

Blue Jays open district play with 42-7 win over Monarchs

By DICK BOYD

The offense was exciting and the defense played their usual hard-hitting game as Coach Bruce Graber's Norton Community High School football team opened district play with an impressive 42-7 win over Thomas More Prep on Friday at Lewis Field Stadium in Hays.

With the dominant victory over the Monarchs, the Blue Jays increased their season record to 5-2 but, more importantly, went 1-0 in district competition. The three district games determine who continues into the playoffs.

From the opening whistle, it was obvious that the Blue Jays had come to Hays to play. Taking advantage of two fumbles caused by their defense's bone-jarring tackles, Norton scored two quick touchdowns and added a third on their third possession to take a 21-0 lead by the end of the first quarter.

Norton kicked off to start the game. Thomas More fumbled on second down and the Blue Jays recovered on the 20. Senior fullback Kyle Kats plunged for four yards and sophomore tailback Blake VanEaton, substituting for injured senior Aaron Overlease, gained eight in two carries for a first down on the 8. Senior quarterback Seth Mills ran the keeper around right end to the 2, then VanEaton dived over the left side of the line for the touchdown. Sophomore kicker Chris Davis booted the extra point and Norton led 7-0 with 9:33 left in the first quarter.

On their second possession, Thomas More moved the ball to the Norton 38 with the help of a face mask penalty against Norton but turned over the ball with another fumble. Mills hit VanEaton over the middle on a slant pass and he carried the ball to the Thomas More 37. Kats ran over the middle to the 29. After an incomplete pass, Kats got the call up the middle again, got good blocking and sprinted into the end zone. Davis kicked the extra point and it was 14-0 with 4:46 remaining.

The gang-tackling Norton defense forced the Monarchs to punt and Kats caught the pigskin on the 25 on the far side of the field. He followed a wall of blockers to the near side and broke into the open down the sideline for a 75-yard touchdown as the Norton fans, sideline players and coaches cheered their approval.

After Davis kicked his third ex-

tra point, Norton led 21-0 with 3:09 left in the first.

After the kickoff, the Blue Jay defense held the Monarchs to three and out once again. On fourth down, Kyle Hammerschmidt went back to punt for Thomas More but Justin Shirk came charging through the line and blocked the kick. Hammerschmidt alertly picked up the ball and ran for a first down. With the help of a face mask penalty against Norton, the Monarchs moved the ball to the Norton 17 as the first quarter ended.

On the first play of the second quarter, Thomas More sophomore Derek Wiley carried the ball and fumbled as he got close to the goalline. Lineman Tim Scheffer recovered in the end zone but the play was called back due to a holding penalty. The Monarchs got to the 5-yard line six plays later and tried a field goal but lost the ball on a bad snap and Norton took over on the 17.

Despite two major penalties, Norton moved the ball to the Thomas More 36 but fumbled. The Norton defense held and the Monarchs punted to the Norton 9. VanEaton gained nine on two carries. On third down, he found lots of running room around right end and was finally run out of bounds on the Thomas More 17 after a 65-yard run.

The Blue Jays advanced the ball to the 3 but fumbled and the half ended with the score still 21-0.

The Monarchs gained some momentum early in the third when they kicked off to Norton, forced them to punt and drove 64 yards to score. Senior Rick Staples ran two yards for the touchdown and Nick Felder kicked the extra point to make it 21-7 with 4:46 left.

Three plays and 48 seconds later, the Blue Jays were back in the end zone.

After Luke Pfannenstiel fell on a squib kick on the Norton 25, Kats ran up the middle for nine. Then, VanEaton got good blocks by right guard Blake Hillebrand and right tackle Michael Sprigg, ran through a potential tackler and sprinted 66 yards for the score. Davis kicked the extra point and it was 28-7 with 3:58 left.

After the kickoff, Norton forced Thomas More to punt again and this time Pfannenstiel returned the pigskin to the Monarchs' 35. Six plays later and the Blue Jays were back in the end zone again. This time, VanEaton ran 12 yards to score. Davis kicked the extra point and Norton was on top 35-7 with

17 seconds left in the third.

With the help of penalties against Thomas More, Norton held the Monarchs again after the ensuing kickoff. The Thomas More punt went out of bounds on the Norton 34. With Pfannenstiel at quarterback, Norton scored its final touchdown just four plays later when Kats burst over left tackle on a 47-yard run. Once again, Davis' kick was accurate and the Blue Jays led 42-7 with 7:34 remaining.

Norton sent in the reserves. Both teams had the ball two more times but neither scored, making the final 42-7.

The Norton offense was so efficient that the Blue Jays amassed 448 yards of offense and gained almost nine yards on every play. Norton rushed for 371 yards and passed for 77 yards. VanEaton, in his first varsity start at tailback, carried the ball 16 times and gained 201 yards for an average of 12.5 yards per carry. Kats rushed for 111 yards on 9 tries for an average of 12.3 yards per attempt.

Mills completed 6 of 7 passes with no interceptions for 86 percent accuracy.

VanEaton added to his rushing total with 46 yards on 2 pass receptions to give him 247 yards of total offense. Kats caught 2 passes for 16 yards and had a punt return of 75 yards for 202 yards of total offense.

Other ball carriers for Norton and their yards gained were: Mills, 6 carries for 36 yards; Davis, 4 for 11; Lance Roe, 1 for 13; Todd Bolt, 5 for 6; Brian Sproul, 1 for 0.

Other pass receivers were: Shirk, 1 for 7 yards and Maddy, 1 for 4.

Pfannenstiel had 1 punt return for 35 yards and 1 kickoff return for 21 yards.

Sprigg kicked off 7 times for a 42 yard average.

Senior linebacker Ryan Maddy was leading tackler for Norton with five solo tackles and six assists. He was followed by Blake Hillebrand, six solos, two assists; Clay Madden and Lance Roe, six solos, one assist each; Seth Mills and Blake VanEaton, five solos, one assist each; Michael Sprigg, two solos, four assists; Paul Juenemann, one solo, five assists; Luke Pfannenstiel, three solos, two assists; Kyle Kats, two solos, one assist; Jason Green, two solos; Austin Brooks, Chris Davis, Matt Engel, Davvid Stanley, Lucas Wiseman, one solo each; and Nathan Broeckelman, Justin



Norton's sophomore tailback Blake VanEaton (above) eludes a TMP tackler and heads downfield on a 65 yard run to the Monarchs' 17 yard line during second quarter action in the Blue Jays' 42-7 district win on Friday night. VanEaton, who started in place of injured Aaron Overlease, compiled 247 yards rushing and pass receiving and scored three touchdowns in the game. Blue Jay senior fullback Kyle Kats (left) makes a cut and heads downfield for a good gain during the game. Kats had an outstanding game, totaling 202 yards of offense and scoring three touchdowns in the contest.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Shirk, one assist each.

Wiley was the leading ball carrier for Thomas More with 70 yards on 14 carries.

"We came into the game ready to play," said Coach Graber. "We had a great attitude and knew what this game was about. We didn't take them lightly.

"We controlled the line of scrimmage and were able to run a nice mix of offensive plays. We had some penalties but were able to overcome them.

"Our defense also played well again. We were hurt outside a couple of times and on the trap a few times but, otherwise, played very well.

"VanEaton had a tremendous night and Kats ran well, too. They had some great holes created by our linemen. Mills made some

great decisions at quarterback.

"I'm super happy for Chris Davis. After he missed two kicks last week, he was a perfect six of six tonight. He was drilling the ball well.

"Our return game was fantastic; our punt returns were unbelievable.

"I'm so proud of the way our players came back from last week's below average performance in our win over Ellis. We talked every day in practice about not doing things that kill ourselves and not ending drives with busted plays. We got lots of mileage off a lot of different schemes offensively.

"We started the second half a little flat and let them score but we recovered and stayed in the game mentally and physically. We had a great effort by everybody, includ-

ing our coaches who had our players well schooled. We didn't just need to win, we needed to play well. We re-established our offense as one that can move the ball. This game has us all excited and anxious to move on and get even better."

Norton will host Russell this Friday evening at Travis Field in the second district game for both teams. Kickoff is at 7 p.m.

GAME STATISTICS

NORTON	THOMAS MORE		
14	First Downs	11	
43-371	Yards Rushing	45-101	
77	Yards Passing	94	
448	Total Yards	195	
6-7-0	Passes Completed	9-18-0	
1-2	Fumbles Lost	3-9	
8-71	Penalties	4-25	
2-26.5	Punts	4-34	

Play by play of Norton's district win over Thomas More Prep

By DICK BOYD

The Norton Community High School football team opened district play with a 42-7 win over Thomas More Prep on Friday at Lewis Field Stadium in Hays and took their season record to 5-2.

First quarter

Michael Sprigg kicked off for Norton and Blake VanEaton set the tone of the game with a hard tackle of Kyle Hammerschmidt on the Thomas More 16-yard line. After an incomplete pass, Thomas More fumbled and Luke Pfannenstiel recovered on the 20. Fullback Kyle Kats gained four, then tailback VanEaton picked up eight on two carries for a first down on the 8. Quarterback Seth Mills ran the keeper to the 2 and VanEaton dived over the left side for the touchdown. Chris Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 7-0 with 9:33 left.

Hammerschmidt returned Sprigg's kickoff but fumbled. The Monarchs recovered on their 34. Derek Wiley made a good gain and a face mask penalty against Norton moved the ball to the Monarchs' 49. Tait Weatherbee gained seven, a fumbled center snap lost the Monarchs a yard and Hammerschmidt ran for a first down on the Norton 40. Rick Staples gained eight, then Paul Juenemann tackled him for a two-yard loss. Wiley ran to the 30 where Ryan Maddy tackled him. On fourth down, Thomas More fumbled and Norton recovered on the 38. Mills passed to VanEaton on a

slant over the middle and he ran to the Monarch 37. Kats plowed over the middle to the 29. A Mills pass was incomplete, then Kats found running room over the middle and ran all the way for Norton's second touchdown. Davis split the up-rights and Norton led 14-0 with 4:46 left.

Hammerschmidt returned Sprigg's kickoff and Clay Madden tackled him on the 36. Madden tackled Weatherbee after a two-yard gain, a fumbled center snap was a no gainer, a pass was incomplete and Thomas More punted. Kats caught the ball on the 25, picked up his blocking and ran untouched 75 yards for the Blue Jays' third touchdown. After Davis' kick, Norton led 21-0 with 3:09 remaining in the initial quarter.

Staples returned Sprigg's kickoff to the 32. Kats tackled Wiley for a five-yard loss, then Wiley gained eight before Mills tackled him. Lance Roe and Maddy combined to stop Weatherbee for no gain. Hammerschmidt went back to punt. Justin Shirk came charging through the line and blocked the punt. However, Hammerschmidt picked up the ball and advanced it for a first down on the Monarchs' 46. Quarterback Trevor Schmidt ran a keeper for another first down on the Norton 41, then completed a nine-yard screen pass. A face mask penalty against Norton moved the pigskin to the Norton 17. After an incomplete pass, the first quarter ended with Norton leading 21-0.

Second quarter

Wiley got loose and appeared to be going for a Thomas More touchdown but fumbled about the 2-yard line and lineman Tim Scheffer fell on the ball in the end zone. A holding penalty against Thomas More nullified the score and the ball went back to the 26. A flat pass to Staples gained two, then Wiley was stopped for no gain. Roe dropped a Monarchs back for a three-yard loss. Schmidt went upstairs and Hammerschmidt made a great catch in a crowd on the 5. Wiley made nothing as the middle of the Norton line stopped him. Weatherbee lost a yard and a pass fell incomplete. Thomas More tried a field goal but the center snap was mishandled and Madden tackled the Monarch on the 17.

Kats gained five and Mills ran the keeper to the 34. The gain was nullified, however, since Norton was flagged for an illegal block. The ball was moved back to the 21. VanEaton ran for three, then found a hole over the left side of the line for a first down on the 40. Mills passed to VanEaton for an apparent first down on the Monarchs' 38 but a clipping penalty against Norton moved the ball back to the 48. After a fumble on the center exchange, VanEaton gained three and a screen pass to Kats gained a first down on the 36. Norton fumbled and Hammerschmidt recovered for Thomas More on the Norton 46. Schmidt ran a keeper but VanEaton tackled him for a one-yard loss. A pass was incom-

plete. Weatherbee gained three and the Monarchs punted. The ball rolled dead on the Norton 9.

VanEaton picked up four, then ran to the 18. On third and one, he took a pitch from Mills, got into the open around the right end and was finally driven out of bounds on the Thomas More 17 after a 65-yard run. Kats bulled ahead for five. Chris Davis replaced VanEaton and plunged for two. VanEaton came back into the game and picked up a first down on the 6. Mills scored on a keeper but a holding penalty nullified the touchdown and the ball was moved back to the 16. Kats ran for two and Mills passed to Shirk, who was run out of bounds on the 7. Then, Mills passed to Maddy on the 3. Thomas More took over on their 11 after a fumbled pitchout and time ran out in the half with Norton on top 21-0.

Third quarter

Thomas More kicked off to start the second half and Pfannenstiel returned the ball to the Norton 36. VanEaton was stopped for no gain, then Mills passed to Madden on the 46 but a holding penalty brought the ball back to the 20. A screen pass to Kats netted six, then Mills ran a keeper to the 40. Davis punted and the ball rolled dead on the Thomas More 36. Staples gained three before Maddy and Roe tackled him. Schmidt passed to Chase Schippers for a first down on the Monarchs' 49 and Maddy made the tackle. Following an incomplete pass, Staples was tackled by Hillebrand and Juenemann

after a one-yard gain. A flat pass to Wiley moved the ball to the Norton 34. Wiley picked up eight on two rushes and Schippers caught a pass on the 25. On fourth and one, Schmidt sneaked to the 23 for a first down. Sprigg stopped Wiley for no gain but, on the next down, he got loose to the Norton 3, where Madden tackled him. On the next down, Staples found room over the middle and scored the Monarchs' only touchdown. Nick Felder kicked the extra point and it was 21-7 with 4:46 left.

Pfannenstiel fell on Thomas More's squib kickoff on the 25. Kats ran for nine. Then VanEaton, getting great blocks from Hillebrand and Sprigg, ran through one defender and sprinted 66 yards for a touchdown. Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 28-7 with 3:58 left.

Lucas Wiseman tackled Hammerschmidt on the Thomas More 31 after Sprigg's kickoff. After an incomplete pass, the Monarchs lost three on a fumbled center snap, then Maddy and Juenemann tackled Wiley after a three-yard gain. Thomas More punted and Pfannenstiel returned it all the way to the Thomas More 35. VanEaton reeled off seven and Kats got a first down on the 24. VanEaton plunged for three, then Norton lost five on an illegal motion penalty. VanEaton ran to the 20, then Mills kept on the option for a first down on the 12. VanEaton ran over the left side of the line and plunged into the end zone for another Blue Jay touch-

down. Davis booted the extra point, extending the Norton lead to 35-7 with 17 seconds left in the quarter.

Jason Green tackled Hammerschmidt on the Thomas More 36 on the kickoff and the quarter ended with Norton leading 35-7.

Fourth quarter

The Monarchs had lots of trouble on this possession. After a fumbled center snap, they were penalized for delay of game and illegal procedure and a screen pass to Wiley was good to just the 40. They punted out of bounds on the Norton 34. Pfannenstiel replaced Mills at quarterback. Davis ran for three and Lance Roe made a first down at midfield. Davis ran for three, then Kats found running room over left tackle and sprinted into the end zone for a 47-yard touchdown. The extra point by Davis made it 42-7 with 7:34 left in the game.

After the kickoff, the Norton reserves played the rest of the contest. VanEaton tackled Hammerschmidt on the 38 on the kickoff. The Monarchs moved the ball to the Norton 31 but Matt Engel sacked quarterback Scott Stramel for a 14-yard loss. A pass to the Norton 25 wasn't enough for a first down and Norton took over the ball. The Blue Jay reserves couldn't move the ball and punted. The Monarchs' fumbled and Maddy recovered. Thomas More held and took over the ball but time ran out and Norton was a 42-7 winner.