

# Norton opens football season with 21-14 win

By DICK BOYD

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

The pads were popping Friday night as the Norton Community High School and Phillipsburg High School football teams met in the 2009 season opener and the Blue Jays prevailed 21-14 in another typically hard-fought contest between the two rivals.

Norton had the edge in both offense and defense but was hurt by five turnovers and twice as many penalties as the Panthers. The Blue Jays suffered three pass interceptions and lost the ball twice on fumbles. In addition, Norton had 75 yards in penalties compared to 35 for Phillipsburg.

The first half was scoreless but Norton tallied on two touchdowns in the third quarter compared to one by Phillipsburg and both teams scored once in the final period.

"Our defense played hard and was able to make big plays when needed," said Norton head coach Lucas Melvin.

"We had way too many self-inflicted errors. With five turnovers, you have to feel fortunate to win.

"It took big plays to spark our offense.

"We were also hampered by cramps so a lot of players had to fill in and they all played hard.

"It was a good effort for the first game and we came out without any major injuries.

"We will have to work hard to eliminate the mistakes."

The stingy Norton defense held Phillipsburg to 114 yards rushing for an average of just 2.5 yards per carry and limited Panther passing to 82 yards and 10.2 yards per completion.

Despite being outweighed 30 to 40 pounds per man, the Norton offense produced 110 yards rushing for 3.8 yards per carry and 185 yards through the air for an average of 26.4 yards per completion.

Coach Melvin started the following players on the offensive line: junior Ryan Blecha, 185 pounds, left tackle senior Marcus Herman, 175 pounds, left guard; junior Kaid McKenna, 175 pounds, center; junior Luke Nine-mire, 190 pounds, right guard; junior Landon Keiswetter, 175 pounds, right tackle; senior J.D. Gall, 180 pounds, tight end; senior Ashton Draper, 180 pounds, wide receiver and senior Landon Hamel, 160 pounds, wide receiver. The backfield consisted of senior Connor Pfannenstiel, 155 pounds, quarterback; senior Zane Perez, 180 pounds, fullback; junior Terrell Lane, 210 pounds, tailback.

On defense for the Blue Jays were: junior Justin Griffith, 180 pounds, defensive end; junior Jeremy Sproul, 200 pounds, defensive end; senior Tyler Cook, 215 pounds, defensive tackle; Herman, defensive tackle; Gall, McKenna, Lane, linebackers; junior Spencer Shirk, 165 pounds, Pfannenstiel, Perez and Hamel, defensive backs.

Zane Perez had a career game from his fullback position. He gained 96 yards on 11 carries for an average of 8.7 yards per carry!

Ashton Draper also had a great game, catching three passes for 116 yards, an average of 38.6 per catch and one touchdown!

Landon Hamel returned four punts for 69 yards, an average of 17.25 per return and one touchdown and had one pass interception for 25 yards!

### First quarter

Norton kicked off to start the game and Phillipsburg fumbled on third down. Griffith recovered the ball for the Blue Jays on the Panther 20-yard-line. Lane gained five yards but fumbled the ball back to Phillipsburg.

The Panthers got one first down and punted. Neither team could



Norton's Landon Hamel broke through the Phillipsburg defenders on a punt return in the third quarter to score a touchdown from 57 yards out and put Norton ahead 13-6!

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

move and they exchanged punts. Phillipsburg intercepted a Pfannenstiel pass but the Blue Jay defense held again and the Panthers punted for the third time in the period as it came to a scoreless close.

### Second quarter

After another exchange of punts early in the second period, Perez had a couple of big gainers. Pfannenstiel completed passes to Hamel and Draper and ran a quarterback sneak for 12 yards and Norton had a first down on the Panther 10.

Phillipsburg's defense stiffened and Norton's junior kicker Caleb Laughlin tried a field goal but officials ruled it wide of the mark.

Phillipsburg put together a good drive but, thanks to the aggressive Norton defense, it fell short and they punted into the end zone with time running out. The Blue Jays ran two plays and it was halftime, still with no score.

### Third quarter

Norton received the kickoff to start the second half but, after gaining two first downs, they fumbled on the Panther 24. After a pass completion to their 43 yard line, Phillipsburg handed the ball to junior running back Trevor Smith. He found a hole in the Norton defense, one of the few all night, and sprinted to the 1 yard line before being tackled. Junior fullback Thomas Rachow bulled into the end zone for a Panther touchdown. A pass for a possible two extra points was no good but Phillipsburg led 6-0 with 8:59 left in the third quarter.

Two plays and 16 seconds later, the Blue Jays grabbed the lead. Hamel returned the kickoff to the Norton 35 and Pfannenstiel and Draper combined on a beautiful 65 yard pass play for a Blue Jay touchdown!

Laughlin split the uprights and Norton led 7-6 with 8:43 remaining.

The next six minutes, Norton was hurt by a pass interception and Phillipsburg by a holding penalty. After the interception, the fighting Blue Jay defense forced another Panther punt and Hamel gathered it in on the Norton 43-yard-line. He weaved through the first and second lines of the Phillipsburg defense and hit the breezes for a 57 yard touchdown!

The extra point kick try was wide but the Blue Jays held a 13-6 advantage with 2:52 left in the period.

Phillipsburg took advantage of a pass reception and pass interference penalty against the Blue Jays to move the ball to the Norton 5-yard-line as time ran out in the third quarter.

### Fourth quarter

On fourth down, Smith got loose around right end and into the end zone for another Panther touchdown. Smith also made a

spectacular catch in the corner of the end zone of a pass from quarterback Weston Coomes for two extra points that boosted the Panthers into a 14-13 lead with 11:16 remaining in the game.

Norton went to the air after the kickoff and Pfannenstiel's pass was intercepted on the Norton 45. With Cook and McKenna leading the way on defense, Norton forced the Panthers to punt. Norton had the ball on their own 7-yard-line with seven minutes left.

Perez shot up the middle for nine yards and Pfannenstiel sneaked for a first down on the 22. Sproul gained four yards and Pfannenstiel passed to Hamel for a first down on the 33. Pfannenstiel connected with Draper for another first down on the Panther 37 with 3:37 left.

The next down, Perez got the call again, found running room around right end, reversed his field and was finally tackled on the Panther 4-yard-line! Lane ran up the middle for the winning touchdown!

Perez was a good choice by coach Melvin to run for two extra points and he did just that to put Norton ahead for good 21-14 with 3:22 showing on the scoreboard!

The Norton defense was equal to the occasion and took possession with 2:05 left. The Panthers held and Norton punted back to them but the home team ran out of time as Hamel intercepted a long pass to end the game with a great season-opening 21-14 win for the Blue Jays!

### Individual statistics

Other ball carriers for Norton, other than Perez, and their yardage were: Pfannenstiel, 8 carries for 31 yards; Lane, 4 for 9; Sproul, 6 for 8.

Lane punted once for 36 yards and Gall punted twice for a 25 yard average.

Lane had one punt return for 12 yards and Pfannenstiel had one for 13 yards

Laughlin had four kickoffs for a 42.5 yard average.

Pfannenstiel completed 7 of 14 passes for 50 percent and 183 yards. Hamel caught four passes for 67 yards and a 16.8 yard average.

Pfannenstiel had two kickoff returns for 38 yards and Hamel had one for 14 yards.

Smith had 20 carries for 54 yards for Phillipsburg and Rachow had 15 totes for 64 yards. Coomes completed 8 of 19 passes for 82 yards. His leading receiver was Jake Cole with 5 catches for 70 yards.

Leading tackler for Norton was linebacker McKenna with 4 solos, 7 assists for 11 total. Linebacker Gall was right behind him with 5 solos, 5 assists, 10 total. They were followed by Spencer Shirk, 5 solos, 4 assists, 9 total; Sproul, 2 solos, 6 assists, 8 total; Perez,



Norton linebacker J.D. Gall and a Blue Jay teammate wrestled Phillipsburg quarterback Weston Coomes to the turf during Norton's 21-14 win on Friday night. Gall was Norton's second leading tackler for the game.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd



The aggressive Norton defense limited Phillipsburg runners to an average of just 2.5 yards per carry on Friday night. Here, at least four Blue Jay defenders smothered Panther running back Trevor Smith to keep him from making any yardage.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

4 solos, 3 assists, 7 total; Cook, 2 solos, 4 assists, 6 total; Draper, 4 solos, 1 assist, 5 total; Hamel, 2 solos, 3 assists, 5 total; Rylee Stanley, 4 solos, 1 assist, 5 total; Herman, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Keiswetter, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Lane, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Pfannenstiel, 3 solos, 1 assist, 4 total; Trey Millan, 2 solos; Ryan Blecha, Griffith, Tye Nickell, 1 each.

### Next action

Norton will host Oberlin at 7 p.m. this Friday in the Blue Jays' season home opener.

The Red Devils defeated Os-

borne 18-15 in their first game of the season.

Oberlin features a Division I wide receiver in senior Toby Peters, a 6'1", 190 pound wide receiver who caught 920 yards worth of passes last season.

He got the season off to a good start Friday when one of his catches was 78 yards for a touchdown.

Osborne took an early 7-0 lead that lasted until mid-way through the second quarter but Oberlin scored in each of the final three periods. Ritter threw a pair of touchdown passes and ran for another score.

"Oberlin will give us a battle," said coach Melvin. "They are gaining more confidence under second year head coach J.D. Johnson.

"Peters is a talented receiver."

### GAME STATISTICS

Norton- Phillipsburg  
9 First Downs 9  
110 Yards Rushing 114  
183 Yards Passing 82  
293 Total Yards 196  
7-14-3 Passes Compl 8-19-1  
2-3 Fumbles Lost 1-3  
3-28.67 Punts 8-29.9  
9-75 Penalties 4-35

## High School Sports This Week



Norton Blue Jays



Northern Valley Huskies



Logan Trojans

### FOOTBALL:

Norton Blue Jays vs. Oberlin Red Devils . . . . . 7 p.m. Friday in Norton  
Norton Junior Varsity vs. Oberlin . . . . . 6:30 p.m. Monday in Oberlin  
Northern Valley Huskies vs. Stockton . . . . . 6 p.m. Friday in Stockton  
Northern Valley Junior Varsity vs. Stockton . . . . . 6 p.m. Monday in Almena  
Logan Trojans vs. Thunder Ridge . . . . . 7 p.m. Friday in Kensington

### VOLLEYBALL:

Norton Lady Jays V vs. Atwood/Brewster/Dundy . . . . . 10 a.m. Saturday in Atwood  
Norton Lady Jays JV in Quinter JV Tournament. . . . . 9 a.m. Saturday in Quinter  
Norton Lady Jays C-team in Phillipsburg Tourney. . . . . 8 a.m. Saturday in Phillipsburg  
Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Gove Co. Classic. . . . 8:30 a.m. Sat. in Grainfield/Grinnell  
Logan Lady Trojans in Southern Cloud Tourney . . . . . 9 a.m. Saturday in Miltonvale  
Logan Lady Trojans Varsity vs. Stockton/Thunder Ridge/  
Franklin, NE . . . . . 3 p.m. Tuesday in Kensington

### CROSS COUNTRY:

Norton Cross Country in Wamego Invitational . . . . . 9 a.m. Saturday in Wamego  
Northern Valley Huskies in Rock Hills Invitational . . . . 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Mankato

### TENNIS:

Norton Lady Jays in Trego JV Round Robin. . . . . 1 p.m. Thursday in WaKeeney  
Norton Lady Jays JV Quadrangular . . . . . 10 a.m. Saturday in Norton  
Norton Lady Jays in Phillipsburg Varsity Quad. . . . . 3 p.m. Tuesday in Phillipsburg  
Norton Lady Jays JV in Russell Invitational . . . . . 3 p.m. Tuesday in Russell

Sports news to (785) 877-3361, or nortontelegram@nwkansas.com