



The triumphant Norton Blue Jays hold up their District 10 championship trophy as they celebrate their 16-13 victory over Phillipsburg last night in Phillipsburg. Norton

will advance to bi-district play and will host Riley County on Tuesday evening with kickoff set for 6 p.m. — Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Norton Blue Jays are District Champions with exciting 16-13 win over Phillipsburg

By DICK BOYD

Junior William Wilhite kicked a 22 yard field goal with eight seconds left to provide the winning points for Coach Bruce Graber's Norton Community High School football team who defeated Phillipsburg 16-13 to win the District 10 championship last night in Phillipsburg.

After allowing a Phillipsburg touchdown on the opening kickoff, the Norton defense played a tremendous game and the Blue Jay offense produced enough points for the win over the Panthers.

Phillipsburg came into the game averaging 279.1 yards rushing per game and 41.6 points per contest, 55.3 points per game the last four weeks. They were undefeated in home games this season and had only given up 4.7 points per game at home.

In addition to allowing the Panthers only 13 points, Norton held them to only 92 yards rushing, 11 yards passing and three first downs. The Panthers averaged just 2.6 yards per rushing attempt and had no first downs the first half. Norton gained 158 yards rushing, 64 passing for 222 total yards of offense. The Blue Jays also had 16 first downs.

"Take away that opening kick-

off and we won the battle defensively," said Coach Graber. "Our defense was outstanding all night long. We tackled well and were able to take away what they wanted to do. We kept their offense off balance. Our secondary played great and only allowed two completed passes.

"Other than the kickoff, we had a breakdown when we allowed them to score their rushing touchdown when we weren't lined up right and we allowed them to break a trap play for a big gain. Other than those three plays, we contained them.

"Offensively, we did just enough to win. Our quarterback Seth Mills had a good game. He ran the option well and made good decisions in the passing game. William deserves all the credit he received for kicking the winning field goal but the defense had to get the ball from Phillipsburg and the offense had to get the ball in position for him to kick it. I'm really proud of the way William stepped up. He had been a little shaky earlier in the game but he really drilled that field goal. It would have been good from much farther.

"We missed a couple of chances to score in the first half when we

shot ourselves in the foot and we weren't as productive in the second half. They put more pressure on us after intermission. We got stuck with our backs to the wall. The whole third quarter, we had a hard time getting past our 35 yard line.

"We beat a very, very good team tonight. Our young men just played a little better than they did. They've had so many short fields in recent games but we were making them go a long ways for a score."

After Phillipsburg took the early lead on the opening kickoff when Jarret Abell returned the ball for a touchdown, Norton put together a 72 yard drive to tie the score at 6-all with 4:12 left in the first quarter. Mills scored from 15 yards out but Wilhite missed the extra point kick. The Blue Jays tallied again with 1:08 left in the first half when sophomore tailback Blake VanEaton dived in from one yard out. Wilhite kicked the extra point this time and Norton led 13-6 at halftime.

Phillipsburg scored their final touchdown after a short punt gave them the ball on the Norton 21 yard line and quarterback Taylor Redinger ran around right end to tally for the 15 yard line. They

kicked the extra point to tie the score at 13-all with 4:55 left in the third quarter. Mills engineered a drive from the Phillipsburg 43 yard line with 1:53 left in the game. He passed to senior fullback Kyle Kats for 20 yards to the 23 and completed a five yard pass to junior wide receiver Clay Madden. On third down, he dropped back to pass, couldn't find an open receiver and ran the ball. He was knocked out of bounds after picking up a first down on the Panther 9 with 36 seconds left in the contest. A run by VanEaton to the 5 set up Wilhite's field goal.

"Seth made a great decision to get us in close on that final drive," said Coach Graber.

Leading rusher for Norton was Kats with 47 yards on 10 carries. He also had two pass receptions for 37 yards. Overlease ran for 43 yards on 19 carries. Mills gained 37 yards on 10 carries and VanEaton picked up 26 yards on 6 carries.

Senior tight end Justin Shirk caught 3 passes for 38 yards, Madden grabbed 1 for 2 yards and Overlease had 2 catches for minus 3 yards.

VanEaton had 2 kickoff returns for 32 yards and Lance Roe had 1 for 16 yards. Junior Luke

Pfannenstiel returned one punt for 5 yards.

Michael Sprigg kicked off 4 times for a 38 yard average.

Chris Davis averaged 33 yards on 6 punts and had several booming kicks. "Chris punted great," said Coach Graber. "He had just one short one."

Redinger was leading rusher for Phillipsburg with 35 yards on 14 carries.

"In the running game, we rotated Blake and Aaron at tailback and it helped them both to stay fresh," said Coach Graber.

"For this group of players to come back from a 1-2 record and end up 7-2 and district champions ranks right up there in my career. Our players have grown up so much in their attitudes. We've had young men step up and give us some great times and our veterans have stepped up and become more physical players.

"I tip my hat to our coaches for the great game they called. Todd Fulton and Lucas Melvin called an unbelievable game defensively and coaches Kevin Jilka and Jason Jones really helped out as well."

Next action

Norton has now qualified for bi-

district competition. The Blue Jays will host Riley County on Tuesday at Travis Field. Kickoff is at 6 p.m.

Riley County edged Beloit 23-22 on Friday night to place second in their district, which was won by Minneapolis.

GAME STATISTICS

NORTON	PHILLIPSBURG
16	First Downs 3
50-158	Yards Rushing 35-92
64	Yards Passing 11
222	Total Yards 103
8-16-0	Passes Completed 2-4-0
2-2	Fumbles Lost 1-2
6-45	Penalties 6-38
6-33	Punts 7-30



Norton's junior kicker William Wilhite signals that his field goal kick was good with eight seconds left to boost the Blue Jays to an exciting 16-13 district championship win

over Phillipsburg last night! Senior quarterback Seth Mills, No. 15, was the holder.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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