

Norton beats Ellis 14-0

By DICK BOYD

Coach Bruce Graber's Norton Community High School football team survived a passing onslaught by sophomore quarterback Cole Erbert and scored two touchdowns in 17 seconds in the fourth quarter to defeat Ellis 14-0 in Mid-Continent League play on Friday night in Ellis.

With the victory, Norton extended its final league record to 4-1. The Blue Jays' only league loss was to Smith Center. Ellis finished 2-3 in the league.

Although Ellis could not run on the Blue Jay defense, Erbert's accurate passing kept the Norton defenders back on their heels the entire game. Ellis had only three yards rushing at halftime and finished with just 23 yards on the ground but the Railroaders gained 110 yards through the air in the first half and finished with 208 yards passing. Ellis reached the Norton 25- and 12-yard lines before intermission.

Norton moved the ball with limited success both running and passing in the first half and reached the Ellis 28- and 25-yard lines but was unable to score. At halftime, Norton had just 49 yards rushing and 14 passing for 63 yards of offense.

The tempo picked up in the third quarter when the Blue Jays forced the Railroaders to punt from their 12 and appeared to be driving for a touchdown.

The Ellis defense stiffened when Norton had a third down on the Railroader 5 and they sacked senior quarterback Seth Mills back on the 20. A Chris Davis field goal try was wide and the third

quarter ended with no score for either team.

Ellis moved down field through the air and made it to the Norton 6. After a holding penalty dropped them back to the 20, the Railroaders tried a field goal but it also missed its mark.

The Blue Jays said "enough is enough" and promptly drove 80 yards in six plays to score the first touchdown. Senior tailback Aaron Overlease gained seven yards, then picked up a first down on the 31. Mills pitched the ball to Overlease and he gained two more and then four more yards to the 37, making it third and four.

Sophomore running back Blake VanEaton excited the Norton fans as he sprinted around right end, picked up some blocking and dashed 28 yards to the Ellis 35. On first down, senior fullback Kyle Kats took a handoff and powered up the middle, spun away from several potential tacklers, ran through several more and burst into the end zone.

The extra point kick attempt was no good but the Blue Jays held a 6-0 lead with just 6:02 left in the contest.

Ellis got a good return of the Norton kickoff to their 43 but the Railroaders would go no farther. On first down, Erbert ran the option left and pitched the ball to his running back. The ball bounced off and into the waiting arms of junior linebacker Lance Roe, who ran untouched into the end zone for the victory-clinching touchdown.

Overlease bulled into the end zone for the two extra points and Norton led 14-0 with 5:45 left in

the game.

After the kickoff, Norton's fired up defense held Ellis to zero yards and took over the ball. After three plays, Norton fumbled and Ellis recovered. Junior defensive back Luke Pfannenstiel intercepted an Erbert pass but the Blue Jays fumbled again and Ellis had another offensive opportunity on their 34. Erbert moved the Railroaders through the air to the Norton 15 before Pfannenstiel came up with his second interception of the fourth quarter to end the game.

Norton gained 184 yards rushing and 34 passing for 218 yards of offense. The Blue Jay defense limited the Railroaders to 23 rushing yards on 15 carries but Erbert completed 17 of 34 passes for 208 yards for 231 yards of total offense.

Overlease was the leading rusher for Norton with 88 yards on 21 carries, followed by Kats, 63 yards on 7 carries; VanEaton 38 yards on 6 carries; Mills, -2 yards on 7; and Pfannenstiel, -4 on 4.

Pass receivers were Overlease, 1 for 13 yards; Jason Green, 1 for 11 yards; and Shirk, 1 for 10 yards.

Pfannenstiel had a great night returning punts. He returned three for 53 yards.

Roe had a kickoff return for 12 yards. Sprigg kicked off three times for a 32 yard average.

Senior linebacker Ryan Maddy was leading tackler with seven solos and two assists. Four Blue Jay defenders followed with six each. Kyle Kats and Lance Roe each had five solos and an assist. Blake Hillebrand had four solos and two assists and Blake VanEaton had three solos and



Norton's junior defensive back Luke Pfannenstiel returned three Ellis punts for 53 yards on Friday. On this play, the Railroaders punted from the Norton 44-yard line and Pfannenstiel took advantage of a wall of blockers to return the pigskin to the Norton 46. Ellis' Jerome Gottschalk prevented a Norton touchdown as he grabbed Pfannenstiel by the jersey and held him long enough for Cole Erbert (No. 12) to put the finishing touches on the tackle. No. 31 for Norton was Norton tailback-linebacker Aaron Overlease.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

three assists. They were followed by Michael Sprigg, four solos, one assist; Paul Juenemann, two solos, three assists; Aaron Overlease and Luke Pfannenstiel, three solos, one assist each; Justin Shirk, two solos, two assists; Seth Mills, two solos, one assist; Lucas Wiseman, two solos; and Jason Green and Clay Madden, one solo each.

"I'm disappointed in our offense," said Coach Graber. "For the second week in a row, we weren't ready to play. We just didn't execute our game plan very well. They outthit us, outplayed us and outcoached us. We can't play that way and continue to win. We didn't throw well, ran wrong pass routes and pass protection was bad. We were even bad to a man up front.

"We showed signs at times of being a pretty good football team. I'm proud of our players that we made the plays when we had to. We had one good offensive drive and we really needed it. If they had scored first, it would have made it rough.

"Our defense did a great job against the run but we let them off the hook on third and long when they made some good catches. We have to find a way to play 48 minutes of football and our players understand this.

"Seth Mills had a great game in the secondary and Aaron Overlease ran hard. He was playing with pain and just kept plugging away.

"I tip my hat to Ellis. They executed their game plan very well. "Everyone starts over now in

district play. Our players understand that the upcoming teams don't have tons more talent than us. If we step up and play at the level we are capable of playing, we'll have a great opportunity to get into the playoffs."

The Norton Blue Jay gridders will start post-season district play this Friday night when they travel to Hays to play Thomas More Prep. Kickoff will be at 7:30 p.m.

Game statistics

Norton		Ellis
14	First Downs	12
45-184	Yards Rushing	25-23
34	Yards Passing	208
218	Total Yards	231
3-13-0	Passes Compl.	17-34-2
2-2	Fumbles Lost	1-3
2-25	Penalties	7-48
3-24	Punts	4-28

Play by play of Blue Jays football victory over Railroaders

By DICK BOYD

It took the North Blue Jays until the fourth quarter but they eventually shut out the Ellis Railroaders 14-0 in Ellis.

First quarter

Norton's 14-0 football win over Ellis on Friday evening began when Norton kicked the ball out of bounds and Ellis started on their 35-yard line. The Railroaders were unable to run on the Norton defense but Erbert completed three passes, including one for 25 yards to senior end Jerome Gottschalk. Norton held on their 25, however, Overlease gained just three yards, a pass was incomplete and Mills gained nothing. Davis punted to the Ellis 45.

This time it was three-and-out for Ellis. Pfannenstiel returned the punt two yards to the 20 but Norton was flagged for clipping and the ball was moved back to the 10. Mills ran for five yards, Overlease gained four and then two for a first down. Kats gained four more but an incomplete pass and four yard loss by Mills forced Norton to punt. Davis' punt carried only 23 yards, giving the Railroaders good field position on the Norton 44.

Running back Eric Gaschler was stopped for no gain, however, by senior defensive tackle Blake Hillebrand and linebacker VanEaton. The Blue Jays put a good pass rush on Erbert and he threw incomplete. Freshman back Justin Gnad gained five and Erbert connected with Gottschalk for an apparent first down but an illegal procedure penalty against Ellis brought the pigskin back to the Norton 44 where the Railroaders started. They punted and Pfannenstiel fielded the punt, found a wall of blockers and returned the ball all the way to the Norton 46.

A Mills pass fell incomplete but Overlease churned up the middle for seven yards. Overlease gained two more and the first quarter ended with no score.

Second quarter

Overlease plowed up the middle for a first down on the Ellis 44 to start the second quarter. Overlease took a pitch from Mills and gained six more around right end, then Mills ran the option around left end and kept the ball for a first down on the 33. After two incomplete passes, Mills hit Overlease on a screen pass for four yards. On fourth down, he connected with a wide-open senior receiver Jason Green for a 10-yard gain and first down on the Ellis 19. Kats plunged for two hard yards but two Mills passes fell incomplete. On fourth

down, Mills went back to pass again and was sacked on the 28.

Mills was shaken up and did not play the rest of the first half.

The Norton defense did not allow the Railroaders to move the ball. On first down, senior defensive end Paul Juenemann dropped Ellis back for a loss, then senior linebacker Ryan Maddy tackled Gaschler after a three-yard gain. An Erbert pass was incomplete and Ellis punted.

Again, Pfannenstiel found a wall of blockers and returned the punt to the Ellis 30. Pfannenstiel replaced Mills at quarterback. Overlease promptly ran for eight, then earned a first down on the 15. The Ellis defense stiffened, however, and Overlease lost a yard and Pfannenstiel got nothing on a keeper. Pfannenstiel was sacked back on the 25 and a fourth down pass fell incomplete, giving the ball to the Railroaders.

Gnad gained just three on two carries before Erbert went back to the air game. He threw a perfect long pass that Gottschalk caught over his shoulder with a Norton defender on him for a 22-yard gain to midfield. He passed again to Gottschalk, this time for only four, then connected with Dylan Lang for a 26-yard gain to the 20. Another pass to Gottschalk was good for five but VanEaton came flying up to tackle Clay King for a one-yard loss after he caught a pass from Erbert. Gaschler caught a flat pass and advanced it to the Norton 12. On fourth and two, Erbert went to the air again but Kats hit the intended receiver hard just as he caught the ball and he dropped it.

Norton took over with 23 seconds remaining in the half. Pfannenstiel ran a sneak for four yards and the first half ended with no score.

Third quarter

Ellis kicked off to Norton to start the second half and Roe fought his way to the 35 on the return. Mills returned as quarterback and handed the ball to Kats for a four yard gain. After Overlease gained nothing, Mills ran the keeper and an Ellis defender was flagged for grabbing his face mask and Norton had the ball on the Norton 49. After Kats was stopped for no gain, Mills connected with Shirk on a deep flat pass for a Norton first down on the Ellis 40. After several incomplete passes and a one yard run by Overlease, Davis punted out of bounds on the Ellis 20.

Ellis lost five yards for illegal motion, then Roe, Sprigg and Overlease ganged up on Gnad for a one-yard loss. Gnad lost another

yard on the next play but Erbert completed a pass to King for a first down by inches on the 30. Gaschler got nothing as Juenemann and Overlease corralled him. On the next play, Roe came charging in and hit Erbert from the blind side, causing him to fumble. The Railroaders got the ball back with a three-yard loss. An Erbert pass fell incomplete and Ellis was penalized for pass interference. The ball was moved back to the 12 and Ellis punted. Overlease received the punt but was tackled on the Ellis 40 before he could run with the ball.

Mills passed to Overlease for 13 yards and a first down on the 27. Kats bulled for one yard, then Overlease got up some steam on a trap play up the middle and carried two tacklers with him as he blasted to the 10 for another Blue Jay first down. Overlease gained five more to the five on two carries but Mills was sacked back on the 20 on third down. Davis tried a field goal but it was wide and Ellis took over.

Gaschler gained just one yard. Pfannenstiel intercepted an Erbert pass but Norton was penalized for pass interference and the ball was moved to the 35. Gnad gained just three before Hillebrand dropped him. Gnad found a rare hole in the Norton defense on the next play, however, and Pfannenstiel made the tackle at midfield. Gnad gained three more as the time ran out in the third quarter with still no score.

Fourth quarter

Mills broke up an Erbert pass to start the final stanza but Erbert connected with Gnad for a first down on the Norton 37. Erbert ran for five, then completed a pass to King for a first down on the Norton 9. Gnad plunged to the 6 but Erbert was sacked on the next play and Ellis was penalized back to the 20. Roe put on a good rush and Erbert threw incomplete. After another good pass rush by Norton defenders and an incomplete aerial, Ellis decided to try for a field goal. Gaschler kicked the ball but it was short and wide and Norton took over with 8:46 left.

Overlease ran for seven, then picked up a first down on the 31. Mills pitched to Overlease for two, then he ran for four more. On third and four, VanEaton took the pitch from Mills and picked up blocking as he ran around right end. He was finally run out of bounds on the Ellis 35 after a 28-yard gain. Kats took a handoff from Mills and ran and spun through the Ellis team for a touchdown. The extra point kick by Davis was no good but Norton led 6-0 with just 6:02 left in the

game.

Gaschler returned Sprigg's kickoff to the Ellis 43 and the Railroaders had good field position. Ellis' fortunes changed quickly, however, as Erbert pitched to a back, the ball bounced off and into the arms of Roe, who ran untouched for Norton's second touchdown within 17 seconds.

Overlease ran into the end zone for two and the Blue Jays suddenly led 14-0 with 5:45 remaining.

Sprigg kicked off again and Gaschler returned to the Ellis 36. Erbert was run out of the pocket but gained five. Mills knocked

down a pass and illegal motion cost Ellis five yards. Kats knocked down a pass and Norton took over on the 36. Pfannenstiel replaced Mills at quarterback. He gained three and VanEaton ran for five on two carries. On fourth down, a fumbled snap was recovered by Ellis on the 29.

After an incomplete pass, Pfannenstiel intercepted another Erbert pass and got to keep this one. He returned the ball eight yards to the Ellis 42. Kats churned ahead for a first down on the 29. VanEaton gained four on two tries but Norton fumbled on the next

play and the Railroaders recovered on the 34.

After one incomplete pass, Erbert threw a middle screen to Gaschler and he got a first down on the Ellis 47. Gottschalk caught another Erbert pass that was good for a first down on the Norton 40, then Gottschalk grabbed another pass and Lang had a reception on the Norton 15 for another first down. Illegal procedure cost Ellis five, then Pfannenstiel intercepted an Erbert pass on the 10 and returned it to the 30 as time ran out with the Jays earning a hard-fought 14-0 Mid-Continent League victory.

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