

Heart-breaking 2-point loss for Blue Jays

By DICK BOYD

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Close only counts in horseshoes but the Norton Community High School football team won a moral victory on Friday night at Travis Field when they battled No. 1 ranked and four-time defending Class 2A state champion Smith Center on even terms before losing a 22-20 Mid-Continent League thriller!

Before Smith Center began their win streak, which is now 57 victories in a row, Norton was the last team to beat them in regular season. And, the Blue Jay players and coaches went into the game intending to do it again.

"We missed a good opportunity to win a big game," said Norton head football coach Lucas Melvin. "I thought we'd win right up until the last and I'm pretty sure our players did."

"I'm proud of the way we played. We played hard but just needed to do some things better. There were certain plays where we just didn't finish or do what we were supposed to do."

"I feel badly for our senior players. They played hard enough to win and just didn't get it done."

"We still have a lot to improve on. There are many things we can do better. Our boys should be excited about what they're capable of doing after playing an outstanding Smith Center team so close."

"You can say it was a moral victory but we wanted the highest score."

The powerful Smith Center wishbone offense is used to averaging 10 or more yards per carry in a game. Take away one long 91 yard run by the Redmen's junior running back Colt Rogers and Smith Center averaged only 4.6 yards per carry against the Blue Jays' fired up, gang tackling defense!

It has also probably been a long time since the Redmen allowed an opposing running back to gain over 100 yards. Norton sophomore tailback Terrell Lane carried the ball 20 times for 102 yards and a 5.1 yard per carry average! Lane also scored all three of Norton's touchdowns.

Coach Melvin started the following players: Nish Millan, left tackle; Brock Lauer, left guard; Kaid McKenna, center; Luke Ninemire, right guard; Tyler Cook, right tackle; Zac Dreher, tight end; Connor Pfannenstiel, quarterback; Matt Stanley, fullback; Terrell Lane, tailback; Ashton Draper, Landon Hamel, wide receivers, offense; Lauer and Kyle Mindrup, ends; Millan and John Van Doren, tackles; Dreher, Stanley, Lane, linebackers; Draper, Hamel, cornerbacks; Brad Nuzum, Zane Perez, safeties, defense.

Norton kicked off to begin the game. The Redmen had the ball three times in the first quarter and the Blue Jays twice but neither threatened to score.

Both teams had the ball once in the second quarter before the Redmen took over on their 14 after a Norton punt. The Blue Jays' Dakota Dreher, who had already recovered a Redman fumble in the first quarter, fell on another on the Smith Center 5-yard-line. Lane ran in for the first touchdown of the night and J.D. Gall kicked the extra point to put Norton ahead 7-0 with 8:20 left in the half.

The Redmen answered with a 75 yard drive to score. Senior running back Trevor Rempe tallied from 18 yards out. Rogers was stopped short on a try for two extra points and Norton led 7-6 with 5:34 remaining.

After the kickoff, Smith Center held and a Norton punt rolled back to the Blue Jay 24 before stopping. Rogers made a good run over the left side of the line for the Redmen's second touchdown with 3:41 left in the first half. Senior running back Joel Osburn scored two extra points to put Smith Center ahead 14-7.

Both teams had the ball two more times in the second quarter without adding to their point total, ending the half with Smith Center leading 14-7.

The hard hitting by both sides continued in the third quarter. After two possessions by both teams, Lane made the run of the game for the Blue Jays when he broke at least four tackles en route to a 51 yard touchdown! Gall kicked the extra point, tying the score at 14-

all with 2:04 left in the period.

Smith Center answered after the kickoff when Rogers gained 91 yards to the Norton 1-yard-line and Trevor Rempe scored. Senior running back Joe Osburn was successful on the two extra points attempt, putting the Redmen ahead 22-14 with 48 seconds left in the third quarter.

In the fourth quarter, Norton's junior defensive back Ashton Draper recovered a Smith Center fumble on the Redman 45 and the Blue Jays drove in for their final touchdown. Lane dented the end zone from two yards out but a running play for two points to tie the score was stopped short by Smith Center, leaving the score at 22-20 with 6:18 remaining in the game.

After the kickoff, Smith Center moved to their 45-yard-line before the "fighting Blue Jay" defense held them on downs and took possession of the pigskin with 3:11 left on the scoreboard. Norton fumbled the ball back to the Redmen, however, and had another scoring opportunity end with a pass interception before the final seconds of one of the most exciting games at Travis Field in a long time ticked off and the Redmen survived 22-20.

The Norton players, coaches and fans were disappointed but proud that they had come very, very close to ending Smith Center's long winning streak!

Individual statistics

Other Norton rushers, in addition to Lane, were: Matt Stanley, 3 for 15; Brad Nuzum, 1 for 4; Connor Pfannenstiel, 6 for 4; Landon Hamel, 1 for 0; J.D. Gall, 1 for minus 3; Zane Perez, 1 for minus 1.

Pfannenstiel completed 5 of 11 passes for 28 yards and had 1 interception. His pass receivers were: Hamel, 2 for 10 yards; Draper, 1 for 8; Zac Dreher, 1 for 7; Stanley, 1 for 3.

Lane punted 8 times for a 33.6 yard average. Lane had 3 kickoff returns for 23 yards.

Rogers led Smith Center with 202 yards on 22 carries. Trevor Rempe gained 85 yards on 17 attempts.

Leading tacklers for Norton were the Dreher brothers and Brock Lauer. Zac had 8 solos, 2 assists, 10 total, Dakota had 6 solos and 2 assists for 8 total and Brock had 6 solos, 2 assists, 8 total. They were followed by Landon Hamel, Terrell Lane, 7 solos each; Matt Stanley, 5 solos, 2 assists, 7 total; Zane Perez, 5 solos, 1 assist, 6 total; Tyler Cook, 5 solos; Ashton Draper, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Brad Nuzum, 3 solos; Nish Millan, 1 solo, 1 assist, 2 total; Justin Griffith, John Van Dorn, 1 solo each.

First quarter

J.D. Gall kicked off for Norton and Lane tackled Joe Osburn on the 30. Trevor Rempe gained just 1 yard but the next Redman attempt yielded 11 yards and a first down. Rogers gained 6 but Stanley and Perez stopped Trevor Rempe after 2. Trevor Rempe ran to the Norton 36. Nuzum, Stanley and Zac Dreher stopped a run for no gain, then Rogers picked up 3 before Lane tackled him. Delay of game cost Smith Center 5 yards. Trevor Rempe ran around right end to the 39 before Hamel tackled him and the Redmen punted.

Norton took over on their 6-yard-line. Lane gained 5 yards and Pfannenstiel 1. Lane was held to no gain and punted. Rogers returned the ball to the Smith Center 44. Rogers gained 7, then Joel Osburn got 2 before Perez and Dreher tackled him. The next down, the Redmen fumbled and Dakota Dreher fell on the ball on the Norton 40!

Perez got nothing, then Pfannenstiel passed to Hamel for 9 yards. Pfannenstiel sneaked for the first down but lost 5 on a fumbled long snap. Lane got the direct snap the next play and fumbled but recovered for a 7 yard loss. Pfannenstiel passed to Draper for 10 yards. Lane punted and Joe Osburn made a fair catch on the Smith Center 19.

Rogers ran around right end for a first down on the 34, then got another first down on the Redman 44 as the scoreless first quarter ended.

Second quarter

Rogers gained 6 before Perez and Dreher dropped him to the turf. A holding penalty put Smith



When Smith Center runs their precision wishbone offense, it's hard to know the location of the ball, so most teams try to tackle every back. On this play, the Redmen's Marshall McCall (#29) and a teammate are already flat on the turf from hits by Norton players and Joel Osburn is being tackled by an unidentified Blue Jay defender as Ashton Draper (#6) and Terrell Lane (#1) cover their positions.

Center back on their 41. Trevor Rempe ran to midfield. Smith Center got 1 hard yard, then Perez made a jarring tackle of Rogers for no gain and Norton took over on their 49.

Lane powered up the middle to the Smith Center 34 but a 1 yard loss by Perez and two incomplete passes later and Lane punted. The ball rolled dead on the Smith Center 14.

On first down, Norton's Dakota Dreher alertly got his second fumble recovery of the night, this one on the Redmen 5-yard-line! Lane outran the Smith Center defenders around left end for Norton's first touchdown of the game. Gall split the uprights and Norton led 7-0 with 8:20 left in the half.

Gall's kickoff was returned by Rogers to the Smith Center 25. Trevor Rempe earned a first down on the 36. Perez tackled Rogers after 3 and Stanley stopped Trevor Rempe after 2. Joe Osburn ran around right end to the Norton 45.

Senior quarterback Travis Rempe tried a keeper but was dropped for a 1 yard loss by a host of Norton defenders. Rogers got off a good run to the Norton 30 and Osburn gained to the 18. On a delay over the right side, Trevor Rempe ran into the corner of the end zone for a touchdown. Rogers was stopped short of two extra points and Norton led 7-6 with 5:34 left in the half.

Lane returned the kickoff to the Norton 22. After an incomplete pass and 1 yard loss by Lane, Pfannenstiel was sacked. Lane punted and the ball bounced backwards after hitting the turf. It ended on the Norton 24 and Smith Center quickly took advantage of the short field. Rogers ran over the left side and avoided several would-be tacklers en route to the end zone. Joel Osburn ran in for two extra points and it was 14-7 with 3:41 left.

Smith Center attempted a short kickoff and got it. The ball went to Kaid McKenna and he caught it on the Norton 47. Stanley gained 1, then Lane had a good gain around right end but Norton was whistled for an illegal block. The ball came back to the Norton 38. Gall lost 2, a pass was incomplete and Lane punted to the Smith Center 40.

Rogers gained 3 and Trevor Rempe 6. Travis Rempe fumbled but recovered for a 4 yard loss. Illegal procedure cost the Redmen 5 more yards and they punted. The ball rolled dead on the Norton 19. Pfannenstiel took a knee and it was halftime with Smith Center ahead by a slim 14-7 margin.

The Norton Community High School marching band, under direction of David Will, presented another outstanding halftime show. It was a western theme and very well done.

Third quarter

Lane returned the kickoff to the Norton 25 and gained 8 yards on 3 carries. He booted a towering 44 yard punt to the Smith Center 23! The fired up Blue Jay defense was equal to the occasion. The Redmen got 1 yard on first down, then Perez and Cook tackled Joe Osburn for no gain. Then, Lane and Nuzum ganged up on Rogers and dropped him after a 1 yard gain. Smith Center punted to the

Norton 39 where Draper was the receiver.

After Lane gained 2, Pfannenstiel passed to Stanley for an apparent first down on the Smith Center 47. A block in the back penalty moved the ball back to the Norton 35. Lane gained 2 and a flat pass to Hamel netted 2. Lane punted and a penalty against Smith Center moved the ball back to the Redmen's 15.

Trevor Rempe gained 10 yards, then ran to the 30 but delay of game cost the Redmen 5 yards. Rogers got just 1 yard as Dreher and Lauer made the tackle. Rogers ran to the 34 before Lauer and Draper made the tackle. Holding by Smith Center dropped them back to the 22. Joe Osburn tried to run around right end but Lauer and Hamel corralled him for no gain! A whole host of players dropped the next Redman back for a 1 yard loss. Smith Center punted to the Norton 49.

On first down, Lane got the handoff and picked up some blocking over the right side of the line. He broke a tackle and ran to the outside, where he broke three more tackles en route to a 51 yard touchdown! Gall kicked the extra point, to the delight of the screaming Norton fans, and the score was knotted at 14-all with 2:04 left in the third period.

Gall kicked off and Rogers was tackled on the Redmen 5-yard-line. Trevor Rempe gained just 3 yards on first down. The Norton fans' cheering was quieted, however, when Rogers got loose over the middle and broke into the open. He was finally run down by Draper on the Norton 1-yard line. Trevor Rempe ran in for a touchdown and Joe Osburn ran for two extra points to put Smith Center ahead 22-14 with 48 seconds left.

Lane returned the kickoff to the 30. Pfannenstiel lost 6 yards and Lane was stopped for no gain as the third period came to a close with the Redmen leading 22-14.

Fourth quarter

Pfannenstiel passed to Dreher for 7 yards on third down. Lane got off another good punt. This one carried 45 yards to the Smith Center 24. Lauer tackled Joel Osburn after 9, then Osburn picked up a first down on the 43. Dreher stopped Joel Osburn after 2, then Draper recovered a Redman fumble on their 45!

Pfannenstiel ran the keeper to perfection and gained 9 yards. Then, Stanley found a hole over left tackle and bulled for a first down on the Smith Center 23!

Two downs later and Lane had a first down on the Redman 12. Lane gained 2 more before Pfannenstiel sneaked to the 8. Nuzum plowed to the 4. On fourth down, Lane ran over left tackle for another Norton touchdown!

Stanley was stopped short on the two extra points try and Smith Center retained a 22-20 advantage with 6:18 remaining in the game.

Rogers returned Gall's kickoff to the Norton 45. Trevor Rempe gained 4 but Rogers was stacked up for no gain. After a 1 yard gain into the mass of Norton defenders by a Redman back, Rogers made it just to the Norton 38 on fourth down and the Blue Jays had the ball!

Lane ran for 3 but fumbled on second down after a hard hit by the Smith Center defenders and the Redmen recovered on the Norton 42 with 3:11 left in the game. An offside cost Norton 5 yards but Nish Millan and Nuzum stopped Joel Osburn for no gain. Rogers ran to the 30, however, before Lane tackled him after a first down

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

pickup. Rogers got the call again but Smith Center was penalized back to the Norton 41 for holding. Rogers got nothing then ran again and Gall, Dreher and Stanley tackled him after 1 yard. Senior running back Marshall McCall tried the Norton line and was stuffed for no gain.

Smith Center punted and Hamel received and was tackled on the Norton 5. Illegal procedure against Smith Center caused them to punt again. After a false start and 5 yard penalty, they punted to the Norton 26 with 30 seconds left on the clock.

A Pfannenstiel pass was intercepted by McCall on the Smith Center 46 with 21 seconds remaining. The Redman quarterback took a knee and the game was over with the scoreboard still reading Smith Center 22, Norton 20.

Next action

The 2-1 Norton Blue Jays now travel to Osborne Friday evening for a 7 p.m. Mid-Continent League contest. Osborne has 14 returning lettermen and 8 returning starters on both offense and defense.

"They are much improved over last year and will be playing at home," said coach Melvin. "They'll play hard and will think they have a chance to upset us. Their senior fullback 6'2", 205 pound Danny Pfannenstiel is a load to bring down. We will have to be prepared to play very well."

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Smith Center
6 First Downs	15
34-116 Yards Rushing	60-362
28 Yards Passing	0
144 Total Yards	362
5-11-1 Passes Compl	0
8-33.6 Punts	5-30.8
1-2 Fumbles Lost	3-4
3-25 Penalties	10-75

High School Sports This Week



FOOTBALL:

Norton Blue Jays vs. Osborne Bulldogs 7 p.m. Friday in Osborne
 Norton Junior Varsity vs. Goodland 6 p.m. Monday in Norton
 Logan Trojans vs. Hill City Ringnecks 7 p.m. Friday in Hill City
 Northern Valley Junior Varsity vs. Hill City 6 p.m. Monday in Almena

VOLLEYBALL:

Norton Lady Jays vs. Hill City/Hoxie V-JV 4 p.m. Today in Norton
 Norton Lady Jays vs. Colby/Atwood V-JV 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in Colby
 Norton Lady Jays C-team vs. Smith Center/Colby 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Norton
 Norton Lady Jays C-team in Hill City Tournament 9 a.m. Saturday
 Norton Lady Jays C-team vs. Goodland 5 p.m. Monday in Norton
 Logan Lady Trojans vs. Alma, Neb./Northern Valley 5 p.m. Today in Almena
 Logan Lady Trojans in Osborne Tournament 8 a.m. Saturday
 Logan Lady Trojans vs. Palco/Western Plains 4 p.m. Tuesday in Palco
 Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Alma, Neb./Logan 5 p.m. Today in Almena

CROSS COUNTRY:

Norton Cross Country in Hill City Invitational 5 p.m. Thursday
 Norton Cross Country in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Tuesday
 Northern Valley Cross Country in Hill City Invitational 5 p.m. Thursday
 Northern Valley Cross Country in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Tuesday

TENNIS:

Norton Lady Jays in Goodland JV Tournament 3 p.m. Today
 Norton Lady Jays in Trego Invitational 9 a.m. Saturday in WaKeeney
 Norton Lady Jays in Phillipsburg JV Tournament 9 a.m. Saturday
 Norton Lady Jays in Colby Varsity Tournament 3 p.m. Tuesday