

Norton wrestling coach receives two more honors

By DICK BOYD

Bill Johnson, head wrestling coach at Norton Community High School, has received two more awards for his coaching expertise to add to the many he has already received.

During the 21st annual Hall of Fame and Awards Banquet of the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association on Oct. 29 in Salina, Coach Johnson was named the 2005 Head Coach of the Year in Kansas by the National High School Wrestling Coaches Association.

He was also one of 18 coaches and boosters of high school wrestling named "2005 Man-of-the-Year" by *Wrestling USA Magazine*.

"Norton's Bill Johnson is a contributor to Kansas wrestling on many levels," said the announcement by the magazine.

"He is a very successful coach at Norton Community High School with two straight state team titles, 63 state placers, 20 state champions and a 119-32 dual record in 14 years at Norton.

"He has served on the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Board of Directors for 16 years, has been Junior National Team Director for seven years and is active with USA Wrestling-Kansas on the youth level. He was a national champion collegiate wrestler at Fort Hays State."

Coach Johnson is a graduate of Flinthills High School, Rosalia. In addition to winning the national championship, he was national runner-up twice and placed fourth. He was chosen the "Outstanding Senior Male Athlete" at Fort Hays State in 1989. He also placed 10th in the wrestling Olympic trials at

114.5 pounds in 1988.

Coach Johnson was inducted in the fall of 1999 into the Tiger Sports Hall of Fame at Fort Hays. He has also been inducted into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame.

In the 2005 season, Coach Johnson's Blue Jay wrestlers won five of six invitational tournaments, including the prestigious 48th annual Newton Tournament of Champions. Norton is the smallest school to ever win this tournament.

During the year, Norton met and finished above the eventual Kansas 6A tournament runner-up, the 5A champions, the 4A champions and the Oklahoma Class 2A state champions, which is the equivalent of Kansas 4A.

The Blue Jay wrestlers won the championship of the most competitive regional tournament in the state, qualifying nine wrestlers for state, then dominated the state tournament.

Among others receiving awards at the banquet in Salina were Eldon Zimelman, St. Francis and Doug Moore, Concordia, Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association Hall of Fame inductees; Brock Hutchinson, Smith Center, and Peter Koster, Oakley, KWCA Class 3-2-1A Regional Coaches of the Year; Randy Bahe, Goodland, KWCA Class 4A Regional Coach of the Year; Larry Gabel, St. Francis, KWCA Class 3-2-1A Coach of the Year; Dennis Charbonneau, Clay Center, KWCA Class 4A Coach of the Year; Danny Grater, Clay Center, NWCA Wrestler of the Year and Levi Younkin, Oakley, Class 3-2-1A Senior Wrestler of the Year.



Norton Coach Bill Johnson accepts the state championship trophy for the second year in a row on Sat., Feb. 26. —Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Former Norton wrestler still winning

By DICK BOYD

Michael Sprigg, a freshman from Norton, won a significant match earlier in the month in Army's Wrestling Intrasquad Scrimmage in West Point, N.Y.

His overtime 5-2 win over senior teammate James Hollis at heavyweight helped his team win 21-14.

Sprigg's match was tied 1-1 at the end of regulation and remained deadlocked at 2-2 through the first four overtime periods. In the fifth extra session, Sprigg broke through with an escape to take the lead and added a takedown to provide the final margin of victory.

The match, which was contested inside the newly renovated Arvin Gymnasium, kicked off the Black Knights' 2005-'06 season.

"Michael Sprigg, who was a high school All-American, is a tough wrestler and the coaching staff is optimistic that he will make a smooth transition to the college level," the *Army Wrestling News* reported.

Army wrestling may have its toughest dual meet schedule in history with nearly half of the meets against top 25 teams. The Black Knights' toughest challenge will be facing two-time NCAA team champion Oklahoma State in Stillwater in January. Oklahoma State is ranked first in the nation again and is exceptionally strong with eight of ten wrestlers ranked nationally.

"Clearly this is a tough challenge for our team but it's a test that we relish," said Coach Chuck

Barbee.

"We want to be one of the elite programs in the country and, to achieve that goal, we will have to wrestle the best.

"We focused our pre-season on establishing a solid conditioning base as well as designing workouts to be more physically and mentally challenging. Our goals are focused on building our team's internal bond, wrestling harder than any team in the nation and winning with speed.

"The start of every season is always exciting, however, this year began with a special sense of anticipation. This is the inaugural season in our completely re-built Arvin Gym. This new facility is spectacular, perhaps the best in the country."

A two-time state heavyweight wrestling champion for Norton Community High School, Sprigg forged a record of 129-18 in four prep years of wrestling. He was ranked as high as 15th nationally by *W.I.N. Magazine*.

He finished fourth at heavyweight in the 2005 NHSCA Senior National Championships to receive All-American status. One of his wins in the national championships was over the No. 1 ranked high school heavyweight in the nation.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. David Sprigg, Norton.

Army's intercollegiate season began in the SUNY Brockport/Oklahoma Gold Classic in Brockport, N.Y. on Saturday. Sprigg competed and had a 3-2 record at heavyweight, which would have placed him either seventh or eighth had they wrestled for that position. He finished with a better record than Hollis.

Army placed third in the tournament. Oklahoma won the championship.

Norton graduate wrestling for Central Oklahoma

By DICK BOYD

Sophomore Eric Johnson from Norton was one of two Central Oklahoma wrestlers to score major decisions, which helped his Blue team to a 29-17 win over the Bronze in the team's final intrasquad match of pre-season on Nov. 3 at Hamilton Field House in Edmond, Okla.

Eric had four takedowns and two near-falls in a 15-3 decision over teammate Cole Jolly at 149 pounds.

Eric is battling No. 6 nationally ranked Shea Timothy, a returning national placer and All-American, for a spot on the varsity. Timothy won his match 3-0 over Justin Wood.

Central Oklahoma is ranked No. 6 in the nation in the NCAA Division II Wrestling Coaches' Association pre-season Top 20 poll.

The Broncos have five All-Americans and three other starters back from last year's team that tied for 11th in the national tournament.

Last year's season was the worst in 29 years for Central Oklahoma,

which is used to placing in the top three nationally.

"Last year was definitely not up to the standards we have with our program," said head coach David James, who has a 264-92-4 dual record heading into his 24th year at the helm.

"The expectations are still there. This team is going to have to regain some respect on the Division II level and that's going to be a real challenge, but I expect us to meet it.

"I'm excited about who we have coming back, but they know they have to step it up this year. Who we have coming back and who we recruited will make a lot of the weights very competitive and that's a good thing."

Johnson is a letterman, who redshirted in 2003-04. He wrestled in two open tournaments, finishing fifth at the Central Missouri State Open at 149 pounds. Last season, he saw action at 149 and 157. He went 7-8 while wrestling in three open tournaments and five duals. He earned a big first period fall that sparked the Broncos to an 18-16 win over Minnesota

State-Mankato at the National Wrestling Coaches Association Division II National Duals.

"Eric will benefit from gaining much-needed experience last season," said Coach James.

"He will push for more action this season and should continue to improve with mat time. He is an aggressive grappler on his feet with excellent fundamentals. He's going to make it competitive at 149."

Johnson was a multi-sport standout at Norton Community High School. He was a four-time state wrestling finalist, winning two titles. He had an impressive 116-12 career record with 327 takedowns. He was also all-league in football and a three-year track letterman.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Johnson, Norton.

Central Oklahoma officially opened their season in the Central Missouri State Open on Sunday. Johnson did not compete due to a minor knee injury he suffered last week in practice.

Team scores were not kept.

Eighth-grade girls basketball begins

The Norton eighth grade girls basketball team opened their season with a win, defeating Stockton 29-19 on Nov. 3.

"The eighth grade girls opened their season on the road against Stockton and came away with a 29-19 victory," said Coach Chuck Zimmerman.

"This was a typical opening game as we played hard but were not as smooth as we want to be. We committed way too many mistakes, which cost us many opportunities on the offensive end of the floor. But, we will work very hard to correct them and get better each and every time out.

"In deflects, the defensive hustle stat which reflects how much defensive pressure is being put on our opponents, Amanda Ray led the team with 6, followed by Beth Winkel, who tipped 3. Shelby Jones, Lacy Keilig and Ashlie Stewart each hustled for 2.

"A deflect by one teammate usually leads to a steal by another teammate. Steals leader was Ray with 5, while Jones took 4 and Hannah Waggoner, 3. The team had a total of 20, which is very good for the first game of the season.

"Rebounding, the final step in playing good defense, was key in this game as it will be in all of our games. Three players grabbed 4 off the boards — Kaitlyn Wolf, Jones and Ray — while Steph Eagleburger pulled 3 down to help

the team's total of 26.

"Assist numbers were low in this first game. We will continue to become more comfortable with the offense and each other and this will increase. Jones found three teammates open for scores, while Ray found 2.

"We found that the rest of the league has worked hard to improve and we must work harder to keep in the top tier of the league so we may continue the success started by our 'big sisters' in basketball."

Scoring for Norton were Stewart, 9 points; Ray, 8; Kendra Engelbert, Keilig, Beth Roy, Jones, Winkel and Alyssa Thomson, 2 each.

Other members of the eighth grade team are Raven Brown, Brandi Graham, Austine Dole, Kelsey Nuzum and Emily Juennemann. Managers are Ashley Esslinger and Jessica Reeves.

On the seventh grade team are Kelsie Griffith, Kyra Fulton, Rebekah Streck, Kaylen Rossi, Lindsey Tacha, Sophie Mills, Meaghan Peterson, Dustyna Sprigg, Allison Gass and Dieder Kramer. Managers are Katie Gall, Ashley Millan, Katie Scott and Rachel Shepard.

Coaches are Anne Stiles and Lynette Archer.

The Junior Lady Jays will play Phillipsburg today, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Norton.

Junior High Basketball Schedule

- Tuesday, Nov. 15 — Phillipsburg Middle School, here, 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 17 — Osborne Junior High, here, 5:30 p.m.
- Monday, Nov. 21 — WaKeeney Grade School, here, 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 1 — Hill City Junior High, there, 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Dec. 8 — Ellis Washington Elementary, there, 5:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Dec. 10 — Smith Center, Beloit and Belleville, at Smith Center, 9 a.m.
- Thursday, Jan. 5 — 8th grade Mid-Continent Elementary League Feather Bracket
- Saturday, Jan. 7 — 8th grade Mid-Continent Elementary League Tournament
- Thursday, Jan. 12 — 8th grade Mid-Continent Elementary League Championships

Seventh-grade boys open with 47-24 win

The Norton seventh grade boys basketball team opened its season with a 47-24 win over Stockton on Nov. 3.

"Our pressure defense really bothered Stockton," said Coach Jim Myers. "We ended up with 25 steals, which is very good.

"I thought we looked pretty good for our first game. We have a number of things to work on, though, including free throw shooting.

"Dakota had a monster game with 16 points and 10 rebounds. That, along with the solid play of the guards, sure helped in this victory."

Dakota Dreher led scoring for the Junior Jays with 8 two-pointers for 16 points. He was followed by Kaid McKenna and Spencer Shirk, 8 points each; Troy Bainter, 4; Bill Broeckelman, 3; Landon Keiswetter, Luke Ninemire and Cole Archer, 2 each.

Rebounding leaders were Dreher with 10; McKenna, 7; Bainter, 4; Ninemire, 3; Shirk, Broeckelman and Archer, 2 each; Keiswetter and Brett Terrell, 1 each.

Shirk led steals with 5, followed by Broeckelman, 4; McKenna, Keiswetter, Ninemire and Dreher, 3 each; Bainter, 2; and Archer, 1.

The junior varsity team won its first game 20-15.

"The junior varsity looked good," said the coach. "The team was led by Luke Ninemire. In this game, we combined with the 8th grade junior varsity. We played in the second half."

Ninemire led scoring with 7 points in the second half.

Other members of the seventh grade team are Chance McMullen, John Koch, Randy Cochran, Andrew Otter, Ryan Blecha, David Puent and Terrell Lane. Kegan Vanover is the team manager.

Joe Cox is the assistant coach.

On the eighth grade team are Matt Pollock, Adam Myers, Connor Pfannenstiel, Jacob Mannel, Justin Chandler, Christopher Maddy, Andrew Soderlund, Landon Hamel, Ronne Tafoya, Matt Miller, Kaenon Keiswetter, Grant McClymont, Marcus Herman, Ashton Draper, J.D. Gall, Robert Derauf, Casey Robison and D.J. Ebner. Managers are William Everhart, Tyler Cook, Jake Romye and Kerstan Reichmeier.

Lucas Melvin is the head coach with Coach Cox assisting him.

The Junior Jays will play Phillipsburg tonight in Norton, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Sports Hall of Fame has a new location

By DICK BOYD

The grand opening of the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame in its new location at the John Q. Hammonds Plaza, 238 N. Mead, in the heart of the Old Town district in Wichita will be held this Thursday through Sunday.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday at the new 27,000 square-foot facility with a number of Hall of Fame inductees expected to make an appearance.

Hours will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1-5 p.m. on Sunday.

Admission is free for the first 200 visitors on Thursday. The first 150 guests on Friday, Saturday and Sunday will receive a limited edition Kansas Sports Hall of Fame commemorative keepsake.

Galleries in the Hall, devoted to football, basketball, track, baseball and many other sports, educate and entertain visitors about the contribution Kansas athletes, coaches and teams have made to the history of sports throughout the world.

Photos and memorabilia pay tribute to Kansas Sports legends including Barry Sanders, Walter Johnson, Dean Smith, Dr. James Naismith, Wilt Chamberlain, Jim Ryun, Lynette Woodard, Jackie Stiles, Gary Spani, Gale Sayers, Dave Stallworth and hundreds more.

Special displays recognize Olympians, as well as world and national champions. College and high school sports histories are prominent throughout the museum.