

Titans no match for Norton's Jays, 53-14

By DICK BOYD

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
Coach Lucas Melvin's Norton Community High School football team got the playoff season started Friday night in Ness City with a 53-14 thrashing of the Ness City-Dighton Titans.

The win extended Norton's season record to 5-2 and dropped Ness City's to 1-6.

For all practical purposes, the game was over after the first four carries by Norton's sophomore tailback Terrell Lane, all of which went for touchdowns and were in the first quarter!

For the game, Lane scored five touchdowns on just eight carries for 223 total yards and a per-carry average of 28 yards.

The Blue Jays led 26-0 after one period and 53-0 at halftime. The Norton junior varsity played the entire second half against the Ness City varsity and gave up two touchdowns.

In addition to Lane, Norton's junior wide receiver Landon Hamel also had a big night. He caught two passes for 87 yards and two touchdowns, had one pass interception, returned one kickoff 82 yards and returned one punt for 27 yards.

Passing to him was sophomore quarterback Spencer Shirk, who replaced injured starter Connor Pfannenstiel. Shirk completed 3 of 5 passes for 60 percent accuracy and 111 total yards.

The "Blue Swarm" Norton defense also had a big night. They limited the Titans to one first down each of the first two quarters and allowed them 50 total yards of offense in the first half, which included a minus five yards rushing!

Hamel returned the game's opening kickoff to the Ness City 8-yard-line and Lane covered the final 8 yards on a run around right end. Caleb Laughlin's extra point kick was blocked, making it 6-0 with 11:23 left.

After holding the Titans to three-and-out, Norton got the ball on the Titan 46. Lane carried around right end, cut back against the grain and ran into the end zone. Laughlin's kick split the uprights and Norton led 13-0 with 8:47 left.

On Laughlin's kickoff, Lane tackled Ness City's Jerry Lira on their 10-yard-line! On third down, a good pass rush by Norton caused Ness City quarterback Joe Flax to throw an inaccurate pass and Hamel stepped in front of the receiver to intercept and return the ball to the 20. Lane ran around left end this time and powered into the end zone. Laughlin's kick made it 20-0 with 7:03 remaining.

Lira made a good return of Laughlin's kickoff and was finally tackled by Laughlin on the Norton 3-yard-line! Two plays later, Zane Perez recovered a Titan fumble on the Norton 1. Lane got the ball for his fourth carry and ran around right end 99 yards for the Blue Jays' fourth touchdown. The extra point kick was unsuccessful but Norton led 26-0 with 6:19 left in the quarter.

After Laughlin's kickoff, Ness City earned their initial first down of the game before punting back to the Jays. Norton drove to the Ness City 1 as time expired in the first quarter.

Shirk sneaked for the touchdown, Laughlin kicked the extra point and Norton led 33-0 with 11:55 left in the half. After another three-and-out by Ness City, the Blue Jays' next touchdown came on a 9 yard pass from Shirk to Hamel. Laughlin's kick made it 40-0 with 8:30 left.

After Ness City made their second and last first down of the half, Shirk passed to Hamel, Dakota Dreher leveled a defender with the block of the game and Hamel sprinted 78 yards for Norton's seventh touchdown. Laughlin's extra point kick extended the lead to 47-0 with 3:59 left.

The Norton defense was again equal to the occasion and took over possession of the pigskin after stopping a fake punt. Lane scored his fifth touchdown and Norton's eighth and final on a 38 yard run with 23 seconds left in the half. The extra point kick was unsuccessful, making it 53-0 at

halftime.

"They aren't very good but we did what we had to do," said coach Melvin. "We played hard, didn't have many mistakes and held down our penalties."

The only glaring mistake came on a Ness City kickoff return that almost went the distance. "Our defense didn't stay in their lanes," said coach Melvin.

"Offensively, Terrell ran hard and the line blocked well for him. Spencer did well in his first varsity start at quarterback.

"Defensively, we played hard and held them to very little yardage in the first half."

Starters for Norton

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

Former starters junior tackle Robert Derauf and sophomore guard Luke Ninemire have been lost for the season due to injury.

Individual statistics

Norton ball carriers, in addition to Lane, and their yardage were: Matt Stanley, 3 for 31; Zane Perez, 3 for 15; Spencer Shirk, 3 for 8; Tye Nickell, 5 for 24; Ashton Draper, 1 for minus 1; Seth Antrim, 1 for 0; Trey Millan, 1 for 3.

Spencer Shirk's other receiver was Ashton Draper who caught 1 pass for 24 yards.

Caleb Laughlin had 9 kickoffs for an average of 46 yards.

J.D. Gall punted 2 times for a 34 yard average.

Trey Millan returned 2 kickoffs for 52 yards.

Leading rusher for Ness City was quarterback Joe Flax with 34 yards on 13 attempts. Flax completed 6 of 9 passes for 123 yards.

Leading tacklers for Norton were: Rylee Stanley, 5 solos, 1 assist, 6 total; Zac Dreher, 5 solos; Billy Broeckelman, Dakota Dreher, Brock Lauer, 4 solos each; J.D. Gall, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Landon Hamel, 1 solo, 2 assists, 3 total; Donny Hildebrand, 3 solos; Marcus Herman, Kaid McKenna, Zane Perez, Spencer Shirk, Matt Stanley, John Van Doren, 2 solos each; Ashton Draper, Trey Millan, Tye Nickell, Brad Nuzum, Caleb Laughlin, 1 solo each; Justin Waggoner, 1 assist.

First quarter

Hamel made an exciting return of the opening kickoff and was tackled on the Ness City 8-yard-line! Lane scored from there; Laughlin's extra kick was unsuccessful and it was 6-0 with 11:23 left.

Laughlin kicked off and Rylee Stanley made the tackle on the 25. A whole host of Norton tacklers stopped quarterback Flax for no gain. Ness City was penalized 5 for delay of game, then Brock Lauer sacked Flax on the 11. Flax ran the keeper to the 17 and Ness punted to their 46.

On first down, Lane ran around right end and cut back for his second touchdown. Laughlin kicked the extra point and it was 13-0 with 8:47 left.

Lira returned Laughlin's kickoff and Lane came down fast to tackle him on the 10. Ness City lost 3, Micah Roehl gained 2 and Flax went back to pass on third down. The swarming Norton defense put on a good rush and his pass was intercepted by Hamel and returned to the Ness City 20. Lane ran around left end for another touchdown. Laughlin kicked the extra point and it was 20-0 with 7:03 remaining.

Lira got loose up the middle of the field on Laughlin's kickoff and Laughlin tackled him on the Norton 3. The Blue Jays were penalized half the distance for being offside. On the next down, the hard-hitting Norton defense caused a fumble and Perez fell on



Norton's "Blue Swarm" defense held Ness City to minus five total yards rushing in the first half of the Jays' big win over the Titans on Friday. Here, a total of nine of the eleven Blue

Jay defenders swarmed over a Titan running back as they held him to no gain!

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

the ball on the 1.

Lane ran over the right side of the line and outran the Titan defense 99 yards to paydirt! The extra point attempt was unsuccessful as Norton had increased their lead to 26-0 with 6:19 left.

Laughlin kicked off again and this time Lira did not get away from the Blue Jays. He was tackled on the 31. Guy Fullmer gained 5 yards, then Zac Dreher tackled him after a 4 yard gain. Flax sneaked for the Titans' only first quarter first down. Fullmer got the ball and Dreher dropped him for no gain. A flat pass to Fullmer gained nothing as Perez made the tackle. Matt Stanley tackled Fullmer for a loss and they punted.

Draper returned the punt and, after a face mask penalty against Ness City, Norton had the ball on their 45. Shirk went back to pass but was sacked. After an incomplete pass, Shirk connected with Draper for a first down on the Ness City 40. Stanley gained 31 yards on two hard runs to the 9-yard-line!

Lane got the call next and, for the first time in the game, did not score. He gained 4 yards, then gained 4 more to the 1-yard-line as the quarter ended with the Blue Jays solidly on top 26-0.

Second quarter

Shirk sneaked the last yard on the first play of the second quarter, and Laughlin split the uprights again to extend the Norton lead to 33-0 with 11:55 left in the first half.

Lira returned Laughlin's kickoff to the Ness City 24. Flax was stopped for no gain. Fullmer lost 1 and, on third down, the entire swarming Norton defense ran to the ball and stopped Roehl for no gain!

Ness City punted and Hamel returned the kick 27 yards to the Ness City 34. Shirk ran the keeper and gained 16 yards to the 18. Perez found a hole and ran to the 9, then Shirk hit Hamel with a flat pass and he sprinted into the end zone for a touchdown! Laughlin's extra point kick made it 40-0 with 8:30 still remaining in the first half.

Fullmer returned Laughlin's kickoff and Hamel made the tackle on the 30. Flax made nothing, then passed for a first down on the Norton 25 for the Titans' second first-and-ten of the game. On the next down, however, Lauer put a crimp in Ness's hopes of scoring when he sacked Flax for a 20 yard loss! Flax was stopped for no gain, then passed to Lira on the 23. A penalty cost Ness 5 yards and a pass was incomplete. Norton took over on their 28.

Draper lost 1 yard on a reverse and delay of game cost Norton another 5 yards. Then, Shirk connected with Hamel in the flat, Dakota Dreher used a timely block to level a defender and Hamel was off to the races. Seventy-eight yards later and Hamel was in the end zone! Laughlin's extra

kick was good, extending the Blue Jay lead to 47-0 with 3:59 remaining.

Lira returned Laughlin's kickoff and was stopped on the 35. Fullmer gained nothing, Roehl picked up 5 but Lauer tackled Flax for a loss. A fake punt by Ness City was stopped on the Norton 43 and the Jays took over.

Matt Stanley was stopped for no gain and a pass was incomplete. On third down, Lane bulled for 5. Next, he ran over the right side of the line, picked up his blocking and raced 38 yards into the end zone! Laughlin's extra kick was unsuccessful but Norton had increased their advantage to 53-0 with 23 seconds left in the first half.

Three plays later, it was halftime and the end of the Norton varsity players' action for the night as they turned over their roles to the Blue Jay junior varsity.

Second half

Due to Norton's big lead in the game, the second half was played with the scoreboard clock running continuously.

Norton kicked off to Ness City and they drove to the Norton 22 where they missed a field goal try. The young Blue Jays were unable to move against the Ness City varsity and punted.

This time, the Titans were successful in scoring. Flax passed 31 yards to Fullmer for a touchdown with 1 second left in the third quarter. Lira kicked the extra point, making it 53-7.

After the kickoff, Tye Nickell made several good runs for the Jays but Norton fumbled the ball away on the Ness City 39.

The Titans drove in for their second touchdown of the night. Flax passed 20 yards to Zac Birney for the score. Lira kicked the extra point, making the score 53-14 with 4:32 left.

After the kickoff, Norton was unable to move and punted back to the Titans. They had two offensive plays before the gun sounded on a 53-14 Norton victory!

Next action

Norton will host the unbeaten and state ranked Scott City Beavers in their second District game at 7 p.m. Friday at Travis Field.



Norton senior defensive end Brock Lauer had a career game Friday night in tackles for losses versus Ness City. Here he is shown making one of three quarterback sacks and he also had another tackle for loss in the Blue Jay victory.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

vers in their second District game at 7 p.m. Friday at Travis Field. Scott City shutout Goodland 28-0 in their first District game on Friday.

The Beavers went three rounds deep in the playoffs last season, which included a playoff win over Norton in Scott City. They return 21 lettermen, six offensive and eight defensive starters.

Their strength is in their defense which includes linebackers Chaston Hoeme, 6', 190 pound senior, with 152 tackles last season; Levi Kuntzsch, 6'2", 200 pound senior, with 117 tackles and Calvin Erven, 6' 215 pound junior, with 117 tackles.

The Beavers' Wing T offense is led by a big, experienced line that features Hoeme, Erven and seniors Rylee Ward, 5'11", 215

pounds, center Adam Wilkinson, 6' 225 pounds and junior Juan Gardea, 5'11", 240 pounds.

"They didn't lose many players from last season and have another outstanding team," said Norton coach Melvin.

"We played much better against Ness City than we did against Ellis but we will have to play our best game of the season to beat Scott City."

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Ness City
14 First Downs	9
303 Yards Rushing	100
111 Yards Passing	123
414 Total Yards	223
3-6-0 Passes Compl.	6-9-1
2-34 Punts	3-26
1-2 Fumbles Lost	1-2
2-7 Penalties	6-49

High School Sports This Week



FOOTBALL:
Norton Blue Jays vs. Scott City Beavers (Senior Night) 7 p.m. Friday in Norton
Northern Valley Huskies vs. Wheatland-Grinnell 7 p.m. Friday in Grainfield
Logan Trojans vs. Palco 7 p.m. Friday in Palco

VOLLEYBALL:
Norton Lady Jays vs. Goodland/Ulysses (V, JV) 5 p.m. Today in Goodland
Norton Lady Jays in Sub-State Tournament TBA Saturday in Beloit
Logan Lady Trojans vs. Lucas-Luray in Regional Tournament 3 p.m. Today in Palco
Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Logan/Lucas-Luray Winner in Regional Tournament Today in Palco

CROSS COUNTRY:
Norton Cross Country in Class 3A Regional Meet 2 p.m. Saturday in Cimarron
Northern Valley Cross Country in Class 1A Regional Meet TBA

Sports tips to: (785) 877-3361