

Lady Jays bring home state championship

By DICK BOYD

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The Norton Community High School girls track and field team finished the best year of sports competition by the Lady Jays in Norton history last weekend by earning the Class 3A State Championship and the Blue Jay boys also performed well, tying for eighth as a team.

The Norton girls athletes started the 2007-08 school year by placing sixth in the State Cross Country Championships, then qualified for and competed in the State Volleyball Tournament, followed by the State Basketball Tournament.

Although they competed like champions in the previous three state events, the team championship eluded them until Saturday at Cessna Stadium in Wichita when they completed two days of intense competition by winning the No.1 prize!

"Wow! What a wonderful and exciting trip," said second-year Norton head track and field coach Jason Jones.

"The State Track Meet is usually a time when wild and crazy things can and do happen, both to the good and sometimes otherwise, and we had our share of that this year. We are extremely proud of the 13 athletes who represented the schools and community of Norton in our sport's highest level of competition! They deserve everything they earned and the entire community should be proud of them, as well. They did an amazing job and this trip was the perfect conclusion to a great season!"

With all six enrollment classes competing at one location, the Kansas state meet is the largest high school track and field meet in the nation with 3500 athletes competing!

Four Norton boys competed in seven events and all four won medals. They set two new personal records and earned a total of six state medals. They scored 21 points to tie for eighth place.

The Norton girls earned medals in nine events but did not run away with the championship as they have at most meets this season. They had to battle hard for every point and the championship was not decided until the final event of the day, the 4 x 400 meter relay.

Norton and Thomas More Prep-Marian of Hays went into that race tied for the lead with 41 points each. The Lady Monarchs' Kim Haberman scored 36 of her team's points with three gold medals and a third place but Thomas More did not have a 4 x 400 meter relay team.

The Lady Jays needed at least one point to win the title and they got four with a fourth place finish. Norton's anchor was junior Laura Lee Baird and she was 30 yards behind in sixth place when she received the baton. As she has all year long, Baird delivered with her long strides and steadily cut the deficit during her 400 meter run to pass both the fifth and fourth place runners before hitting the finish line.

Norton assistant coaches again this season were Dale Engelbert, Doug Reusink, Todd Fulton and Lucas Melvin. Student managers were Lucy Gosselin and Bloss Jacobus.



Norton junior Zach Bainter medaled in the 1600 meter and 800 meter runs at the Kansas State Track Meet in Wichita last weekend. Here he is shown finishing fourth with a personal record time in the 1600 meter run. He also placed sixth in the 800 meter run.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Third place in the 3A girls' team totals went to Medicine Lodge with 31 points, followed by Riley County, 30; Jayhawk-Linn, 28; Wichita Independent, 25; Garden Plain, 20.33; Ellsworth, 20; Conway Springs, 19 and Scott City, 17.66 to round out the top ten.

Scott City won the boys championship with 82 points, followed by Hillsboro, 55; Garden Plain, 53; Remington, 36; Phillipsburg, 33; Jayhawk-Linn, 28; Jefferson North, 26; Norton, 21; Riley County, 21 and Halstead, 20, in the top ten.

In Class 2A, the Atwood girls were the champions, Ellis was third, Oakley fourth, Plainville fifth and Osborne eighth. In 2A boys competition, Smith Center was fourth and Atwood ninth.

Girls

Running with Laura Lee Baird in the exciting 4 x 400 meter race were senior Courtney LeClair, junior KaraJo Jones and freshman Dustyna Sprigg.

Baird also medaled in three individual events. She placed second in the 800 meter run to Cori Christensen, Medicine Lodge, who beat her to the finish line by just over a second. Christensen was timed in 2:20.89 and Baird in 2:21.59.

Christensen also won the gold medal in the 1600 meter run in 5:15.22 and Baird was right behind her in 5:18.33.

Baird's fourth medal of the day came in the 400 meter dash where she placed third in 1:00.71, just ten hundredths of a second behind second place Kailea Hayes, Council Grove. Micala Jamison, Hoisington, won the race in 59.44.

Norton junior Hayli Bozarth had another great day in her two specialties: the shot put and discus. She was leading the shot put



Norton junior Hayli Bozarth heaved the shot put 44' 1.5" to win the silver medal in the event at the Kansas State Track Meet in Wichita over the weekend. She was leading the competition until the final throw by Leffler of Northern Heights. Bozarth also placed second to Leffler in the discus event where Leffler set a new state record.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

event with an excellent 44' 1.5" until Jacquelyne Leffler, Northern Heights, bettered it with a 44' 7.25" heave on her final throw.

In the discus event, Bozarth also placed second behind Leffler, who threw the discus a new state record distance of 157' 7". Bozarth won the silver medal with an outstanding throw of 137' 9".

Bozarth also competed in the javelin, where she placed tenth with a throw of 111' 1".

The top seven places in each event lettered, as compared to the top six in all other meets.

Norton junior Taylor Rossi tied for sixth in the pole vault with a clearance of 9' and senior Courtney LeClair earned a point as well with a seventh place finish in the 300 meter hurdles in 49.61. LeClair just missed a point in the 100 meter hurdles where she placed eighth in 17.54.

The Lady Jays' other point came on a seventh place finish by the foursome of LeClair, Rossi, Jones and sophomore Hannah Waggoner in the 4 x 100 meter relay in 51.96.

Also competing but not placing were Jones in the long jump where she finished tenth with a jump of 15' 2.25" and sophomore Alyssa Thomson in the high jump where she cleared 4' 10" to finish 14th.

The other senior on this year's Lady Jay team was Courtney Cox.

The only other time in Norton history that the Lady Jays won the state championship was in 1982 when Brenda Wolf, LaNell Cox, Renee Cox, Gina Anthony, Teddi Blackin and Amy Bullock were members of the Class 3A championship team. Head coach was Leslie Dodd and the assistant coaches were Don Bechard and

Jake Durham.

"We talked earlier in the week with our girls about focusing on doing well in all events and just letting the chips fall where they may in the team points race to see where we ended up down the stretch," said coach Jones.

"We knew we could probably be in the hunt for the title if we did well where we had opportunities. Our girls did a wonderful job of this! They worked hard all week in practice, just like they have all year, and they took right to the business at hand. Of our nine girls entered as competitors, seven earned medals en route to this championship!"

"Friday was a good day for us in that every girl who competed either medaled or qualified for Saturday's finals. Hayli finished second in the discus and Taylor tied for sixth in the pole vault. Saturday was good, as well, as our girls' success continued.

"Our only competing senior, Courtney LeClair, medaled in the 300 meter hurdles and as a member of both relays. We are glad she had these opportunities in what was her final competition as a Norton athlete!"

"Laura Lee finished second in the 800 meters and 1600 meters and third in the 400 meters and Hayli added her second medal by finishing second in the shot put. It was nice to see Courtney, Taylor, KaraJo and Hannah finish seventh in the 4 x 100 meter relay to earn themselves a medal.

"With one event left, the 4 x 400 meter relay, we were tied with Thomas More Prep-Marian of Hays and they did not have a relay team in the finals. So, the greatest focus of that relay was to leave everything they possibly had on



Lady Jay junior Laura Lee Baird hit the finish line to anchor her 4 x 400 meter relay team to a fourth place finish in the final event of the Kansas State Track Meet on Saturday in Wichita to break a team tie with Thomas More Prep-Marian of Hays and earn the Lady Jays their second ever state championship! Running with Baird were senior Courtney LeClair, junior KaraJo Jones and freshman Dustyna Sprigg.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

the track, just like they always do. Finishing well enough to score a point and medal would also score a point to add to the totals to win the team title. They got it done in very fine fashion as KaraJo, Courtney, Dustyna and Laura Lee finished fourth and rest assured, every other member of the team was running that relay in spirit as well. The combined efforts of our girls during the entire weekend earned them the highest level of success in our sport at this level!"

Attending the meet as additional competitors were Alyssa Thomson in the high jump and junior Katharine Roy as a 4 x 400 meter relay alternate. Sophomore Raven Brown qualified for the state meet in the regional as a member of the 4 x 100 meter relay team but was unable to compete due to illness.

"Every girl in every event simply stepped into the competition, all weekend long and did her absolute very best that she could that day and it paid off.

"We could not be happier for our girls or more proud of them for the manner in which they won this title!"

"They are a wonderful group of individuals who are also very talented but their continued hard work to better themselves, day in and day out, year in and year out, is what has given them the edge they needed to do what they did!"

"Words cannot express how proud of these athletes we are and how lucky we feel to have had the opportunity to work with them in this journey. They deserve every bit of success they have experienced!!"

Boys

Norton freshman Terrell Lane won his first high school state track medals by placing third with

outstanding jumps in the long jump and triple jump events. He set a personal record in the triple jump with a distance of 43' 3.5" and leaped 21' 7.75" in the long jump.

Lane also had the 12th best time in the 200 meter dash with a clocking of 23.72 but did not qualify for the finals.

Norton junior Zach Bainter continued to run well in the 800 meters and 1600 meters. He placed fourth in the 1600 with a personal record time of 4:39.26 and sixth in the 800 in 2:03.21.

Senior Wes Georgeson earned a medal in his final high school competition by placing sixth in the 110 meter hurdles in 15.86. Senior teammate Jared Cox finished just behind him in seventh to also medal with a time of 15.92.

Cox also competed in the 300 meter hurdles and easily qualified on Friday for Saturday's finals where he hit the last hurdle and fell but got up and finished in 44.11, the eighth best time.

"Our four boys did an awesome job of competing," said coach Jones. "All four won medals. Freshman Terrell and junior Zach turned in strong performances and Wes and Jared both medaled as well in their final competition as Blue Jays. That is a pretty nice way to finish your career. We are very proud of these four athletes and all they have done all season long and throughout their careers here to get themselves to this point.

"Our boys have worked hard and we love to see them rewarded for their continued efforts. They did a great job!"

Other seniors on this year's Norton boys team were Todd Bolt, David Counter, Bryce Engelbert, Logan Kats and Luke VanSkike.

Northern Valley, Logan athletes perform well at state

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Four athletes from Northern Valley and two from Logan High School performed in Class 1A at the Kansas State Track Meet on Friday and Saturday in Cessna Stadium in Wichita.

Northern Valley

Lady Husky sophomore Alison Cole qualified for Saturday's finals in the 100 meter hurdles with a preliminary time of 16.76 on Friday. In the finals, she was clocked in 16.83 and placed sixth.

Alison also competed in the high jump where she finished in a tie for fifth with a 5' clearance.

"Alison had a good performance in the high hurdles," said Northern Valley coach Chuck Fessenden. "We were hoping for a little better place in the high jump but she was only two inches out of first place."

Northern Valley senior Joni Hilburn cleared 7' 6" in the pole vault, which was 13th best in the state.

"Joni struggled in the pole vault," said coach Fessenden. "The combination of heat and wind was giving her trouble and causing her to blow through all of her attempts at 8 feet."

Freshman Kayla Field competed in the 3200 meter run and was 14th with a time of 13:37.56.

"We really felt that Kayla would improve upon her regional time in the 3200," said coach Fessenden. "However, she never looked comfortable during the race. It was a good experience for her and she should have several more chances since she is just a freshman."

Husky junior Nathaniel Graham threw the javelin 156' 7", made the finals and finished eighth.

"We were happy to see Na-

thaniel make it to the finals," said coach Fessenden. "He went into the finals with the eighth best throw but was unable to improve his position. He threw well for his first state track meet."

Logan

"Our two state qualifiers competed well," said Logan coach Chris Graham.

Senior Zach Long was the only Logan boy who qualified for the Class 1A state meet. He performed well in all three events in which he competed.

Zach's best event was the 110 meter hurdles where he placed fourth in 15.88. He just missed medaling in two other events. He was eighth in the triple jump with a distance of 42' 7.75" and eighth in the pole vault with a 12' 6" clearance.

"In the hurdles on Friday, Zach ran a pretty good time even though

he hit the first hurdle pretty hard with his knee," said coach Graham. "We knew if he ran well on Saturday that he'd be right in the hunt and he did run a good race in the finals.

"It was fun watching him improve so much this year. He missed our school record in the 110s by .11 of a second in the conference meet so we were hoping he could break it at state but we're still happy with his performance.

"Zach had a personal best in the triple jump and just missed out on a medal. He had a couple of jumps that were better than his final mark but scratched by a hair on both of them. He was seeded in the middle of the pack so he knew he would have to jump well and he did but just missed a medal. He was happy with how he jumped but disappointed in not medaling.

"In the pole vault, Zach was

vaulting probably the best he had all season in the lower heights. He cleared 12' and 12' 6" with a lot of room. Something changed in his form at 13' and he just couldn't get over it. The other coaches at the event thought it would take 13' to medal and Zach just missed it."

Senior Aspen Larson was the only girl from Logan High School to qualify for the state meet. She finished just out of the points in eighth in the discus with a throw of 105' 7".

"Coming in, we knew Aspen would need to throw well to make finals. She did but just missed medaling by a few inches. We were pleased with how well she threw. The headwind was causing some problems but she got a couple of good throws. It was disappointing to her to be so close to medaling.

"Aspen's worked pretty hard in

the weight room for the past three years and it's shown this year in her throwing. It's good to see her hard work be rewarded.

"Zach and Aspen have worked hard and been a joy to coach. We'll miss them a lot."

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