

Norton Blue Jays railroad Ellis Railroaders

By **DICK BOYD**

A defense that bent but didn't break and great play by special teams propelled coach Lucas Melvin's Norton Community High school football team to a 27-6 Mid-Continent League victory over Ellis at Travis Field on Friday.

Except for a perfect Railroader pass play for a touchdown, the swarming Blue Jay defense kept Ellis from even threatening to score. Norton's special teams were exceptional, averaging 23 yards per punt and kickoff return, blocking an Ellis punt and turning a fake punt into a touchdown.

Although the blocked punt, which came on Ellis' first possession, did not lead to a Norton touchdown, it gave the Blue Jays some welcome early momentum. The first quarter ended in a scoreless tie but a punt return by senior Nathan Broeckelman to the Norton 44 yard line and two rushing first downs moved the Blue Jays to the Ellis 26 as the quarter ended.

Norton scored six plays into the second quarter. Junior quarterback Logan Kats ran into the end zone on a keeper from 12 yards out. Senior kicker Chris Davis split the uprights and Norton led 7-0 with 10:13 left.

Defenses by both teams dominated the rest of the first half until Kats hit Broeckelman with a 45 yard pass to the Ellis 7 yard line with 49 seconds left. Senior tailback Blake VanEaton scored from eight yards out, Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 14-0 at halftime.

After a 29 yard kickoff return by VanEaton to start the second half, he raced 44 yards on the second play from scrimmage to the Railroader 10. Next play, the Blue Jays suffered their only lost fumble of the game. The Norton defense forced Ellis to punt again and Broeckelman gave the Blue Jays good field position with a return to the Railroader 39. Norton drove in for their third touchdown. VanEaton scampered 12 yards for his second touchdown of the game. Davis kicked the extra point and the Jays led 21-0 with 5:45 left in the third period.

On their next possession, the Blue Jays drove deep into Railroader territory once again. The big play was a 32 yard pass to junior wide receiver Wes Georgeson who was tackled on the Ellis 8. The Railroader defense stiffened and Davis missed a field goal try. The third quarter ended with Norton on top 21-0.

Ellis held Norton on the Jays' first possession of the final period and Davis dropped back to receive the center snap and punt. Instead, the ball went to Kats and he passed to Broeckelman for a 42 yard score. The extra point kick missed but the Jays led 27-0 with 8:50 left.

The visitors' only score came with 6:00 remaining. Senior quarterback Cole Erbert fired a perfect 38 yard pass to senior back Andrew Casey who caught the ball over his head for a touchdown. A run for two extra points was stopped by the Blue Jay defense.

On the ensuing kickoff, Norton put together a five first down drive that ended on the Railroader 3 yard line when time ran out.

"Our offensive line did an excellent job," said coach Melvin. "They controlled the line of scrimmage."

"Defensively, we did not tackle well. Their backs were strong and ran hard but we needed to stay on our feet and tackle better."

"Overall, we had a few breakdowns here and there but we played well."

Norton rushed for 244 yards on 48 carries for a 5.08 yards per carry average. Adding 124 passing yards on 5 of 9 completions by Kats brings Norton's total offense to 368 yards.

Ellis gained 155 yards rushing and 47 yards passing for 202 total yards of offense.

VanEaton rushed for over 100 yards for the third straight game. He gained 104 yards on 17 carries for a 6.1 yard average.

Coach Melvin started the following players on offense: senior Nic Lewis, center; senior Pat Burton and sophomore Brock Lauer, guards; junior Preston Herman and senior Lucas Bailey, tackles; junior Jared Cox, tight end; senior

Nathan Broeckelman and senior Brian Juenemann, wide receivers; senior Chris Davis, fullback; senior Blake VanEaton, tailback and junior Logan Kats, quarterback.

Starting on defense for Norton were: senior Brett Thomson and senior Matt Engel, ends; Herman and junior Zach Mannel, tackles; VanEaton, Cox and sophomore Zac Dreher, linebackers; Broeckelman, junior Todd Bolt, Kats and junior Travis Ray, defensive backs.

First quarter

Norton's Chris Davis kicked off. Andrew Casey returned the kick to the 34 yard line where Landon Hamel made the tackle. Cory Amrein gained three yards, then Justin Gnad ran a counter around left end. Ray tackled him after a six yard gain. Amrein picked up a first down on the 45. Gnad gained three yards before Dreher stopped him. Broeckelman and Dreher combined to limit Amrein to two yards. Ray and VanEaton threw Gnad for a two yard loss.

Quarterback Cole Erbert also punts for Ellis. He went back to punt but a whole host of Norton players came charging up the middle of the line to block it! Senior end Brett Thomson got credit for the block.

Norton took over on the Ellis 41. The Blue Jays were unable to capitalize, however, as Davis gained two yards, VanEaton got nothing and Kats was sacked on the 45. Davis punted and Casey made a fair catch on the 15.

Gnad gained five yards before VanEaton and Bolt tackled him. Gnad found running room up the middle for a first down on the 36. Bolt tackled Gnad after a two yard gain. Amrein ran for a first down on the Ellis 48 before Ray tackled him. Erbert's pass fell incomplete. Gnad made nothing. After an incomplete pass, Ellis punted.

Broeckelman made a nice return to the Norton 44. VanEaton got three yards and Kats picked up a first down on the Ellis 45 on a keeper around right end. Kats tried running around left end and gained seven more yards. VanEaton got a first down on the 37, then Davis bulled up the middle for five yards. Bolt lost two yards but Kats ran a keeper to the 28. Bolt ran over right guard to the 26 as the first quarter ended in a scoreless tie.

Second quarter

After an incomplete pass, VanEaton ran for four yards. Kats passed over the middle to Davis on the 17. On fourth down, Kats sneaked for the first down on the 14. VanEaton plunged for two yards, then Kats ran the keeper around right end for the touchdown. Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 7-0 with 10:13 remaining.

Casey returned Davis' kickoff to the 30 where Ray tackled him. Gnad gained five yards, then Erbert threw a flat pass to Amrein but VanEaton wasn't fooled and threw him for a five yard loss. Lauer and Engel sacked Erbert on the 25 and Ellis punted. Broeckelman made another great return, getting to the Ellis 35.

VanEaton gained two yards, Davis plowed for seven yards, Van Eaton went around left end for a first down on the 20. Kats went back to pass, couldn't find an open receiver and ran to the 15. Norton was penalized five yards for having 12 men on the field. VanEaton ran for three yards, then Kats passed to Cox on the 8. A holding penalty against Norton wiped out the gain and moved the ball back to the 25. Kats went back to pass, his arm was hit by an Ellis defender and he fumbled. Kats got

back on the ball but the Jays were on the 30 and punted.

VanEaton downed Davis' punt on the Railroader 3. On first down, a mixup in Norton's defense allowed Erbert to run a keeper untouched around left end. He was finally tackled on the Ellis 41. Amrein caught a flat pass from Erbert but Juenemann tackled him for no gain. Gnad ran a counter for a first down on the Norton 49 and Juenemann again made the stop. Amrein tried to run around left end but Cox came up to tackle him for no gain. A good rush by the Norton defense caused Erbert to throw an incomplete pass. Erbert ran a keeper for three yards, then Broeckelman knocked the ball away from a potential pass receiver on fourth down and the Jays took over the ball on the Norton 46.

After Davis plunged for two yards, Kats connected with Broeckelman for a 45 yard pass to the Ellis 7 yard line with 49 seconds left in the half. Bolt ran up the middle to the 3. Illegal procedure cost Norton five yards but the Blue Jays were not to be denied. After a Kats pass fell incomplete in the end zone, VanEaton got the call and legged the ball around left end and into the end zone. Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 14-0 with 28 seconds left.

Casey returned Davis' kickoff to the Norton 46 where Broeckelman and Brad Nuzum made the tackle. Erbert went back to pass but was chased out of the pocket by Norton defenders and gained a first down on the Norton 31. Erbert went to the air once too often and Ray intercepted his aerial. Ray returned the ball 55 yards to the Ellis 38 as time expired in the first half with the Blue Jays on top 14-0.

Third quarter

Ellis kicked off to start the third quarter. VanEaton made a 29 yard return to the Norton 43. VanEaton gained three yards on first down, then found running room over the left side of the line and rambled to the Ellis 10 before he was tackled. On the next down, Norton fumbled and Ellis recovered on the 8.

Amrein gained three yards but Ellis was penalized back to the 5 for illegal motion. Gnad gained 11 yards to the 16. Gnad barely picked up a first down on the 18. Amrein was stopped by Bailey and Dreher for no gain. Gnad ran around left end to the 25 where Thomson stopped him. Dreher and Engel dropped Amrein for a one yard loss. Ellis punted and Broeckelman ate up more return yardage as he breezed down the sideline to the Ellis 39.

Kats ran the keeper for a first down on the 27. Davis plunged to the 20, VanEaton gained two yards and Davis ran for a first down on the 12. VanEaton ran around left end for the touchdown. Davis kicked the extra point and Norton led 21-0 with 5:45 left.

Casey returned Davis' kickoff to the 35. Gnad gained five yards around left end but was stopped for no gain on second down by VanEaton. Davis came charging in to sack Erbert on the 30. Ellis punted and Bolt made a good return to the 50. Davis threw a pass which was incomplete but two straight offsides penalties cost Ellis 10 yards. Kats passed to Georgeson and he made a good over-the-head catch on the 8. Kats lost two yards but VanEaton ran for four. A pass was incomplete but Norton was penalized for holding. After an incomplete pass, Davis tried a field goal but it missed. Ellis took over on the 20.

Erbert threw an incomplete pass, then Gnad gained five yards



Norton senior tailback Blake VanEaton gained over 100 yards for the third straight game Friday night in the Blue Jays' 27-6 Mid-Continent League win over Ellis at Travis Field. Here he is shown gaining 44 yards on a run early in the third quarter as Railroader defenders chase him.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

before John Van Doren and Davis tackled him. A slant pass to Gideon Fuchs was good for a first down on the 34 where Broeckelman made the stop. Gnad broke several tackles and gained six yards before Ray tackled him as the third quarter ended with the Jays leading 21-0.

Fourth quarter

Bolt broke up a long Ellis pass to start the final period. After another incomplete pass, Ellis was whistled for holding and the ball was moved back to the 25. Thomson sacked Erbert on the 20 and he punted.

The ball was downed on the Ellis 39. VanEaton took a pitch from Kats and tried to run around right end but was dropped for a four yard loss. Davis gained four yards but VanEaton caught a screen pass and lost two yards. Davis went back to punt but the Blue Jays' trickery resulted in Kats getting the snap from center Nic Lewis. Kats connected with a wide open Broeckelman and he weaved his way threw the Railroader defenders for a 41 yard touchdown! The extra point kick was no good but Norton had extended their lead to 27-0 with 8:50 remaining in the contest.

Casey returned Davis' kickoff and was greeted rudely by Bolt and Juenemann at the 24. Norton was offsides, however, and Davis kicked again. This time, Casey made it to the Ellis 47 where Nuzum and Ray made the stop. Lewis and VanEaton stopped Gnad for no gain but Amrein ran for a first down on the Norton 40 where Juenemann and Dreher made the tackle. Amrein gained five more yards before Davis and Lewis dropped him to the turf. Amrein gained nothing the next down but Ellis was penalized for holding. The Railroaders got out

of the hole when Erbert threw a screen pass to Amrein and he ran to the Norton 38 before Bailey tackled him. The next play, Erbert hit Casey with a perfect pass in the end zone for the Railroaders' only touchdown of the night. Erbert's pass for two extra points was incomplete and Norton led 27-6 with 6:00 remaining in the game.

Ellis had a short kickoff and Juenemann recovered for Norton on the 30. Illegal procedure cost Norton five yards but Davis bulled for nine yards. VanEaton got lose for a 42 yard gain to the Ellis 24 but unnecessary roughness penalties against both teams nullified the play. VanEaton ran for three yards, then Kats gave good second effort on a keeper for a first down on the Norton 41.

Kats ran for two more yards and VanEaton added five. VanEaton ran for a first down on the Ellis 47. Davis plunged for two yards and Bolt ran 10 yards for a first down on the 35. Bolt ran around left end for a first down on the 15, then battled forward to the 8. Another carry by Bolt reached the 5, then he ran to the 3 for a first down. Time had expired, however, and Norton was a 27-6 winner over Ellis.

Individual statistics

Norton ball carriers and their yardage were: VanEaton 17 carries for 104 yards; Todd Bolt, 9 carries for 50 yards; Logan Kats, 12 carries for 46 yards and Chris Davis, 9 carries for 40 yards.

Pass receivers for Norton were Broeckelman, 2 for 88 yards; Georgeson, 1 for 32 yards; Davis, 1 for 6 yards; VanEaton, 1 for minus 2 yards.

Broeckelman had 3 punt returns for 77 yards and Bolt had 1 for 10 yards. VanEaton had 1 kickoff return for 29 yards.

Davis kicked off 5 times for a

39.6 yard average.

Leading rusher for Ellis was Gnad with 81 yards on 16 carries.

Leading tackler for Norton was sophomore linebacker Zac Dreher with 6 solos and 5 assists for 11 total. He was followed by Blake VanEaton, 6 solos, 2 assists, 8 total; Todd Bolt, 5 solos, 2 assists, 7 total; Travis Ray, 4 solos, 1 assist, 5 total; Chris Davis, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Matt Engel, 1 solo, 3 assists, 4 total; Nathan Broeckelman, 3 solos; Brett Thomson, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Preston Herman, 2 solos; Brian Juenemann, 2 solos; Brock Lauer, 2 solos; Nic Lewis, 1 solo, 1 assist, 2 total; Zach Mannel, 2 solos; Lucas Bailey, 1 assist; Jared Cox, 1 solo; Landon Hamel, 1 solo; Logan Kats, 1 assist; Brad Nuzum, 1 solo.

Next action

Norton will play Stockton in the final regular season Mid-Continent League football game this Friday in Stockton, beginning at 7 p.m.

The Tigers lost 57-6 to two-time defending state champion Smith Center on Friday.

Lenael Weiser, Stockton's second team All-Mid-Continent League wide receiver, scored the Tigers' touchdown on a 1 yard pass from junior quarterback Stephen Bellerive.

Benjamin Clark is in his first year as head coach at Stockton.

Game statistics

	Norton	Ellis
19	First Downs	10
244	Yards Rushing	155
124	Yards Passing	47
368	Total Yards	202
5-10-0	Passes Completed	5-13-1
1-2	Fumbles Lost	0-0
6-46	Penalties	5-42
2-26	Punts	5-32

High School Sports This Week



FOOTBALL:
 Norton Blue Jays vs. Stockton Tigers 7 p.m. Friday in Stockton
 Northern Valley Huskies vs. Weskan 7 p.m. Friday in Almena
 Logan Trojans vs. Palco 7 p.m. Friday in Logan
 Norton Junior Varsity vs. Stockton 6:30 p.m. Monday in Norton

VOLLEYBALL:
 Norton Lady Jay Varsity and Junior Varsity vs. Smith Center and Trego
 (Senior Night 5 p.m. Today in Norton
 Norton Lady Jay Varsity in Scott City Tournament 9 a.m. Saturday in Scott City
 Norton Lady Jay Varsity vs. Logan and Golden Plains 4 p.m. Tuesday in Rexford
 Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Golden Plains and Wheatland 4 p.m. Today in Almena
 Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Hill City Tournament 8:30 a.m. Saturday in Hill City
 Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Stockton, Western Plains
 and Eastern Heights 4 p.m. Tuesday in Stockton
 Logan Lady Trojans vs. Kensington and Eastern Heights 4 p.m. Today in Kensington
 Logan Lady Trojans in Cougar Invitational 9 a.m. Saturday in Mankato
 Logan Lady Trojans vs. Golden Plains and Norton 4 p.m. Tuesday in Rexford

TENNIS:
 Norton Lady Jays Varsity in Class 3A Regional Tournament 9 a.m. Thursday in WaKeeney

CROSS COUNTRY:
 Norton Blue Jays in Phillipsburg Invitational (MCL) 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Phillipsburg
 Northern Valley Huskies in Phillipsburg Invitational 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Phillipsburg

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