

'Jay wrestlers miss state title by 1 1/2 points

Smith Center, Beloit tie for crown with 116.5 points, Norton gets 115

By DICK BOYD

After winning the last three Class 3-2-1A state championships in a row, head coach Bill Johnson's Norton Community High School wrestling team's dream of a fourth straight missed the mark by just one and one-half points as they finished third in the "big show" over the weekend in Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays.

Smith Center, who placed second 76.5 points behind Norton last year, tied for this year's state championship with Beloit, who placed eighth a year ago.

Norton had the championship sewed up by the end of the first day a year ago, but this time around it was obvious that it was a much tighter team race. After the first two rounds on Friday, Norton led with 57 points, Beloit was second with 51.5 and Smith Center third with 46. By the end of the day, the Redmen had moved into the lead with 85 points, followed by Beloit, 74.5 and Norton, 72.

Norton qualified 10 wrestlers and still had nine left. Beloit and Smith Center each had seven left. Norton had one wrestler in the finals, Beloit had two and Smith Center had three.

After two consolation rounds on Saturday, Norton and Smith Center were tied for the lead with 109 points and Beloit had dropped to third with 103.5. After the third and fifth place matches with just the championship finals remaining, Beloit had surged into first with 112.5 points and Norton and Smith Center were tied for second with 111.

Each of the three schools had one state champion but Smith Center's gold medal winner had a technical fall which accounted for enough extra points to move the Redmen into a 116.5 tie with the Trojans for the state championship. The Blue Jays' extra four points for a champion made their final total 115.

This was one of the closest finishes ever for a Class 3-2-1A state tournament. The only other tie for a state championship was between St. Francis and Leoti in 1996.

Fourth place went to an excellent Scott City team, who has always performed well in the Class 4A state tournament but moved down to 3A this year. The Beavers scored 97 points.

Phillipsburg made it three Mid-Continent League teams in the top five with their 85 points. They were followed by Eureka, 83; Sabetha, 73.5; Oakley, 67; St. Francis, 64; and Silver Lake, 63.5 to round out the top 10. Other teams of interest and their placing were: Plainville, 38, 14th; Oberlin, 35, 15th; Atwood, 17, tie for 17th; Trego, 29.5, 19th; Osborne, 29, 20th; Stockton, 22, 28th; Ellis, 17, tie for 31st and Hill City, 15.5, 33rd.

A total of 224 wrestlers who qualified in the previous week's four regional tournaments competed and a total of 84 different schools were represented.

Only four of Norton's 10 state qualifiers had previous state tournament experience and seven Blue Jay wrestlers placed, more than any other school. Smith Center and Beloit placed six wrestlers each and Scott City had five placers.

Norton compiled a 26-19 win-loss record and 11-3 pin ratio.

State champion

Norton senior 130 pound wrestler Nathan Broeckelman completed a stellar season with a perfect 40-0 record and state championship! Broeckelman was ranked No. 1 in the state and is now a four-time state placer. In addition to winning the 125 pound state championship last season, he placed third in the state his sophomore year at 119 pounds and second his freshman season.

Junior Alex Thomas entered the state tournament ranked No. 4. He brought a perfect record into the tournament and placed third at 285 with a final 38-1 record. His only loss was to defending state champion Duane Zlatnik, Rossville, who completed the season with a perfect 42-0 record.

Blue Jay senior Blake VanEaton was ranked No. 2 in the state at 152 pounds and placed fourth. He ended the season 30-9. VanEaton is a three-time state placer. He was sixth in the state at 145 pounds as a sophomore and placed third at state last year at 140 pounds.

Also placing fourth this year was sophomore Zach Bainter at 125 pounds. He was state runner-up last year at 112 pounds and was ranked No. 4 in the state. He finished the season 32-12.

Blue Jay junior Jeff Soderlund entered the tournament unranked but wrestled through the back door to place fourth at 145 pounds. He finished the season 34-12.

Norton senior Kent Mann entered the tournament ranked No. 3 at 135 pounds and placed sixth. He finished with a 36-4 record for the season. Mann is a three-time state placer. He finished third in the state last season at 130 pounds and fifth his freshman year at 103 pounds.

Blue Jay freshman Zane Perez placed sixth at 119 pounds and completed the season with a 30-11 record.

Also competing for Norton were freshman Connor Pfannenstiel, 103; freshman Kaemon Keiswetter, 112; and junior Aaron Husted, 140.

Coach's comments

"We placed seven of our 10 state qualifiers and came really close to the championship but that was not quite good enough," said coach Johnson.

"We really lost it in the matches for third and fifth places where we won just one of six. Actually, all we had to win in the entire tournament was one more match to give us the championship.

"Our expectations and those of our fans are really high and I'm proud of our young men for competing hard.

"We lost five state placers off last year's team and I'm sure if someone told me at the start of this season that we would come this close to a state championship, I would have said I'd take it. We have a lot of young wrestlers on this team. Six of our ten who qualified had never wrestled in the state tournament and this is quite an experience.

"Smith Center and Beloit wrestled very well. Some of their second tier wrestlers came through for them. There was more balance to teams in the tournament this year and that actually helped us.

"Thanks to all our fans for cheering us on this year.

"We were in a major rebuilding year and every one of our wrestlers improved by leaps and bounds through the season. We will lose three good seniors off this year's team but seven more state qualifiers return.

"We gave our best effort and fell just a little short. I guarantee we'll be back next year."

Coach Johnson named Nathan Broeckelman "Wrestler of the Week".

The Oakley team and community won the "Sportsmanship Award". Accepting the award was Peter Koster, head coach.

Assistant coaches on Norton's team were Doug Ray, Chance McKinney and Shane Miller. Student managers were Morgan Kauten and Jessica Sprigg.

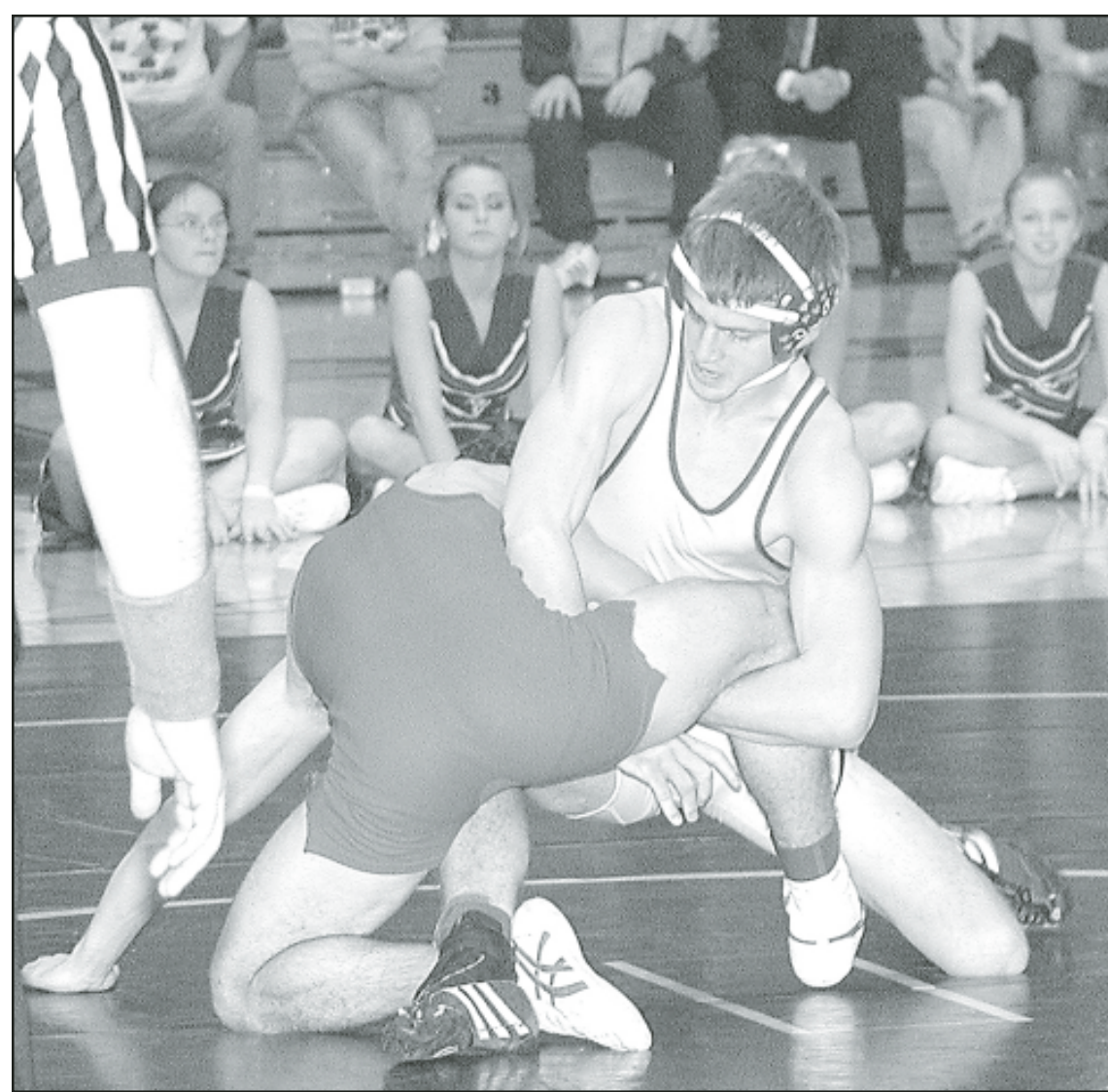
Individual results

•103 — Connor Pfannenstiel lost a very close 6-5 decision to Andrew Mieber, Herington, in the first round and dropped into the consolation bracket. He pinned Alex Jost, Hillsboro, in 4:37; pinned Jesse Brown, Flinthills, in 5:40 and lost a 6-4 decision to Jordan Bauer, Wabunsee, and missed placing by just one match. Pfannenstiel finished the season 26-13.

Bauer placed third by pinning Brandon Ray, Eureka, in 2:36. Francisco Antillon, Scott City, won the championship with a 5-3 decision over Carlos Galloway, Stockton. Galloway completed the season with a 26-3 record. One of his losses was in the regional tournament to Pfannenstiel.

Fifth place went to Michael Provencher, Rossville, with a pin in 4:03 over Mieber.

•112 — Kaemon Keiswetter pinned Joe Orsi, Wichita Independent, in 3:08. He lost a 10-3 deci-



Blue Jay senior Nathan Broeckelman completed a perfect 40-0 season with a 5-1 decision over Wyatt Bechtel, Eureka, in Saturday night's 130-pound championship match in the state wrestling tournament in Hays. Broeckelman also defeated Bechtel in the title match last year. - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

sion to last year's 103 pound champion Collin Hase, Silver Lake, and dropped into the consolation bracket where he lost a 9-5 decision to Dillon Stucky, Scott City.

Keiswetter ended the season with a 32-8 record.

Hase placed third with a pin in 1:41 over Dan Weigel, Plainville. Smith Center freshman Colt Rogers finished the season undefeated with a 22-7 technical fall over Jace Campbell, Oakley, in the championship finals. Rogers compiled a perfect 37-0 record this season. Hase finished 37-2.

•119 — Zane Perez decided Cody Wildin, Marion, 6-1; shutout Brett LaMar, Silver Lake, 6-0; lost a 6-4 decision to Brendan Harshman, Chase County, that dropped him into the consolation bracket. He lost a 6-3 decision to Thain Brobst, Eureka, then lost a 4-0 decision to Cody Merriman, Onaga, to place sixth.

Perez ended the season 30-11.

Aaron Patton, Wellsville, won the championship with a 4-1 decision over Harshman. Brad Augustine, Beloit, won third by pinning Brobst in 1:41. Harshman ended the season 33-3.

•125 — Zach Bainter won a 15-1 major decision over Cameron Motter, Remington; was pinned in 1:35 by Cole Zoglman, Garden Plain, to drop into the consolation bracket. He pinned David Williams, Oskaloosa, in 43 seconds; won a 3-2 decision over Aaron Weatherhead, Belleville and won a 2-1 decision over Danny Floyd, Osborne, to qualify for the consolation championship. He wrestled Nate Watts, Burlington, and lost a 14-7 decision to place fourth.

Bainter ended the season 32-12. Matt Migchelbrink, Atwood, completed a perfect 33-0 season by pinning Dustin Zahorsky, Phillipsburg, in 5:55 in the championship match.

Floyd placed fifth by default over Zoglman. Watts finished the season 38-4 and Zahorsky and Zoglman had 27-5 seasons.

•130 — Nathan Broeckelman pinned Alex Lomas, Hoisington, in 2:23; won a 13-3 major decision over Nicholas Mueller, Hillsboro; and won a 13-2 major decision over Trevor Rempe, Smith Center, to reach the championship finals for the second straight year. He also faced Wyatt Bechtel, Eureka, for the second time in the championship finals.

Broeckelman took a 1-0 lead after one period and held it until the third period when he added 4 more points to win 5-1 and secure the championship. Broeckelman edged Bechtel 9-8 to win last year.

Broeckelman completed a perfect 40-0 season. Bechtel's loss to Broeckelman was his first of the season and he finished 29-1.

Rempe placed third with a 7-0 decision over Tommy Knapp, Lincoln. Rempe and Knapp both finished the season 34-5.

Jeremy Chase, Hill City, placed fifth by default over Gavin Smull,

St. Francis.

•135 — Kent Mann shutout Jayme Streit, Sabetha, 7-0; decided Marshall McCall, Smith Center, 5-2 and lost a 6-2 decision to Brett Swoyer, Rock Creek. In the consolation bracket, Mann lost a 6-3 decision to Cas Spangler, Beloit and lost a 4-0 decision to Keaton Taylor, Silver Lake, to place sixth.

Mann finished the season 36-4. Swoyer won the championship with a 1-0 decision over Pat Mosley, Wichita Independent. Spangler won third with an 18-10 major decision over Billy Benz, Eureka.

Swoyer finished the season 37-1 and Mosley finished 33-1.

•140 — Aaron Husted lost a 16-0 technical fall to Justin York, Smith Center and was pinned in 1:45 by Luke Thibault, Halstead. Husted was 23-12 this season.

Brad Esterl, Beloit, won the championship with a 7-5 overtime decision over Justin York, Smith Center. Dustin Warta, Scott City, placed third with a 7-5 decision over Gage Reichert, Oberlin. Fifth place went to Cody Eaton, Bennington, with a 5-3 decision over Daniel Utley, Onaga.

Esterl finished the season 41-1, York was 35-5 and Warta was 23-6. Esterl was last year's 135 pound champion.

•145 — Jeff Soderlund pinned Martin Hojda, Osborne, in 59 seconds and lost a 16-0 technical fall to Jason Pyle, Sabetha. In the consolation bracket, he won a 7-2 decision over Aaron Dinkel, Plainville; shutout Drake Moore, Oakley, 4-0 and decided Wade Adams, Beloit, 4-3 to reach the consolation championship. He lost a 16-4 major decision to Kade Bloom, Phillipsburg, to place fourth.

Soderlund finished the season 34-12.

Pyle won the championship with a 9-0 major decision over Nick Kough, Scott City. Adams won fifth with a 6-1 victory in two overtimes over Cody Meier, Silver Lake.

Pyle completed a perfect 38-0 season and won his third straight state championship. Bloom finished 36-3 and Kough was 41-4.

•152 — Blake VanEaton pinned Colin Loomis, Beloit, in 32 seconds; pinned Nick Whetzell, St. Marys-Colgan, in 1:11 and lost a 3-2 decision to Jordan Meyer, Sabetha. In the consolation bracket, he won an 8-2 decision over Travis Rempe, Smith Center, to reach the consolation championship. VanEaton lost a 5-4 decision to Lakin Dreiling, Scott City, to place fourth.

VanEaton ended the season 30-9.

Jordan Gienger, St. Francis, won the championship with a 6-5 decision over Meyer. Jake Livesay, Lincoln, placed fifth with a 7-0 decision over Rempe.

Gienger finished the season 33-1.

•160 — Ryan Patterson, Garden

Plain, won the championship with a 2-1 overtime decision over Jason Corwin, Silver Lake. Kelly Younkin, Oakley, placed third with a 3-1 decision over Cody Hanel, Beloit. Ryan Swatzell, Phillipsburg, won fifth by pinning Grady Godsey, Smith Center.

Patterson compiled a perfect 44-0 season. Corwin finished 37-5.

•171 — Derek Oswald, Effingham, won the championship with a 14-12 decision over Matt Hyman, Beloit. Luke Brin, Plainville, won third by pinning Marshall Manning, Haven, in 1:47. Russell Rogers, St. Francis, placed fifth with a 5-1 decision over Andrew Stover, Sabetha.

Oswald finished the season 40-6. Brin and Manning were both 31-5 and Hyman was 22-5.

•189 — Michael Malay, Trego, completed a perfect 36-0 season with an 11-5 decision over Matt McGinty, Southeast of Saline, in the championship match to win his second straight state title. Trent Snyder, Sabetha, placed third with an 8-3 decision over Matt Engstrom, Hoisington. Fifth place went to Matt Vander Linden, Burlington, with a 7-0 decision over Jake Robinson, Effingham.

McGinty finished the season 33-3 and Snyder was 35-4. Vander Linden finished 41-3.

•215 — Aaron Racette, Oakley, a first cousin of Norton's Nathan Broeckelman, completed an outstanding 39-2 season by winning an 11-5 decision over Kirk Palmer, Smith Center, in the championship match. Racette was runner-up last year. Damon Garcia, Herington, won third with a 3-2 decision over Josh Stillwell, Eureka. Fifth place was won by Kendall Fiscus, Fredonia, a former Norton resident, with a fall in 3:05 over Lucas Camac, Jayhawk Linn.

Palmer finished the season 35-3 and Garcia was 35-2.

•285 — Alex Thomas pinned Brian Heintzelman, Pleasant Ridge, in 1:00; pinned Zack Puetz, Garden Plain, in 1:22 and then faced unbeaten and defending state champion Duane Zlatnik, Rossville, in the championship semi-finals. Thomas was pinned by Zlatnik in 3:18 to end Thomas' unbeaten string.

In the consolation bracket, Thomas pinned Jace Smith, Phillipsburg, in 1:21, then won a 1-0 decision over Brock Euhus, Oberlin, to place third.

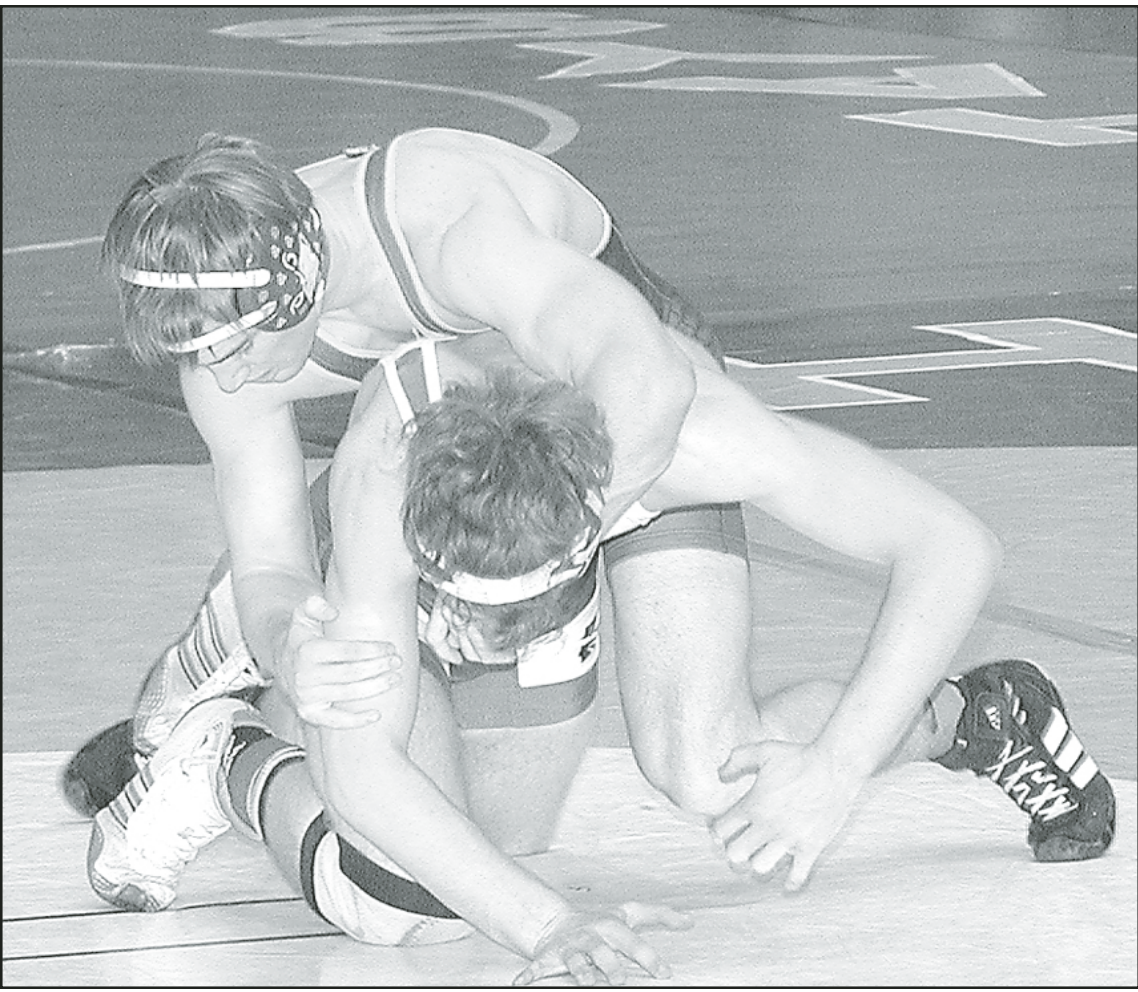
Thomas finished the season 38-1.

Zlatnik won the championship with a 3-0 decision over Brennon Wilger, St. Francis.

Zlatnik and Wilger also wrestled for the 285 pound championship last year when both went into the match unbeaten and Zlatnik pinned Wilger to win the title.

Smith placed fifth by pinning Puetz in 2:47.

Zlatnik finished the season 42-0 and Wilger's season record was 21-3.



Norton's 152-pound senior Blake VanEaton dominated Travis Rempe, Smith Center, to win an 8-2 decision and advance to the consolation championship in the state tournament on Saturday in Hays. - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd