



Norton defensive back Landon Hamel leaped high to intercept a pass intended for Garrett Figgins, No. 34, late in the Blue Jays' 36-0 win over St. Francis on Friday. Also in the photo is Ashton Draper, another Norton defensive back.
— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Jays defeat Indians, 36-0

By DICK BOYD

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The Norton Community High School football team traveled to St. Francis on Friday night and returned with an impressive 36-0 shutout of an excellent Indian eleven.

St. Francis set their defense to stop the Norton rush so the Blue Jays focused on the pass and had a lot of success through the air. Meanwhile, the "Blue Swarm" defense bent but did not break.

The Indians, running the well-known Smith Center wishbone offense, were able to pick up yardage in the middle of the field but, the closer they got to the goalline, the tougher the Blue Jay defense became.

St. Francis finally got as close as the Norton 6-yard-line late in the game but the Norton defenders stopped them to preserve the shutout!

The Indians had enough confidence in their running game that they tried for a first down seven times on fourth down but were successful only twice.

"The key to the game was that we played hard the whole game and played together," said Norton head football coach Lucas Melvin. "It was our most complete game of the year."

"Having no turnovers was big. We had good play in every phase of the game. A lot of guys stepped up. Our special teams were good again."

Senior quarterback Connor Pfannenstiel had an outstanding all-around game.

He completed 10 of 13 passes for 77 percent, 186 yards and two touchdowns, gained 30 yards rushing on 4 carries for a 7.5 yard average and scored touchdowns on a 4 yard sneak and 60 yard punt return.

On defense from his defensive back position, he tied for third high tackler with 11 stops.

Pfannenstiel hit senior fullback Zane Perez for a 20 yard touchdown pass with 5:29 left in the first quarter and junior kicker Caleb Laughlin split the uprights for a 7-0 lead.

With 4:46 left in the second quarter, Pfannenstiel connected with senior wide receiver Landon Hamel for a 34-yard touchdown pass and Laughlin added the extra point to make it 14-0.

The Blue Jays' third touchdown in the first half came when Pfannenstiel sneaked four yards into the end zone with 48 seconds left and Laughlin split the uprights for a 21-0 advantage.

With 6 seconds left in the half, St. Francis was back to punt deep in their own territory and the center snapped the ball over the punter's head and out of the end zone for a 2 point safety, making the halftime score 23-0.

Perez scored his second touchdown of the night on a 28 yard run to paydirt with 41 seconds remaining in the third period and Laughlin again added the extra point kick to extend Norton's lead to 30-0.

Pfannenstiel's final touchdown was a thing of beauty when he returned an Indian punt down the sideline, then reversed field and ran untouched 60 yards into the end zone with 11:33 left in the game. Laughlin's extra point

attempt was blocked, making the final tally 36-0.

Norton rushed for 146 yards on 27 attempts for a 5.4 yards per carry average while St. Francis earned 256 yards on 64 tries for a 4 yard average.

Norton completed 13 of 17 passes for 76 percent and 206 yards while St. Francis missed on all four passes.

The Blue Jays' total yardage was 352 yards compared to 256 yards for St. Francis. Norton had 117 return yards and St. Francis had 91.

Leading rusher for Norton was Zane Perez with 71 yards on 9 carries for a 7.9 yard average. Other Norton backs and their yardage were: Jeremy Sproul, 11 for 42; Spencer Shirk, 2 for 6 and Landon Hamel, 1 for minus 3.

Laughlin had 3 kickoffs for a 50.8 yard average. J.D. Gall had 1 kickoff for 45 yards and 6 punts for an average of 34 yards.

Hamel had 3 pass receptions for 73 yards, followed by Ashton Draper, 5 for 53 yards; Zane Perez, 2 for 31; J.D. Gall, 2 for 26 and Dakota Dreher, 1 for 23 yards.

Spencer Shirk completed 3 of 4 passes for 20 yards and a 75 percent completion rate.

In defeating the Indians, the Blue Jays also did a respectable job of limiting the yardage of senior running back Trent Raile, who came within one yard of tying the all-time St. Francis single season rushing record last season with 1,787 yards. Coming into Friday night's game, he was leading the rushing chart in all enrollment classes in the Salina Journal area with 670 yards on 84 carries for an 8 yards per carry average and 167 yards per game.

Against Norton, he carried the ball 18 times for 99 yards for an average of 5.5 yards per carry.

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 junior Spencer Shirk, 165 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 Jeremy Sproul, 200 pounds, tailback.

Starting on defense for the Blue Jays were: junior Justin Griffith, 180 pounds, left end; junior Dakota Dreher, 160 pounds, right end; junior Landon Keiswetter, 175 pounds, left tackle; Sproul, nose guard; Herman, right tackle; Perez, Gall, McKenna, linebackers; Draper, Shirk, Pfannenstiel, defensive backs.

Leading tackler for Norton was: linebacker Kaid McKenna with 10 solos, 8 assists, 18 total, followed by Tyler Cook, 6 solos, 6 assists, 12 total; Connor Pfannenstiel, 6 solos, 5 assists, 11 total; Dakota Dreher, 5 solos, 6 assists, 11 total; Spencer Shirk, 6 solos, 5 assists, 11 total; Luke Ninemire,

5 solos, 4 assists, 9 total; Justin Griffith, Landon Hamel, each 5 solos, 2 assists, 7 total; Ashton Draper, 3 solos, 3 assists, 6 total; Landon Keiswetter, 2 solos, 4 assists, 6 total; Zane Perez, 3 solos, 3 assists, 6 total; J.D. Gall, 3 solos, 2 assists, 5 total; Jeremy Sproul, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Trey Millan, 1 solo, 2 assists, 3 total; Ryan Blecha, 2 solos; Marcus Herman, 2 assists; Jake Romey, 1 solo, 1 assist, 2 total; Jacob Brooks, Dalton Miller, 1 assist each

First quarter

Laughlin kicked off for Norton and Ashton Draper and Connor Pfannenstiel set the tone for the game as they charged downfield to tackle Matt Raile on the 6-yard line! St. Francis picked up three first downs, then punted to the Norton 27.

Mixing rushes by Sproul and passes to Draper and Zane Perez, Norton moved downfield. The Jays scored their first touchdown when Pfannenstiel avoided a pass rusher and possible sack and connected with Perez for a 20 yard touchdown. Laughlin kicked the extra point and Norton led 7-0 with 5:29 left.

Laughlin tackled on the 10-yard line. The Indians earned one first down and had to punt again. This time, Norton got the ball on the St. Francis 47. The Blue Jays were three-and-out and Gall punted into the end zone. The Indians earned one first down and the quarter ended with Norton leading 7-0.

Second quarter

After another first down, St. Francis was forced to punt again. Landon Hamel returned the kick to the Norton 32. Norton was again three-and-out and Gall punted to the Indian 24. The Blue Jay defense was equal to the occasion and forced a fourth down. The Indians decided to run for a first down but were stopped cold. The next play, Pfannenstiel passed to Hamel for a 34 yard touchdown. Laughlin split the uprights, making it 14-0 with 4:46 remaining.

Laughlin kicked off and Trent Raile made a good return up the sideline to the Norton 24 but the "Blue Swarm" ended any Indian thoughts of moving in for a touchdown. After four downs, Norton took over on their 18-yard line.

With Sproul running the ball and Gall and Dreher catching Pfannenstiel passes, Norton moved downfield for another touchdown. Pfannenstiel ran the final four yards to the end zone on a quarterback sneak. Laughlin kicked the extra point, extending the Blue Jay lead to 21-0 with 48 seconds left in the first half.

Laughlin kicked off and Matt Raile was tackled on the 12-yard line by Hamel. A penalty for blocking in the back dropped the Indians back to their 6. The Blue Jays allowed no more yards and, on fourth down, the Indian punter was in the end zone. The center snap went over his head and out of the end zone, giving Norton two more points for a safety. St. Francis was required to kick the ball from their 20 after the safety and Justin Griffith made a good return of the ball as the first half came to a conclusion with the Jays

on top 23-0.

Third quarter

Hamel returned the kickoff to the Norton 25 but Norton had to punt after three plays. Gall's punt ended on the St. Francis 26. Trent Raile had one of his two good runs at this point and carried the ball 33 yards to the Norton 31. After one first down, Norton held on their 14-yard line.

One Norton first down and Gall punted to the St. Francis 31. Trent Raile got loose on his other big run. This time he carried the ball 18 yards to the Norton 43. Once again, the Blue Jay defense stopped the Indians, this time on the Norton 36.

The hit of the night came when Gall threw a big time block on a St. Francis player, knocking his helmet off and allowing Pfannenstiel to make an 8-yard gain on a keeper. Pfannenstiel then passed to Hamel for a first down on the Indian 28. The next down, Perez ran over right tackle for another Norton touchdown. Laughlin kicked the extra point and Norton led 30-0 with 41 seconds left in the period.

Laughlin kicked off and St. Francis started a new possession on their 16-yard line.

Fourth quarter

The Norton defense forced St. Francis into another three-and-out. The Indian punt was fielded by Pfannenstiel. He ran down the sideline, then reversed field and outran the St. Francis defenders 60 yards to paydirt!

The extra point kick attempt was blocked but Norton led 36-0 with 11:33 left in the game.

The Indians didn't give up and, after returning Laughlin's kickoff to their 32, they drove deep into Norton territory. The Blue Jays stopped them on their 6 and regained possession. After one first down, Norton punted back to the Indians on their 38. Hamel leaped high to intercept a pass on the Norton 30!

After one first down, Norton punted to the St. Francis 23 and three plays later the game was over with Norton earning a tremendous 36-0 shutout victory!

Next action

Norton will return home this Friday night where the Blue Jays will face another outstanding opponent in the Ellis Railroaders, a team who was 10-2 last season and returns 15 starters.

The Railroaders have beaten Norton the last two years in Ellis but must travel to Norton this year. They are 3-2 for the season,

having lost 14-0 to an excellent Oakley eleven and 16-10 last Friday to still unbeaten Smith Center.

Nearly all of the offensive line returns for Ellis, including Division I prospect Matt Erbert, who is 6'4", 285 pounds.

The Railroaders have two outstanding running backs in tailback Dylan Pfeifer and fullback Gideon Fuchs. They combined for 2,000 yards rushing last season.

"Ellis has a good all-around team highlighted by two outstanding running backs and a big line with every player over 200 pounds," said coach Melvin. "Erbert is an exceptional lineman."

"They will bring an excellent team to town and we will have to play hard from the opening whistle to have a chance to beat them. We must not have any let-downs against them."

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	St. Francis
10	11
146	256
206	0
352	256
13-17-0	0-4-1
0-1	0-2
6-34	4-35.3
5-39	3-26

Jay cross country does well in Oberlin

By DICK BOYD

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The Norton Community High School girls cross country team was runner-up and the boys cross country squad won the team championship in the Oberlin Invitational cross country meet on Tuesday, Sept. 29.

McCook won the girls championship with 20 points, followed by Norton, 60; Colby, 83; Southwest Nebraska, 88; Oakley, 112.

Norton won the boys championship with 47 points, followed by Colby, 66; McCook, 81; Phillipsburg, 96; Goodland, 99; Oberlin, 103.

Girls

"This was a nice night for a run," said Norton cross country coach George Rossi. "Our Lady Jays ran well tonight."

"McCook had a very good team."

"For the most part, I feel that we ran about the best race we were capable of running. The times our girls are running are getting closer to what we need down the road to be competitive."

"We have some time off and we are going to hit it hard getting ready for the Mid-Continent League meet in Phillipsburg."

Lady Jay freshman Regan Simpson continued to lead the Norton girls runners, finishing ninth individually in 16:45. She was followed by sophomore Abby Bainter, 12th, 17:28; fresh-

man Kamilla Jones, 14th and a personal best time of 17:42; freshman Julia Kent, 15th and personal best time of 17:44 and junior Dustyna Sprigg, 21st and a personal best time of 18:09.

Also running for the Lady Jays was junior Kaylen Rossi, who was 27th in a time of 18:25.

Kayla Lowry continued to run well for Northern Valley. She placed seventh in 16:32.

Top ten finishers were: Sughroue, McCook, 15:37; Gschwenter, McCook, 15:57; Kaus, Colby, 16:04; Hapham, McCook, 16:25; Kaus, Colby, 16:27; Nichols, McCook, 16:31; Lowry; Toliver, McCook, 16:38; Simpson; Bair, McCook, 17:18.

Boys

"I believe this was the best overall race from our boys team," said coach Rossi.

"Zach ran a very smart race and won by a wide margin. Bryan, Kegan and Troy also ran well. Chris Maddy is getting back in shape and John Renner ran a personal best."

"Our boys have a strong determination to get better with each race because everyone on both teams knows that it takes a lot of hard work to achieve their goals."

"Cross country is a sport that can get the best of a person if you let it. In order to get better, you must be able to set both short term and long term goals and keep yourself dedicated and focused to

the task at hand."

Sophomore Zach Hartwell won the gold medal with a personal best time of 17:17. Sophomore Bryan Henry also ran a personal best time in placing fifth in 17:59. Junior Troy Bainter placed 11th with a season best clocking of 18:24. Senior Chris Maddy placed 18th in 19:00 and junior Kegan Vanover was right behind him in 19th with a time of 19:02.

Also running for the Blue Jay boys were freshman John Renner, 33rd in a personal best time of 19:56 and junior Zach Porter, 39th in 20:36.

Running for the Norton junior varsity were freshman Ryan Bainter, 24th in 23:07; senior Matt Miller, 18th in a personal best time of 21:54 and senior Grant McClymont, 27th in a season best time of 23:30.

The top ten varsity finishers were: Hartwell; Shields, Oberlin, 17:36; Reed, Colby, 17:51; Pourin, Goodland, 17:58; Henry; Friess, Hoxie, 18:04; Nally, Colby, 18:05; Ceman, Phillipsburg, 18:06; Lopez, Phillipsburg, 18:21; Jones, Oberlin, 18:23.

Next action

The Norton girls and boys cross country teams will compete in the Mid-Continent League meet on Thursday in Phillipsburg, beginning at 4:30 p.m. on the Phillipsburg golf course.

High School Sports This Week



Norton Blue Jays



Northern Valley Huskies



Logan Trojans

FOOTBALL:

Norton Blue Jays vs. Ellis Railroaders 7 p.m. Friday in Norton
Norton Junior Varsity vs. Colby 5:30 p.m. Monday in Norton
Northern Valley Huskies vs. Weskan 3:30 p.m. Friday in Weskan
Northern Valley Junior Varsity vs. Palco 5 p.m. Monday in Almena
Logan Trojans vs. Pawnee Heights 7 p.m. Friday in Rozel

VOLLEYBALL:

Norton Lady Jays vs. Smith Center, Trego V, JV 5 p.m. Today in Norton
Norton Lady Jays V in Scott City Invitational. 9 a.m. Saturday in Scott City
Norton Lady Jays V, JV vs. Golden Plains, Logan 4 p.m. Tuesday in Golden Plains
Norton C-team vs. Atwood, Colby, St. Francis 10 a.m. Saturday in Atwood
Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Golden Plains, Triplains 3 p.m. Today in Winona
Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Hill City Tournament 8:30 a.m. Saturday in Hill City
Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Stockton Quad 4 p.m. Tuesday in Stockton
Logan Lady Trojans vs. Palco, Thunder Ridge 4 p.m. Today in Palco
Logan Lady Trojans in Cougar Invitational 9 a.m. Saturday in Mankato
Logan Lady Trojans vs. Norton, Golden Plains 4 p.m. Tuesday in Golden Plains

CROSS COUNTRY:

Norton Cross Country V, JV in Phillipsburg MCL Meet ... 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Phillipsburg
Northern Valley Huskies, V, JV in Phillipsburg Meet ... 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Phillipsburg

TENNIS:

Norton Lady Jays in Class 3A Regional Tournament Friday, Saturday in WaKeeney