

# Norton loses 15-14 to Riley in Bi-District

By DICK BOYD

A Bi-District football championship slipped away from the Norton Community High School football team in the final minutes on Tuesday evening when the Blue Jays lost 15-14 at Riley County.

It was a defensive battle for three quarters, then Riley County took a 7-0 lead early in the final stanza. The Blue Jays rallied for two touchdowns to lead 14-7 but Riley County scored a touchdown with 1:08 left and tallied two extra points to take the win and advance in post-season play.

Riley County extended their season record to 9-1 and will play Hesston on Saturday for the regional championship. Norton finished the season 6-4.

Riley County was playing without senior quarterback and line-backer Zack Sullivan who broke his collarbone while making a tackle during Riley County's district win over Beloit. The Falcons rallied around his replacement, sophomore Jace Hartenbower, who played very well in his substitute role. He passed well and was the leading ball carrier for the Falcons.

Riley County kicked off to start the game but two holding penalties forced a punt by Chris Davis to the Riley County 43. With Hartenbower playing like a senior, he led the Falcons down field. After three Riley County first downs, Norton took over on their 32 when defensive end Nic Lewis sacked Hartenbower and he fumbled. Fullback Davis plowed over right tackle for four yards as the first quarter ended in a scoreless tie.

Defenses ruled in the second quarter where both teams were three-and-out on every possession. Norton punted four times and Riley County booted the ball three times and the first half ended without a score.

Wilhite kicked off for Norton to start the third quarter. With Hartenbower leading the way passing and running, the Falcons earned two first downs before be-



Norton defensive back Luke Pfannenstiel, left, and defensive tackle Davvid Stanley tackle Riley County quar-

terback Jase Hartenbower for a two yard loss during the Bi-District football game. — Telegram photos by Dick Boyd

ing forced to punt. The ball rolled dead on the Norton 9. After one first down, Norton punted to the Riley County 34. After the Falcons gained 20 yards on a screen pass, the Blue Jay defenders forced another Riley County punt. Once again, Norton was deep in its own territory, this time on the 6. It was three-and-out for the Blue Jays as the third quarter came to a close with a scoreless tie.

The fourth quarter was quite a contrast to the first three as both teams stepped up the intensity of their play. Davis' punt to start the final stanza rolled dead on the Norton 33, putting the Falcons in excellent field position and they scored quickly. On second down, Hartenbower ran a keeper for six yards, then he threw a touchdown pass to Blake Hageman. Hageman also kicked the extra point and the Falcons led 7-0 with 10:31 left in the game.

Blake VanEaton returned the ensuing kickoff to the Norton 47. The Blue Jays were unable to move the ball and Davis punted to the Riley County 10. Defensive back Luke Pfannenstiel made a big play as he intercepted a

Hartenbower pass and returned the ball to the 8. VanEaton gained four yards on two carries, then full-back Lance Roe blasted over right tackle for the first Norton touchdown. Senior kicker William Wilhite split the uprights and the game was tied 7-7 with 6:42 remaining.

After Wilhite's kickoff, linebacker Davis stripped the ball from a Falcon ball carrier and Pfannenstiel fell on the pigskin for Norton on the Riley County 33. Pfannenstiel ran a keeper for three yards, then Davis gained five to the 25. VanEaton ran for a first down on the 21. Davis made a great play from there as he ran around right end and down the sideline. A Falcon defender tried to tackle him on the three-yard-line but he pulled out of his grasp and stretched into the end zone for the go-ahead touchdown! Wilhite's kick put Norton on top 14-7 with 4:24 remaining.

Hartenbower returned Wilhite's kickoff to the 30 and led his team down field with most of the yardage coming on completed passes. On fourth and goal from the Norton 6, he connected with Justin Glenn in the corner of the end

zone for another Riley County touchdown. A fake kick for the extra point was successful when Hartenbower leaped out of a would-be Norton tackler's arms and into the end zone for two points to put the Falcons on top 15-14 with 1:08 left.

A squib kick by Riley County was recovered by Norton on the Blue Jay 49. On first down, Pfannenstiel ran a keeper, broke several tackles and reached the Falcon 39 for an apparent first down. A penalty nullified the play. Pfannenstiel completed an 11 yard pass to wide receiver Nathan Broeckelman but two sacks caused Norton to turn the ball over. Riley County ran out the clock for a 15-14 win.

"Our young men played as hard as they have all year but the game just slipped away," said Coach Bruce Graber.

"We were well prepared and tried a lot of things in the first half but couldn't feel comfortable with anything. We were in the heavy set and the unbalanced set offensively but were turning people loose. We didn't execute up front or in the backfield.

"It says a lot about our young

men that they came back in the second half and had a chance to win.

"We built our defense on stopping their running back J.J. Cosh and we did a good job of that but the sophomore quarterback really hurt us. He ran the ball well. Our defense played hard but not always smart.

"It was a great football game in that last quarter. Luke Pfannenstiel made two great plays when he intercepted the pass and when he recovered the ball after Chris Davis stripped it. After they scored their second touchdown, we knew they would try for two points. We had it defended pretty well but their quarterback made a great leap into the end zone.

"The offside penalty hurt us after the kickoff. We were trying to at least get close enough for a field goal."

Neither team gained many yards rushing. Norton had 76 and Riley County gained 82. The difference was in the passing game where the Blue Jays had just 37 and the Falcons picked up 127.

Leading ball carrier for Norton was VanEaton with 18 carries for 50 yards. Davis had 30 yards on 3

carries, Roe gained 8 on 2 attempts and Pfannenstiel had minus 12 on 9 rushes.

Broeckelman caught 1 pass for 13 yards and VanEaton had one reception for 9 yards.

VanEaton had 1 kickoff return for 35 yards and Pfannenstiel had 1 for 11 yards. Pfannenstiel had 1 punt return for 5 yards.

Wilhite kicked off 3 times for a 51 yard average.

Roe was the leading tackler with 12 solos, 4 assists for 16 total. Pfannenstiel had 8 solos and 1 assist and Broeckelman had 7 solos.

"I enjoyed working with this group of young men and am really proud of them," said Coach Graber.

"They really had good attitudes. They were team oriented. There were no egos, they never bickered. They wanted to play and have fun. They were overachievers and achieved more than expected of them and that's a compliment to them.

"Our seniors battled hard and brought some of our younger players along with them and showed them how to battle.

"The four teams we lost to are a combined 38-2 and are still playing. We played dead even with them at times and were in every game. We just didn't have the consistency we needed."

Norton will lose ten seniors — Clay Madden, William Wilhite, Nathan Broeckelman, Luke Pfannenstiel, Nathan Morse, Lance Roe, Austin Brooks, Andrew Ables, Heath Vincent and Davvid Stanley.

The annual football banquet will be held at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 20, in the high school cafeteria.

## GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Riley County		
8	10	First Downs	10
76	82	Yards Rushing	82
37	127	Yards Passing	127
113	209	Total Yards	209
3-9-0	10-21-1	Passes Compl.	10-21-1
0	2	Fumbles Lost	2
6-40	6-37	Penalties	6-37
8-35	5-35	Punts	5-35

# Blue Jays lose heart-breaker in battle of the birds

The Norton Blue Jays lost a 15-14 heart-breaker to the Riley County Falcons in a bi-district high school football battle of the birds.

## First Quarter

Norton's Luke Pfannenstiel returned the opening kickoff to the Blue Jay 29-yard-line. On the first play from scrimmage, tailback Blake VanEaton ran around right end for 10 yards and a first down. Quarterback Pfannenstiel made one yard on a keeper but VanEaton was stopped for no gain. Norton was penalized 10 yards for holding on the play. Pfannenstiel was tackled for a loss but Norton was called for holding again and the ball was moved back to the 15.

Pfannenstiel gained two yards and VanEaton got loose for an 11 yard gain but it wasn't enough for a first down and Chris Davis punted. The ball rolled dead on the Riley County 43.

Running back J.J. Cosh gained six yards on first down before defensive tackle Davvid Stanley tackled him. Cosh ran for another yard before linebacker VanEaton stopped him. On third down, quarterback Jase Hartenbower went into the shot gun and ran out of that formation for a first down on the Norton 47.

Hartenbower ran the keeper and defensive back Pfannenstiel and Stanley combined to throw him for a two yard loss. Hartenbower ran the ball again and gained seven yards before linebacker Davis tackled him. Next, Hartenbower passed to Justin Glenn and defensive back Nathan Broeckelman stopped him on the 39. On fourth and two, Hartenbower ran another keeper and was tackled by Broeckelman after a two yard gain. Officials called for a measurement and the Falcons had a first down by inches.

After an incomplete pass, Hartenbower ran a quarterback draw and was tackled by Davis after a three yard gain. Another draw by Hartenbower netted five yards as defensive guard Austin Brooks and VanEaton tackled him and the Falcons were in another fourth down situation. Cosh ran around right end where defensive back Todd Bolt tackled him on the 26;

however, it was enough for another first down.

Running back Dane Starnes gained four yards around left end before Davis stopped his progress. Cosh got nothing as defensive tackle Heath Vincent, linebacker Lance Roe and defensive end Nic Lewis dropped him to the turf. Cosh was tackled back on the 27 by Lewis and Roe, then Lewis sacked Hartenbower, he fumbled and Norton took over on the 32. Fullback Davis plowed over right tackle for four yards as the first quarter ended in a scoreless tie.

## Second Quarter

VanEaton lost yardage to the 27, Pfannenstiel ran a keeper to the 30 and Davis punted. Cosh received Davis' punt and Andrew Ables tackled him just as he caught the ball on the Riley County 37. Hartenbower swept around right end for a seven yard gain before Roe tackled him. Pfannenstiel, VanEaton and Lewis combined to stop Cosh for no gain. After VanEaton tackled Hartenbower for no gain, the Falcons punted. The ball rolled dead on the Norton 25.

Pfannenstiel passed to Davis for a first down on the Norton 45. VanEaton struggled ahead for five yards on two downs, then Pfannenstiel went to the air again. This time his pass was incomplete and Davis punted.

Cosh fielded the punt and Logan Kats made the tackle. A block-in-the-back penalty against Riley County moved the ball back to the 6. A draw by Hartenbower gained four yards but an illegal procedure penalty against the Falcons moved the ball half the distance to the goal to the 3. Hartenbower ran another keeper and VanEaton tackled him after a four yard gain. Broeckelman came up hard from his defensive back position to tackle Hartenbower for no gain.

Hartenbower went to the air and defensive backs Clay Madden and Pfannenstiel were alert defensively and made sure the intended receiver did not make a catch. The Falcons punted and Broeckelman covered the ball on the Riley County 38.

Norton's good field position was hampered by a five yard penalty for

illegal procedure. VanEaton ran around right end but was dropped for a two yard loss. A screen pass from Pfannenstiel to VanEaton in the left flat gained nine yards to the 36. Another pass was incomplete, however, and Davis punted into the end zone.

Riley County took over on their 20. On first down, Cosh lost two yards, compliments of VanEaton. Cosh gained four yards as VanEaton and Vincent tackled him. On third down, Roe and Stanley put a good rush on Hartenbower as he tried to pass and his aerial was incomplete. Riley County punted.

Pfannenstiel returned the ball to the Norton 45. A first down pass intended for Davis was incomplete but Riley County was flagged for pass interference and the ball was moved to the Riley County 40. VanEaton found some running room and was tackled on the 26 but an illegal procedure penalty cost the Blue Jays the gain and the ball came back to the 45. Pfannenstiel ran for three yards and VanEaton gained two more. A third down pass was incomplete and Davis punted.

The ball went out of bounds on the Riley County 10. Cosh gained nothing as Stanley and Vincent wrapped him up. Cosh lost three yards as VanEaton blitzed to make the tackle on the final play of the scoreless first half.

## Third Quarter

Bruce Field returned Wilhite's kickoff to start the second half and Todd Bolt tackled him on the 24. Hartenbower ran a keeper but Roe tackled him after a one yard gain. The Blue Jay defense put a good rush on Hartenbower and he threw incomplete on second down but a third down pass completion to Justin Glenn was good for a first down on the 35.

Cosh got nothing as Stanley stopped him. An illegal motion penalty cost the Falcons five yards but Hartenbower ran a keeper to the 37 where Brooks tackled him. It was third and eight but Hartenbower got loose around left end for a first down on the Riley County 49 where Jared Cox made the tackle. Roe tackled Cosh for no gain. Stanley put a good rush on Hartenbower and his pass was in-



The Blue Jays' junior tailback Blake VanEaton tries for extra yardage as Joel Eastes, No. 44, for Riley County tries to make a tackle during the Bi-District football game on Tuesday at Riley County.

complete. Hartenbower tried another keeper and was tackled by a whole host of Norton defenders for no gain. Riley County punted and the ball rolled dead on the Norton 9.

VanEaton gained nine yards on two carries and Pfannenstiel sneaked for a first down on the 20. Roe ran over left tackle for four yards and VanEaton gained three more on two carries. Davis punted and the ball rolled dead on the Riley County 34.

Riley County surprised the Norton defenders with a screen pass. Hartenbower barely got the ball off as he was almost sacked by hard-rushing Blue Jays but Glenn caught it and gained 20 yards before Roe tackled him from behind on the Norton 46. Cosh gained three yards before VanEaton tackled him. After an incomplete pass,

Hartenbower was stopped by Roe for no gain. The Riley County punt rolled dead on the Norton 6.

VanEaton gained four yards on three carries and Davis punted as the third quarter ended with no points on the scoreboard for either team.

## Fourth Quarter

The punt by Davis rolled dead on the Norton 33, giving the Falcons excellent field position and they were able to take advantage of it. On first down, Cosh was tackled for no gain by Roe. Hartenbower ran a keeper around left end for a six yard gain before Pfannenstiel tackled him. On third down, Hartenbower passed into the end zone and Blake Hageman caught it for a touchdown. Hageman also kicked the extra point and the Falcons led 7-0 with 10:31 left in the game.

VanEaton returned the kickoff up

the middle, then broke to the outside, picked up his blocking and ran to the Norton 47 before being tackled. An illegal shift cost Norton five yards. A pass fell incomplete and VanEaton ran to the Norton 48. After another incomplete pass, Davis punted. Stanley downed the ball on the Riley County 10.

Hartenbower ran a keeper for four yards, then Roe tackled him on another keeper. The play did not count, however, since the Falcons were penalized back to the 6 for offensive holding. Hartenbower went back to pass, hoping to surprise the Blue Jay secondary, but it was not a good choice. Pfannenstiel alertly stepped in front of the potential receiver and intercepted the ball. Pfannenstiel returned the pigskin all the way to the 8.

VanEaton plowed ahead to the 4

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