitude are the things they need to continue working on. We have some very good football players and we have young men who have the potential to be great football players. All of them say they want to do it; now is the time to do it. We must work hard in the weight room and the other sports now. There is no waiting; it is now."

"I believe academics for our student athletes is continuing to improve some. We did not have an athlete ineligible due to academics this season, which is great. But, we want even more improvement. It is vital that these young men understand the importance of an education. It is our goal for them to be the type of young men that their peers look up to in the classroom and community. We need to continue to hold each other accountable for the way we treat each other in and out of school. We hope these young men are courageous enough to continue that upward trend and encourage others to be involved in all types of school activities."

"Character is a big factor when it comes to leadership and athletics."

"I am excited about our future. If we will learn to be more physical and aggressive and limit mistakes, good things will happen."

# J.R. Durham wrestling tournament to take place this coming Saturday

By Dick Boyd

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The 48th annual J.R. Durham Invitational Wrestling Tournament will be held Saturday in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium in Norton.

Competing, in addition to the Norton varsity and junior varsity wrestling teams, will be squads from Atwood, Beloit, Cozad, Thomas More Prep - Hays, Hoxie, Leoti, McCook, Oakley, Scott City, Cimarron, Tribune, Lakin, Ulysses, Plainville and Smith Center.

The first session will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will include the

first round, quarterfinals, semi-finals/consolation first round, consolation quarterfinals and consolation semifinals. Wrestling will be on three mats.

Session two will begin 30 minutes after completing of the consolation semifinals. It will consist of fifth and sixth place matches on two mats, followed by consolation and championship finals on two mats. First and third place matches will be wrestled simultaneously.

Honored prior to the finals will be state tournament wrestling medal winners from 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60 years ago.

Those former medal winners invited to be honored are: Ralph Mason, Vic Peterson, Keith Sanderson, Russell Awalt, Lewis Howell, Eldon Archer, Gerald Horning, 1943; Raymond Hewett, 1953; Rod Fisher, Richard Miller, 1963; Bill Klein, Keith Sides, Evan Whitney, Dave Ward, Roland Washburn, Bruce Koel, 1973 3A state champions; Kent Hahn, Chuck Dalton, Stan Wahlmeier, Shane Wyatt, 3rd in 4A state tournament in 1983; Billy Smith, 1993; Clay Madden, Luke Pfannenstiel, Lance Roe, James Annon, Eric Johnson, Tim Sprigg, Bo

Pfannenstiel, Michael Sprigg, 2nd in Class 3-2-1A state tournament in 2003.

Each of the former state medal winners will be introduced to the crowd and each will receive a certificate of wrestling excellence from J.R. "Jake" Durham in honor of the anniversary of their state medal.

The longtime Norton tournament was renamed 16 years ago in honor of J.R. "Jake" Durham of Norton, the former longtime wrestling coach for the Blue Jays.

Jake's many honors include membership in the National

Wrestling Hall of Fame and Kansas High School Wrestling Hall of Fame. Jake and his wife, Ruth, still reside in Norton.

This tournament is traditionally a very tough, competitive event with many state ranked wrestlers competing.

Plaques will be awarded to the top three teams and medals to the top four wrestlers in each weight class. There will be no public recognition for fifth and sixth place finishers and they will receive no points.

An "Outstanding Wrestler" will be chosen by vote of the team coaches.



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