

# State runner-up football team re-unites



The members of Norton's 1983 State Runner-up Football Team who were present for their 30th reunion were introduced between the first and second quarters of the Blue Jays' 41-7 District win over Minneapolis on Friday night at Travis Field in Norton. Pictured are, from left, assistant coach Dale Engelbert, Robert Wiltfong, Darren McMullen,

Rod Kaus, Doug Smith, Robert Smith, Scott Schrum, Rich Wahlmeier, Todd Harman, Jim Voss, Dan Porter, Scott Ellis, Kirk Kasson. Not pictured but present for the reunion was Jeff Hardiek.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

By **DICK BOYD**

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

Memories came flooding back, most of them positive, for the former members of the Norton Community High School 1983 state runner-up football team during their reunion last Friday in Norton.

Remembered as one of the most successful football teams in Norton history, the players and some coaches were treated to a hamburger meal at the Livestock Barn prior to the Norton-Minneapolis football game at Travis Field. Then, between the first and second quarters, they were introduced to the crowd.

Former players attending were: Jeff Hardiek, Hill City; Robert Wiltfong, Edmond; Rod Kaus, Hays; Rich Wahlmeier, Ellis; Todd Harman, Inman; Kirk Kasson, Alma; Darren McMullen, Doug Smith, Robert Smith, Scott Schrum, Jim Voss, Dan Porter and Scott Ellis, all of Norton.

Former assistant coaches attending were Dale Engelbert and Jake Durham, both of Norton. Also attending was Larry Hillman, Norton, one of the coaches of the same players when they played fifth and sixth grade football and Lary Stull, Hays, former Norton high school principal.

Former players unable to attend were: Mike Bell, Randy

Colip, Chuck Dalton, Pat Haxton, Rex Knappe, Gordon LeBeau, Todd Nelson, Bobby Peterson, Ralph Streit, Stan Wahlmeier, Shane Wyatt, who were seniors; Dale Applegate, Ron Cox, Brad Elling, Richard Goss, Mike Jensen, Doug Peterson, David Slusher, Kurt Summers, who were juniors; John Ankenman, Stacy Area, Steve Boxler, Mark Carter, Eric Farber, J.D. Hand, Todd Harman, John Paul Jimenez, Mark Merklein, Tony Wilson, Rod Wiltfong, who were sophomores; George Boteler, Chris Browne, Brian Carlton, Mike Colip, Larry Davis, Tom Georgeson, Mitch Guthrie, Kevin Hahn, Terry Hawks, Joe Lorimer, Derek McMullen, Keith Mintzmyer, Craig Posson, Jon Sanko, Jerry Sonntag, Paul Wendel, who were freshman.

Former student managers unable to attend were Kurt Hueneke, Dan Harshbarger, and David Freddie.

Former head coach Neil Melillo and assistants Ford Farber and Ken Stohs were not in attendance.

Although Norton later won state championships in 1985 and 1986, the 1983 Norton team placed the highest in the state playoffs of any previous Blue Jay eleven.

In their 10-3 season, Norton

defeated Ellis 44-7, lost to Osborne 39-6; outscored Stockton 32-6; lost to Smith Center 18-8; beat Plainville 20-6; shutout Hill City 29-0; shutout Thomas More Prep of Hays, 12-0; shutout Russell 25-0; edged Phillipsburg 25-21 in the regular season. Then, shutout Goodland 6-0 in Bi-District, shutout Clearwater 34-0 in the Regional; defeated Clay Center 20-14 in Sub-State and lost the Class 4A State Championship game by a 13-6 score to Fredonia in Manhattan. It was Norton's first appearance in a State Championship Football Game.

Earning post-season honors for all-league and/or all-state were seniors Jeff Hardiek, Pat Haxton, Rod Kaus, Stan Wahlmeier, Robert Wiltfong, Shane Wyatt, junior Ron Cox and sophomore John Paul Jimenez.

In addition, Stan Wahlmeier was selected to play in the 1984 Kansas Shrine Bowl All-Star Football Game.

The first half of the championship game with Fredonia was played in fairly good weather; however, the second half was played in freezing rain and gusting winds.

Penalties and turnovers dampened the spirit of the Blue Jays in the 13-6 loss to the No.1 state ranked team.

"Fredonia was a fine football

team but I think we were, too," said Norton head coach Melillo.

"Time just ran out on us in the end.

"We had an outstanding season, a year certainly to remember and, despite the rain, the snow and the loss in the finals we have a heck of a lot to be proud of!"

The 1983 Blue Jays averaged 235.8 yards rushing and 92.6 yards passing for a total of 328.4 yards total offense per contest. With this offense, they amassed 269 points or an average of 20.7 per game.

The 1983 team was especially powerful on the ground where they rushed for 3,066 yards at a 5.4 yards per carry clip. They also compiled 1,204 yards passing for a total yardage production of 4,270.

They limited the opposition to just 123 points, or an average of 9.4 per game. The opposition picked up 123.5 yards rushing and 55.4 yards passing per game for a total of 178.9 yards per contest against the Blue Jay defense.

Senior running back Stan Wahlmeier was the leading ball carrier for the Jays as he rushed for 1,134 yards on 226 carries for a 5 yard average. Stan was also the second leading pass receiver with 21 catches for 245 yards or an 11.6 yard average.

These two totals together created an offensive production by Stan of 106 yards per game.

Including punt returns and kickoff returns, Stan averaged 131.4 all-purpose yards per game.

Second leading ball carrier was senior fullback Shane Wyatt with 800 yards on 108 carries for a 7.4 yard average. Shane was hurt toward the end of the season or certainly would have gone over 1,000 yards rushing. Filling in for him was sophomore John Paul Jimenez who rushed for 418 yards and a 5.5 yard average.

Sophomore quarterback J.D. Hand gained 213 yards for a 4.8 yard average and senior quarterback Jeff Hardiek ran for 178 yards and a 3.1 yard average. Hardiek was leading passer with 889 yards on 60 of 122 completions for a 49 percent average. Hand completed 30 of 65 passes for 315 yards and a 46 percent average.

Robert Wiltfong was leading pass receiver with 32 receptions for 445 yards and a 13.9 yard average. Following Wahlmeier's 21 catches for 245 yards was junior receiver Todd Harman with 17 receptions for 182 yards and a 10.7 yard average.

Senior receiver Doug Smith had the best average per catch with 9 receptions for 266 yards

and a 28.4 yard average.

Wahlmeier was the leading scorer with 13 touchdowns for 78 points.

### A season highlight

Receiving major attention during the former players' pre-game remembrances was Norton's fantastic come-from-behind finish to defeat Phillipsburg 25-21 in District action at Travis Field.

With one second left in the game, the Jays were trailing the Panthers 21-19 but senior quarterback Jeff Hardiek faded back to pass as time clicked off the scoreboard clock and fired a perfect 17 yard pass to junior tight end Todd Harman for the winning touchdown!

Norton's last second heroics overshadowed Phillipsburg's go-ahead touchdown with 26 seconds left on the clock. With the Panthers on top 21-19 after a two-point conversion, Phillipsburg kicked the ball on the ground and Jeff Hardiek wrapped it up on the Norton 44 yard line with 21 seconds showing. A long pass was incomplete but with 9 seconds left, Hardiek hit Robert Wiltfong in stride and he was run out of bounds on the 17-yard line with 1 second remaining! Hardiek then connected with Harman for the winning touchdown and the Norton fans rushed onto the field!

# Lady Jays compete in Mid-Continent League tourney

By **DICK BOYD**

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

The Norton Community High School girls volleyball team played in the annual Mid-Continent League Tournament on Saturday in Plainville.

The Lady Jays lost to Ellis 21-25, 25-15, 18-25; lost to Phillipsburg 23-25, 15-25 and lost to Stockton 22-25, 18-25.

Phillipsburg won the championship 29-27, 25-18 over Smith Center. Ellis defeated Plainville to place third.

### ELLIS

Freshman Caitlyn Cox had 4 serving aces, followed by senior Johnnye Ruder, 3; junior Katie Bohl, 2; freshman Baylee Miller, 1.

Ruder led in setting assists with 21, followed by Cox, 2; senior Bailey Ambrosier, 1.

Kills leader was Bohl with 12, followed by Ruder, 8; Cox, 6; Bailey Ambrosier, 3; sophomore Casey Ambrosier and sophomore Peyton Renner, 1 each.

Cox had 12 digs, followed by Miller, Bohl and Bailey Ambrosier, 8 each; junior Adrienne Hager, 5; Ruder, Casey Ambrosier, 1 each.

Cox and Casey Ambrosier each had 2 blocks and Renner, Bohl, Bailey Ambrosier and Ruder each had 1 block.

### PHILLIPSBURG

Miller led serving aces with 2. Ruder was leader again with

setting assists with 13, followed by Cox, 2; Casey Ambrosier, 1.

Kills leader again was Bohl with 12, followed by Bailey Ambrosier, 4; Ruder, 2; Cox, Miller, 1 each.

Bailey Ambrosier led in digs with 10, followed by Cox, 8; Bohl, 7; Miller, 4; Casey Ambrosier, Renner, 1 each.

Bailey Ambrosier had 2 blocks and Ruder and Cox had 1 each.

### STOCKTON

Cox was serving aces leader with 4 while Ruder had 3.

Again, Ruder led in setting assists. She recorded 15, followed by Cox, 2; Hager, 1.

Kills leader once again was Bohl with 8, followed by Bailey Ambrosier, 6; Cox, 5; Ruder, 2; Renner, 1.

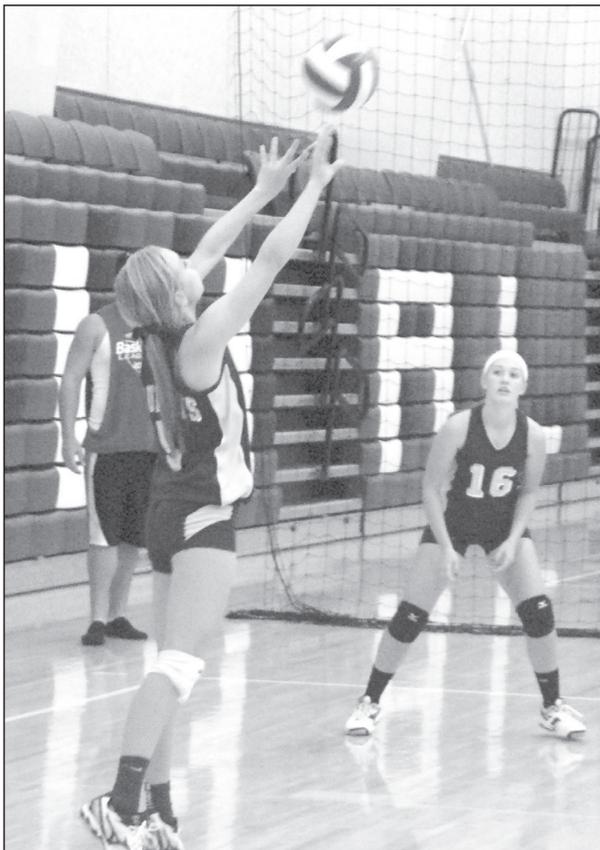
Bohl had 5 digs, followed by Bailey Ambrosier, 4; Ruder, 3; Miller, 2; Hager, Cox, freshman Miah Melvin, 1 each.

Cox had 2 blocks; Bailey Ambrosier and Renner had 1 each.

### Coach's comments

"Our first match of the day against Ellis proved to be more than our girls anticipated," said Norton head coach Christine Thompson. "We pretty easily beat Ellis during the season and weren't expecting them to come at us the way they did.

"With the loss against Ellis, we knew we would have to play some pretty competitive volleyball the next two matches to get



Norton freshman Baylee Miller is pictured overhead passing an attack during the Lady Jays' match with Stockton in the Mid-Continent League Volleyball Tournament on Saturday in Plainville. Also pictured for Norton is freshman Miah Melvin, No. 16.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

out of pool play.

"Due to us playing tentative against Phillipsburg and Stockton, we were not able to come away with a win for the day.

"It is the time in the season where teams have to play aggressive in order to earn wins.

"As a team, we have made gains in being aggressive and not letting up. When we go up against great teams, we still are a little too tentative and that is what hurts us.

"All this week, we are communicating what each individual needs to do to contribute to a successful weekend at Sub-State.

"We were grateful to see all of the Norton fans who made the trip to come and support us at the MCL tournament. Volleyball is always exciting when there is a crowd cheering for you."

### Next action

Norton will compete in the Class 3A Sub-State Volleyball Tournament this Saturday in Cimarron.

Play will begin at 2 p.m. on two courts.

Norton is seeded No.7 with a 16-17 record and will play No.2 Cimarron (28-7) at 2 p.m.

Also in the lower part of the bracket, No.3 Holcomb (27-7) will play No.6 Southwestern Heights (21-14).

In the top part of the bracket, No.1 seed Hoisington (29-7) will play No.8 Thomas More

Prep-Marian of Hays (6-26) and No.4 Phillipsburg (28-8) will play No.5 Lakin (21-12).

Winners will play in the semifinals and then in the finals.

The champion will play next week in the Class 3A State Volleyball Tournament at White Auditorium in Emporia on Friday, Saturday, Nov. 1-2.

Fans who are unable to make the trip to Cimarron will be able to watch the Norton matches over their computer on live.usd211.org.

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advertising  
needs please  
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a call 877-  
3361  
email:  
dpaxton@  
nwkansas.com