

Blue Jay boys basketball team had excellent season

By DICK BOYD

With only two returning starters, and those starters being the only returning lettermen, the 2005-06 season for Coach Doug Reusink's Norton Community High School boys basketball team did not appear to be very promising but both the veterans and newcomers lived up to the Blue Jay winning tradition!

The Norton boys quintet compiled a 12-8 final season record, which compared very favorably with the previous year's 15-7 mark by a team led by all-league senior forward Ryan Maddy, who averaged 16 points and 7 rebounds per game and all-league senior guard Kyle Kats who was third high scorer and rebounder and led the team in steals and assists.

Last year's team placed second in the Topside Tipoff Tournament in Goodland, tied for second in the Mid-Continent League race and placed third in the MCL Tournament. Their final loss was 50-47 in the semi-finals of the substate tournament to eventual Class 3A state champion Thomas More Prep of Hays.

Returning starters-lettermen for this season's Norton Blue Jay boys team were 6-foot-6-inch senior center Heath Vincent and 6' senior guard Nathan Morse. The only other senior was guard Dane Krizek who was injured and did not play.

Nic Lewis, 6'3" junior center; Brian Juenemann, 5'10" junior guard; Jared Engelbert, 5'11" junior guard; Logan Kats, 5'8" sophomore guard; Jared Cox, 6' sophomore guard-center and Wes Georgeson, 6'3" sophomore forward, saw a lot of playing time throughout the season.

Unfortunately, Engelbert suffered a broken arm in a game at Plainville on February 10 and was lost for the season. He was the most accurate Norton shooter from three-point range and second most accurate free throw shooter.

The inexperienced Blue Jays got their initiation under fire in the season-opening Topside Tipoff Tournament in Goodland, where they placed sixth and emerged with a 1-2 record.

Never fear, the youngsters led by the two senior lettermen were learning fast. They won six of their next

seven games to extend their record to 7-3.

Their only loss in that stretch was to eventual Class 2A state champion Trego Community and their fourth loss was in the championship finals of the Mid-Continent League Tournament to No.2 seed Trego after Norton had defeated No.1 seed Plainville in the semi-finals.

The Blue Jays compiled a 5-3 record in league play and finished in fourth place.

At season's end, they were seeded No.3 in the Class 3A substate tournament and lost 45-44 to No.6 Bennington in the first round to end their season. It was the only time during the season that Norton lost two games in a row.

Assisting Coach Reusink again this season were coaches David Stover and Todd Fulton. Student managers were Kayleigh Brooks, Ashley S. Maybon and Lacy Ellis.

Norton opened the season with a 96-21 loss to a strong Class 5A Ottawa quintet in the Topside Tipoff Tournament in Goodland. Ottawa won the tournament championship with a 72-52 victory over Goodland.

In the second round of the Topside Tipoff Tournament, Norton got their first win by outscoring Weskan 51-39 as Vincent poured in 17 points. In the game for fifth place, Norton lost 40-31 to a good Holyoke, Colo., quintet who had competed in the Colorado state tournament the past three years.

Vincent was chosen to the all-tournament team for the second straight year.

On December 16, the Blue Jays traveled to Phillipsburg for their first Mid-Continent League game of the season and surprised a quality Panther team by beating them 57-56 in overtime to even their record at 2-2. Kats hit a three-point shot at the buzzer in regulation to send the game into an extra period with the score tied at 53-all. It was Kats' only basket of the game. Veteran center Vincent hit the winning basket and ended with 18 points.

Norton started the new year with a winning record after defeating Oberlin of the Northwest Kansas League 59-24 in Norton on January 3. Two days later, the Blue Jays won

their second league game as they outscored Stockton 62-36 in Norton in a weather-postponed game from December. Lewis led Norton in scoring with 15 points and was followed by Vincent with 13.

The Blue Jays won their third game in four days and extended their record to 5-2 and league record to 3-0 by outpointing a visiting Osborne quintet 53-37. Vincent poured in 19 points and Morse was on target from the perimeter as he swished 17.

Norton had their fourth straight home game on January 13 when they hosted eventual Class 2A state champion Trego Community. The Golden Eagles left the nets smoking as they hit 7 of 10 three-point attempts and 19 of 26 free throws for 73 percent from the line in a 66-40 league win. Vincent led the Blue Jays in scoring with 14 points. It was Norton's first loss since the season-opening Topside Tipoff Tournament in Goodland.

In their next contest, the No.4 seeded Blue Jays seemed to be on the verge of suffering their second straight loss when they hosted No.5 seed Hill City in the first round of the Mid-Continent League Tournament on January 17.

Norton trailed by 17 points at half-time but the Blue Jays proved that it isn't over until it's over as they outscored the Ringnecks by 21 points in the second half to record an exciting 37-33 victory.

An 18-1 fourth quarter in Norton's favor gave Coach Reusink his 400th victory in 27 seasons of coaching in Northern Valley and Norton. Vincent continued to lead Norton in scoring as he tallied 14 points.

The Blue Jays met No.1 seed Plainville in Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays in the tournament semi-finals. The momentum from the win over Hill City carried over and the Blue Jays upset Plainville 56-55 to extend their record to 7-3 and drop the Cardinals to 10-2. Vincent hit 17 points which included the winning basket with 15 seconds left in the game.

The win over Plainville put Norton in the championship contest versus No.2 seed Trego Community but, once again, the Blue Jays were



Norton boys basketball coach Doug Reusink gives his players a pep talk during a time out in the Blue Jays' 56-55 victory over No.1 seed Plainville in the Mid-Continent League Tournament semi-finals in Hays this season. Players are, from left, Heath Vincent, Nic Lewis and Logan Kats.

unable to outscore the Golden Eagles and lost 60-42 to place runnerup in the tournament. Trego extended their record to 11-2 and Norton dropped to 7-4.

On January 24, Norton returned to Goodland to play the Cowboys of the Northwest Kansas League. Goodland had lost to Ottawa by just 72-52 in the championship contest of the Topside Tipoff Tournament. A Blue Jay quintet that was much improved since the one that lost to Ottawa in the Topside Tipoff arrived in Goodland and returned with a 61-53 victory. Vincent tallied 16 points and Morse swished 12.

Norton hosted Smith Center on January 31 in a return to Mid-Continent League play and defeated the Redmen 50-41. Lewis led Norton in scoring with 20 points, followed by Vincent with 13.

On February 3, Norton traveled to Hill City knowing that the Ringnecks would not have forgotten the Blue Jays' come-from-behind win in the league tournament. Norton trailed by 28-24 at the end of the third quarter and held Hill City to just one field goal in the fourth period but the Ringnecks hit their free throws to pull out a 41-33 win.

Norton traveled to Oberlin on February 7 for a contest with their longtime Northwest Kansas League rivals. The Blue Jays won 56-37 to extend their record to 10-5. Vincent led Norton scoring with 17 points; Lewis and Morse had 10 each.

On February 10, the Blue Jays had another road trip to play a team with payback on their minds and Plainville was able to do just that. The Cardinals rolled to a 71-45 win as they hit 56 percent of their field goal tries which included 70 percent accuracy from beyond the arc. Vincent led Norton in scoring with

23 points, more than half of the Blue Jay total.

Norton entertained a quality Hoxie quintet from the Northwest Kansas League on February 14. The Blue Jays beat the Indians 43-37 in a defensive battle. Kats led Norton in scoring with 12 points.

The final league contest for Norton was on February 17 in Ellis. The Blue Jays beat the Railroaders 53-41 to extend their final league record to 5-3, good enough for a fourth place finish in the league race. Vincent and Morse each scored 11 points.

In the final game of the regular season, Norton hosted Colby of the Northwest Kansas League on February 21. The Blue Jays lost 46-40. Lewis was leading Norton scorer with 16 points.

Norton was seeded No.3 in the Beloit Class 3A Substate Tournament and hosted No.6 seed Bennington on February 27. It was a tight game. With 3:38 left, Norton led 42-41 and the score was tied at 44-all with 2:11 remaining on the scoreboard clock. Only one point was scored the rest of the way but it was a Bennington free throw with 4.8 seconds showing and gave the visitors a 45-44 victory. Vincent scored 14 points to lead Norton.

The Blue Jays ended the season with a 12-8 record which would have seemed impossible to many at the start of the season.

Vincent was named to the first team of the Mid-Continent League All-League Team by vote of team coaches.

Season statistics

As a team, Norton averaged 46.8 points per game this season compared to 47.7 by opponents. The Blue Jays hit 39.5 percent of their field goal tries and opponents swished 37.2 percent.

Norton connected on 57.3 percent from the charity stripe compared to 64.8 percent by opponents.

The Blue Jays had a big advantage over opponents in the rebounding department. They averaged 28.8 caroms per contest compared to 22.9 by opponents.

Norton had 144 steals on defense for an average of 7.2. The Norton defense caused 271 opponent turnovers for 13.5 per contest. The Blue Jays had 203 assists which is just over 10 per game.

Vincent was Norton's leading scorer with an average of 13 points per game. Lewis was second with 9 points per contest and Morse was third with a 6.8 points per game average.

Vincent was most accurate shooter for Norton. He hit 76.5 percent from the free throw line and 57.9 percent from the field.

Lewis was leading rebounder with an average of 7.7 per game and Vincent was right behind him with a 7 carom average.

Vincent blocked 46 shots this season. Second to him was Lewis with 13.

Steals leader was Kats with 35 total, followed by Juenemann, Lewis, 21 each; Georgeson, 16; Engelbert, 15; Vincent, 14; Morse, 13.

Kats was assists leader with 70, followed by Morse, 33; Juenemann, 22; Engelbert, Georgeson, 20 each; Vincent, 19.

"I was pleased with our season," said Coach Reusink. "We made great improvement throughout the season and played above expectations. We could play with anybody on a given night."

"Obviously, we will miss our seniors Heath Vincent and Nathan Morse. You don't find many young men as committed who put in the time they've put in to be better players."

Norton girls had another outstanding basketball season

By DICK BOYD

With eight returning letter winners, four of whom were starters, Coach Kevin Jilka's Norton Community High School girls basketball team was expected to have another outstanding season in 2005-06 and they came through with an unbeaten Mid-Continent League championship, runnerup in the MCL tournament and 18-2 final record.

Last year's quintet was also a good one, winning the league and league tournament and compiling a 17-5 mark.

Returning starters this season were seniors Chelsea Cox, 6-foot center; Becca Ebert, 5'11" center; Whitney Newell, 5'6" guard and Karlie Jones, 5'4" guard.

Other returning letter winners were senior guards Klaire Mann and Amber Overlease and junior center Maggie Nielsen. Senior guard Chelle Donovan was injured and served as a manager.

Other seniors on this year's quintet were center Rachael Lentz and forward Amber Waggoner.

Also seeing lots of varsity action were sophomore center Chantille Campbell and freshman guard Laura Lee Baird.

Assisting Coach Jilka again this season were coaches George Rossi and Joan Bolt. Student managers, in addition to Donovan, were Darci Darling and Lucy Gosselin.

The Lady Jays started the season with a 65-54 win over Ottawa in the first round of the Topside Tipoff Tournament in Goodland. Cox and Jones each hit 21 points. In the semi-finals, Norton defeated Burlington, Colo. 66-37. The win was a milestone for Coach Jilka since it was his 400th victory in 24 years of coaching in Norton.

Phillipsburg on December 16 to start the Mid-Continent League season. Cox and Jones each scored 16 points.

The Lady Jays got the new year off to a good start with a 42-31 win over Oberlin in Norton on January 3. Norton hit only 31 percent from the field but the Lady Jay defense limited the Lady Red Devils to 24 percent. Cox led scoring with 17 points.

Two days later, Norton defeated Stockton 66-37 in Norton in a game postponed from December due to inclement weather. Cox scored 21 points and Jones hit 15.

Playing their third game in four days, Norton defeated Osborne 45-42 in Norton on January 6. Norton led 32-18 at halftime but the Lady Bulldogs made a game of it in the second half. Jones hit 16 points and Cox tallied 14.

On January 13, the Lady Jays entertained Trego Community with a 57-25 romp. Trego was playing with no seniors and only four juniors. Jones hit 18 points, Ebert 15 and Baird 14.

No.1 seed Norton hosted No.8 seed Smith Center on January 16 in the first round of the Mid-Continent

League Tournament. The Lady Jays prevailed 39-21.

On January 20, tournament games moved to Hays and Gross Memorial Coliseum. Norton played No.5 seed Trego and won 34-19 to advance to the championship finals.

Norton's record fell to 10-1 with a 50-37 loss to No.3 seed Ellis in the finals. The Lady Railroaders extended their record to 10-2. Cox scored 17 points in a losing cause.

On January 24, the Lady Jays traveled to Goodland for a regular season game against the Cowgirls whom they had beaten for the Topside Tipoff title. The Cowgirls were ready for them and determined to avenge the earlier defeat. Norton had to come from behind to win 39-38. The Lady Jays outscored the Cowgirls 20-8 in the fourth quarter. Jones hit the winning basket with 15 seconds left. Cox led Norton in scoring with 13 points.

The Lady Jays returned home on January 31 to defeat Smith Center 48-30. Jones led scoring with 17 and Cox hit 12.

Norton traveled to Hill City on February 3 and returned with a 56-32

league victory. It was a team effort as 10 different girls made scoring, rebounding or steal plays. Baird led scoring with 13 points.

The Lady Jays went on the road again on February 7 when they traveled to Oberlin and defeated the Lady Red Devils 45-33.

A third straight road trip resulted in a 60-34 win at Plainville on February 10. Baird poured in 21 points and Jones hit 17.

An outstanding Hoxie team came to town on February 14. The Lady Jays were equal to the task and dealt the Lady Indians a 51-44 loss. The Norton defense caused 23 Hoxie turnovers while the Lady Jays turned the ball over just 9 times. Ebert led Norton scoring with 13 points, Cox hit 12 and Jones swished 10. It was Hoxie's fourth loss and extended the Norton season record to 16-1.

The schedule did not appear to be getting any easier for Norton, however, because the Lady Jays' next game was at Ellis, home of the only team to beat them. It was February 17 and only three days after the tough win over Hoxie. The Norton girls

were determined to make amends for the MCL championship loss to the Lady Railroaders and did so in rebounding fashion. It was no contest this time around as Norton rolled to a 46-31 victory which brought a perfect 8-0 league record and championship with it.

It was the first home loss of the season for Ellis and dropped their record to 15-4. Baird was the leading scorer for the Lady Jays with 19 points.

The final game of the regular season was against another tough opponent, Colby, the No.5 state ranked team in Class 4A. The contest was in the friendly confines of Norton Community High School Memorial Gym on February 21 and the Lady Jays won 34-31 to complete the regular season with a sterling 18-1 record. Colby dropped to 15-5. Jones led Norton in scoring with 12 points.

Norton was the No.1 seed in the Class 3A Substate Tournament and received a first round bye since Salina St. John's Military did not have a girls team. After a 10-day layoff, Norton traveled to Beloit to play No.4 seed Riley County in the semi-finals. The Lady Jays hit just 20 percent of their field goal attempts and the result was a disappointing 44-33 loss and end to an exceptional season. Jones was leading scorer for Norton with 12 points.

At the end of the season, Cox was chosen by league coaches to the first team of the All-Mid-Continent League Team for the third consecutive year. Jones received all-league honors for the third year. She was third team her sophomore year, second team last season and first team this year. Newell and Baird both received honorable mention.

After losing to Norton, Hoxie continued on to become Class 2A substate champion and place second in the state tournament to unbeaten Belleville. Goodland also won the Class 4A substate championship by defeating Colby and continued on to compete in the Class 4A state tournament.



Norton girls basketball coach Kevin Jilka visits with his players during a time out at the Mid-Continent League Tournament in Hays. From left are, Chantille Campbell, Assistant Coach George Rossi, Amber Overlease, Manager Chelle Donovan, Coach Jilka, Whitney Newell, Karlie Jones, Klaire Mann, Becca Ebert, Laura Lee Baird and Chelsea Cox.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd