

Blue Jays score Homecoming win

By DICK BOYD

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It was Homecoming Week for Norton Community High School and the Blue Jay football team was still celebrating when they took the field Friday night and had to come from behind to defeat the visiting Osborne Bulldogs 39-14 in Mid-Continent League play.

Norton did have an early 7-0 lead when Osborne got in trouble trying to punt but the Bulldogs quickly tied the score at 7-all and scored again on their fourth possession of the quarter to take a 14-7 advantage.

Although the outmanned Bulldogs receive a lot of credit for fighting hard to the end, they were unable to score again. Meanwhile, the hard hitting Blue Jays shook off numerous penalties, including one that led to Osborne's first touchdown, in taking a 26-14 halftime lead and building it to 39-14 in the third quarter.

For all practical purposes, the game was over after three periods but Osborne continued to play hard despite picking up only one first-and-ten in the third quarter. The visitors held the Blue Jays out of the end zone on their three possessions but earned just one first down on two possessions of their own in the fourth quarter.

"They played hard and we didn't get on them very well early," said Norton head football coach Lucas Melvin.

"We came out a little flat. We hadn't done that in the first three games. We always get after it from the opening whistle.

"I called a time out and told our players we needed to play together as a team, take care of business and build up each other.

"We needed to stop worrying about mistakes and penalties and rally.

"After the first quarter, we played very well defensively. We held them to just 34 yards and two first downs in the second half. Our offense also played well. They threw a lot of junk defenses at us. They focused on stopping Zane Perez and that allowed our quarterbacks and tailbacks to do better.

"We run a multiple offense so, if they try to take one away, they get hurt by the others."

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 Ninemire, 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.

Starting in the backfield for the Blue Jays were: senior Connor Pfannenstiel, 155 pounds, quarterback; senior Zane Perez, 180 pounds, fullback and junior Terrell Lane, 210 pounds, tailback.

Starting on defense for the Blue Jays were: junior Rylee Stanley, 150 pounds, left end; senior Tyler Cook, 215 pounds, left tackle; Herman, right tackle; junior Jeremy Sproul, 200 pounds, right end; Gall, McKenna, Lane, linebackers; Perez, Pfannenstiel, Draper, Hamel, defensive backs.

Tailback Terrell Lane scored three touchdowns in the game. He hit paydirt from 30 yards out with 10:39 left in the second quarter, picked up a fumble and ran it in from 22 yards with 7:14 remaining in the half and tallied from 11 yards out with 9:08 left in the third quarter.

Lane rushed for 139 yards on 18 carries for an average of 7.7 yards per carry. Norton's other tailback, Jeremy Sproul was also hard to bring down. He gained 58 yards on 10 totes for a 5.8 yard average.

Other ball carriers for Norton were Zane Perez, 4 for 3 yards; Connor Pfannenstiel, 2 for minus 1; Spencer Shirk, 4 for minus 6.

Quarterback Pfannenstiel completed 5 of 11 passes for 69 yards and quarterback Spencer Shirk completed 2 of 4 for 64 yards.

Ashton Draper had 3 pass re-

ceptions for 81 yards, followed by Lane, 1 for 6; Landon Hamel, 1 for 7; Perez, 1 for 22 and J.D. Gall, 1 for 17.

Caleb Laughlin had 7 kickoffs for an average of 49.7 yards.

Rylee Stanley had 2 fumble recoveries and Lane had 1.

Jason Knoll was leading ground gainer for Osborne with 57 yards on 20 carries.

Leading tackler for Norton was defensive back Landon Hamel with 5 solos, 3 assists, 8 total; followed by Zane Perez, 7 solos; Kaid McKenna, 4 solos, 3 assists, 7 total; J.D. Gall, 2 solos, 5 assists, 7 total; Tyler Cook, 3 solos, 3 assists, 6 total; Terrell Lane, 3 solos, 2 assists, 5 total; Jeremy Sproul, 1 solo, 3 assists, 4 total; Dakota Dreher, 1 solo, 2 assists, 3 total; Justin Griffith, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Connor Pfannenstiel, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Ashton Draper, 2 solos; Luke Ninemire, 1 solo, 1 assist, 2 total; Spencer Shirk, 2 solos; Rylee Stanley, 2 assists; Cayleb Campbell, Marcus Herman, Trey Millan, Jake Romey, 1 solo each; Dalton Miller, 1 assist.

First quarter

Laughlin kicked off for Norton and Damon Schurr returned for the Bulldogs. Perez tackled him on the 27-yard-line.

After an incomplete pass, Herman tackled Jason Knoll after 2 yards. Another incomplete pass set up a punting situation for Osborne.

Jakob DeMars went back to punt but the center snap was short and he picked up the ball. Norton's Jeremy Sproul had already broken through the Bulldog defenders, however, and caused DeMars to fumble. Rylee Stanley recovered for Norton on the 8.

On first down, Pfannenstiel passed complete to wide receiver Ashton Draper for Norton's first touchdown. Laughlin split the uprights for the extra point and the Blue Jays held a 7-0 lead with 11:04 left in the period.

Justin Pruter returned Laughlin's kickoff to the 26. Osborne made a first down on two running plays, then completed a 40 yard pass to Schurr on the Norton 25. The Bulldogs tried both rushing and passing from there but had no luck until a fourth down pass was incomplete and Norton was penalized for roughing the passer. That gave them a first down deep in Blue Jay territory and they scored on a three yard run by Pruter.

Pruter also kicked the extra point and the score was tied at 7-all with 6:09 left in the first quarter.

The fired up Osborne defense held Norton to three-and-out and J.D. Gall punted to the Osborne 30. On the Bulldogs' third down, Perez intercepted a pass and, a clipping penalty on the return, moved the ball back to mid-field. After one Norton first down, Osborne took over on their 30. After a 5 yard gain by Pruter, Schurr found running room around right end and scampered 65 yards for Osborne's second touchdown. Pruter kicked the extra point and the visitors suddenly led 14-7 with 21 seconds left in the first period.

Second quarter

As they had after their first touchdown, Osborne kicked off on the ground to avoid a long runback and Norton started on their 38.

After Lane bulled for 6 yards on 2 carries, Pfannenstiel connected with Perez for a 22 yard gain to the Osborne 36.

Lane carried for 7 more yards, then powered around left end, ran over one opposing player around the 20 and sprinted into the end zone. Laughlin's extra point kick was blocked and Osborne led 14-13 with 10:39 left in the half.

On Osborne's next possession, they fumbled and Stanley recovered the ball on the Osborne 18 but, two plays later, Norton fumbled and Osborne got the ball back on their 23. A flat pass to Knoll resulted in an Osborne first down on their 34. An attempt to run a double reverse did not work for the Bulldogs and they fumbled the ball again. This time, Lane picked



Norton junior tailback Jeremy Sproul cut downfield for a big gain through a hole created by his offensive linemen during action in the Blue Jays' Homecoming victory over Osborne

on Friday. The Blue jays won 39-14 against the Bulldogs - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

up the pigskin and dashed 22 yards for another Norton touchdown. A pass for two extra points was incomplete but the Blue Jays had taken a 19-14 lead over the upset minded Bulldogs with 7:14 left in the half.

After Laughlin's kickoff, it was three-and-out for Osborne and they punted out of bounds on the Norton 39. Draper made a circus catch over his head of a Pfannenstiel pass on the Osborne 35. With Lane getting most of the yardage, the Blue Jays drove for their fourth touchdown. Perez plunged the final four yards and Laughlin split the uprights again, extending the Norton advantage to 26-14 with 2:13 remaining in the half.

After the kickoff, the swarming Blue Jay defense limited the Bulldogs to just three more yards before halftime.

Third quarter

Osborne kicked off to start the second half and Landon Hamel got a nice 23 yard return to the Bulldog 45.

After that, the offensive line did their job and Lane did his job as he gained 44 yards on 5 carries, the last one going 11 yards around right end for another Norton touchdown. Laughlin's extra point kick pushed the Norton lead to 33-14 with 9:08 left in the period.

After Laughlin's kickoff, the Blue Jay defense was equal to the occasion once again. This time, the gang-tackling Jays threw the Bulldogs back 7 yards and they punted again.

Junior Spencer Shirk entered the lineup to run the offense for the Blue Jays. Sproul gained 11 yards on two rushes, then Shirk and Draper connected on a perfect 48 yard pass for another Norton touchdown!

The extrapointkick was blocked but Norton now led 39-14 with 5:47 left in the third quarter.

DeMars caught Laughlin's kickoff but Landon Hamel made the hit of the game as he hit DeMars with a vicious tackle that spilled him backwards head over heels on the Bulldog 21! After picking up the only first down they would get in the period, Osborne was forced to punt again.

With the help of a great open field block by Lane, Hamel returned the punt to mid-field. Sproul bulled for 12 yards to the Osborne 38 but the Norton offense bogged down and Gall punted to the Osborne 15.

Fourth quarter

The Bulldogs got their last first down of the game but they went to the air next and Lane made a leaping interception of an Osborne pass on the Norton 45! Shirk passed 17 yards to Gall but the Jays were unable to move

for another first down and Gall punted into the end zone.

The Norton defense again would not budge and Osborne punted. A penalty for running into the kicker whistled on Norton did not give the Bulldogs a first down and they punted again. This time the ball rolled dead on the Osborne 47.

Sproul gained 9 yards on 3 rushes but Osborne intercepted a Shirk pass on the Osborne 25. After another Osborne three-and-out, Norton was whistled for holding on the punt and had the ball on their 37.

Sproul got the carries again for Norton and gained 20 yards on 3 carries and had another big gainer nullified by a holding penalty as the scoreboard clock signaled zero time and a 39-14 Mid-Continent League Homecoming victory for the fighting Blue Jays!

Next action

Norton will have another real challenge when they travel Friday to St. Francis to take on the

hard hitting Indians who run the wishbone offense and are known by some as the "Smith Center of the West".

In the 7 p.m. contest, Norton will face a team they defeated 36-16 last season. It was the first loss of the season for St. Francis, who eventually finished 9-2.

The Indians have already lost two games this season but both to outstanding elevens. In the second week, they lost 28-20 to an excellent Phillipsburg team and on Friday they lost 26-14 to another outstanding Oakley eleven. In their other two games, they defeated Goodland and Colby.

Smith Center graduate Tim Lambert, after 16 years guiding the Indians, left for the head coaching job at Concordia. His replacement, Nathan Smith, is another Smith Center graduate who continues to run the same wishbone offense.

"They have strong young men who play very physical," said coach Melvin. "They'll be ready

to get back at us after we beat them last year.

"They have one of the best players in the area if not the state."

Coach Melvin was referring to senior running back Trent Raile. The 6'1, 185 pound Raile came within one yard of tying the all-time single season rushing record at St. Francis last season. He gained 1,787 yards on 196 carries for a 9 yards per carry average and scored 27 touchdowns. He also plays strong safety on defense and recorded 92 tackles with 7 pass interceptions last season.

In the loss last year to Norton, Raile gained 141 yards on 30 carries for a 4.7 yard average.

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Osborne	
10	First Downs	8
202	Yards Rushing	110
133	Yards Passing	56
335	Total Yards	166
7-16-1	Passes Compl	4-12-2
1-1	Fumbles Lost	3-3
3-30.3	Punts	5-23.4
10-80	Penalties	4-30

High School Sports This Week



FOOTBALL:

- Norton Blue Jays vs. St. Francis Indians 7 p.m. Friday in St. Francis
- Norton Junior Varsity vs. St. Francis 6 p.m. Monday in Norton
- Northern Valley Huskies vs. Cheylin 7 p.m. Friday in Bird City
- Northern Valley Junior Varsity vs. Cheylin 5 p.m. Monday in Almena
- Logan Trojans vs. Natoma 7 p.m. Friday in Logan

VOLLEYBALL:

- Norton Lady Jays vs. Atwood, Colby V, JV 4:30 p.m. Today in Norton
- Norton Lady Jays in Decatur Invitational vs. Oberlin, Hoxie, St. Francis, Atwood V, JV 9 a.m. Saturday in Oberlin
- Norton Lady Jays vs. Smith Center, Trego V, JV 5 p.m. Tuesday in Norton
- Norton Lady Jays C-team vs. Plainville, Phillipsburg, Smith Center 4:30 p.m. Monday in Plainville
- Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Ellis Tournament 8:30 a.m. Saturday in Ellis
- Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs Golden Plains, Triplains 3 p.m. Tuesday in Winona
- Logan Lady Trojans vs. Palco, Western Plains 4 p.m. Today in Logan
- Logan Lady Trojans vs. Palco, Thunder Ridge 4 p.m. Tuesday in Palco

CROSS COUNTRY:

- Norton Cross Country V, JV in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Today in Oberlin
- Northern Valley Huskies V, JV in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Today in Oberlin

TENNIS:

- Norton Lady Jays in Colby Tournament 3 p.m. Today in Colby
- Norton Lady Jays in Colby Junior Varsity Tourney 9 a.m. Saturday in Colby
- Norton Lady Jays in Trego Invitational 9 p.m. Saturday in WaKeeney