

Lady Huskies finish season



By CHUCK ZIMMERMAN
Special to The Telegram

I'll start off this last article of the year by stating that I have never been more proud of a team in all my years as I am with this year's group. Now the reason.

In the last two weeks of this season we were hit hard by illness as our whole team was ill with whatever was and is going around. In the regional tournament against our first round opponent, Thunder Ridge, we put three players on the court who were Junior Varsity players and this mixture of veterans and youngsters fought hard in the first set but lost 21-25 but came back to win the next two, 25-22, 25-19. The ladies came together, helped each other and won the right to advance to Saturday, substate action.

In the regional final against Natoma, we were definitely feeling the effects of the illness and used our entire roster of Junior Varsity players and still played well enough to scare the Cardinals. We lost 25-27 and then 17-25 with players dragging themselves off the court when time outs were called. We fought hard and came away holding our heads high with the knowledge that we played a state ranked team tough with our team weakened by injury and illness.

In the three days between regional and substate we were only able to practice one day because the illness stayed with us and dif-

ferent players started to be affected. So we went into substate play with only 8 players suited with three starters sitting on the bench with me in street clothes because of injury or illness. With this group of players (again 3 Junior Varsity) we took on #1 seeded Wallace County (Sharon Springs) and the girls played well as we took the lead and held it for a while then the Wallace group started to find holes (actually lucky mishits) and came back to finally win 23-25. In the second set it was much of the same as it was close the whole set but Wallace came away with the victory with the score of 22-25.

These young ladies have nothing to hang their heads about. They played hard, played together and still about pulled off the victory.

This season will forever be remembered as the season that could have been - if the injury and illness bugs (which you have no control over) had not decimated our squad at the wrong time. I truly believe we would have won the right to go to state. But, alas it was not meant to be.

We wish to thank all the fans who followed us throughout the season and hope you enjoyed our play as at times you saw one of the best teams in the state of Kansas.



The history making Norton Community High School girls and boys cross country teams, both of whom qualified on Saturday for the state meet in Wamego for the first time in the same year, are shown here following the runner-up finish by the boys and third place by the girls. Pictured are, from left, front row: Kaylen Rossi, Abby Bainter, Ryan Bainter, Julia

Kent, John Renner, Zach Hartwell; back row: Assistant Coach Lindsey Bailey, Troy Bainter, Kegan Vanover, Chris Maddy, Bryan Henry, Dustyna Sprigg, Manager Amanda Ray, Kamilla Jones, Regan Simpson, Head Coach George Rossi.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

Blue Jays make history at meet

By DICK BOYD

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Coach George Rossi's Norton Community High School girls and boys cross country squads made school history on Saturday in Cimarron as, for the first time ever, both teams qualified the same year for the Class 3A State Cross Country Meet which will be on Saturday in Wamego.

The Norton girls qualified for the state meet as a team for the first time in the history of the school in 2007 and repeated last year and the Norton boys have qualified as a team when the girls haven't but it was exciting to see both squads make it the same year for the first time ever!

The top three girls and boys teams and the fastest five individual runners not on a qualifying team earned berths in the state meet. The Norton girls team placed third and the boys finished in the runner-up spot!

In girls competition, Ellinwood won the championship with a 47, followed by Thomas More Prep-Marian of Hays, 59; Norton, 61; Larned, 68; Medicine Lodge, 101; Cimarron, 144.

In the boys race, Holcomb won the championship with 55 points, followed by Norton, 96; Sterling, 98; Southwestern Heights, 128; Goodland, 153.

Girls

Freshman Regan Simpson led the Norton girls with a fourth place finish in 16:41. She was followed by sophomore Abby Bainter, 12th, season best 17:19; freshman Julia Kent, 15th, personal best, 17:21; freshman Kamilla Jones, 20th, 17:48 and junior Dustyna Sprigg, 22nd, personal best, 17:57.

Also running for the Lady Jays was junior Kaylen Rossi who placed 29th in 18:38.

The top ten runners were: Jenna Snell, Ellinwood, first, 15:32;

Heather Ruder, TMP, second, 15:35; Allison Pfeifer, TMP, third, 16:37; Regan Simpson, Norton, fourth, 16:41; Savanna Christensen, Medicine Lodge, fifth, 16:45; Karissa Pena, Holcomb, sixth, 16:50; Julia Rosales, Lakin, seventh, 16:56; Becky Elsen, Ellinwood, eighth, 16:57; Shanna Prescott, Larned, ninth, 16:57; Rebecca Strecker, Ellinwood, tenth, 17:04.

Christensen, Pena, Rosales and Prescott qualified individually for the state meet along with Jaden Bolmer, Lakin, who finished in 17:14, the 11th fastest time.

"We were very aware that this would be a very close race and we were right," said coach Rossi. "Our girls did what they needed to do and now they get to compete in the state meet!"

"I must say that this was the best overall performance for our girls so far this year. Abby, Julia and Dustyna had either personal or season best times. Regan, Kamilla and Kaylen were just a couple seconds off their best times.

"We told our girls that when they finished today that they should not be able to say they could have run faster. I think each girl put out maximum effort.

"Weather conditions were perfect with cool weather and no wind. Our girls were able to concentrate completely on their running.

"Many people would not expect us to do what we have done after losing quality runners last year but our three freshmen runners have done a great job. Abby, Dustyna and Kaylen all ran faster times than they did on this course last year. Dustyna has improved her times this year by about one minute or more in each race.

"We now intend to compete at our highest level at Wamego."

The girls Class 3A state meet

race will start at 12:30 p.m. on the golf course at the west edge of Wamego.

Boys

Sophomore Zach Hartwell led the Norton boys to the finish line with a fifth place finish in 17:30.

He was followed by sophomore Bryan Henry, seventh, personal best, 17:38; junior Troy Bainter, 17th, tied personal best, 18:24; junior Kegan Vanover, 24th, personal best, 18:42; senior Chris Maddy, 45th, 20:04.

Also running for the Blue Jays were freshman John Renner, 46th, 20:05 and freshman Ryan Bainter, 69th, 22:29.

The top ten runners were: Kayson Matthews, Lakin, first, 17:02; Michael Wolf, Holcomb, second, 17:05; Tyler Roberts, Sterling, third, 17:19; Enrique Sanchez, Southwestern Heights, fourth, 17:25; Zach Hartwell, Norton, fifth, 17:30; JaCee Jarnagin, Holcomb, sixth, 17:37; Bryan Henry, Norton, seventh, 17:38; Jean-Lucien Pourin, Goodland, eighth, 17:44; Jahman Hill, Larned, ninth, 17:50; Peter Wiebe, Southwestern Heights, tenth, 18:03.

Matthews, Sanchez, Pourin, Hill and Wiebe qualified for the state meet as individuals.

"During the boys race, we were trying to keep track of runners from other schools so we could figure out where we were in the team standings," said coach Rossi. "When I went to the clubhouse for a games committee meeting, I did not think our boys qualified as a team. When the results came out, I wanted to scream!"

"Our boys just made Norton history by qualifying for state. Never before have both teams qualified for the state meet in the same year.

"Qualifying both teams had been our goal since summer camp in June. Many thought after los-

ing Zach Bainter to graduation that our boys team would not be as good. The returning runners Troy, Bryan and Kegan all posted personal records today. Zach again ran a great race and was close to his personal record. Freshman Ryan Bainter was thrust into a varsity race for the first time and ran close to his personal record also.

"This team has worked extremely hard all year and we are very pleased that they will get a chance to compete for a trophy at the state meet in Wamego.

"It would be great to see a large Blue Jay crowd present to cheer on both teams together for the first time at the state championship race in Wamego."

The boys Class 3A race in the state meet will begin at 11:30 a.m. on the golf course at the west edge of Wamego.



The Norton boys cross country team got off to a good start in their 3.1 mile race in the Regional Meet on Saturday in Cimarron and ran hard the entire way to win the runner-up plaque and qualify along with the girls team for the state meet in Wamego this Saturday. Shown are, from left, Ryan Bainter, John Renner, Chris Maddy, Kegan Vanover, Zach Hartwell, Bryan Henry and Troy Bainter.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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