

Jays lose to Scott City 14-6

By DICK BOYD

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On Friday night, for the third time this season, the Norton Community High School varsity football team lost a hard-fought game with a state-ranked team when the Blue Jays traveled to unbeaten Scott City and were outscored 14-6.

Earlier this season, Norton played Smith Center even before losing 20-14, then played Ellis in a game that appeared to be heading into overtime until the Railroaders completed a last second touchdown pass to win 22-14.

Otherwise, the Blue Jays have had little trouble handling five other opponents to compile a current 5-3 record.

The loss to Scott City was the second of two District games for the Blue Jays who easily defeated Ness City-Dighton 48-0 the week before. The final District contest will be at 7 p.m. Thursday evening versus Goodland at Ward Field in Norton. A victory would put Norton in the District runner-up spot with a contest next Tuesday versus another district winner.

Just a positive play here or there in any of Norton's three losses would have resulted in a victory over some outstanding teams who, undoubtedly, will go far in the playoffs.

The loss at Scott City was a defensive battle. The first quarter ended in a scoreless tie with each team able to earn only two first downs. Norton was inside the Beaver 30-yard line twice in the period but could not score.

Earlier in the second quarter, Scott City drove 69 yards for their first touchdown and held a 7-0 halftime lead. Norton received the kickoff to open the third quarter and drove inside the Scott City 30 for the third time in the game but was denied and the Beavers drove 74 yards for their second and final touchdown to extend their lead to 14-0 with 4:58 left.

On both of their touchdown drives, Scott City got one first down by inches to keep the drives alive.

Norton broke into the scoring column with 5:32 left in the game when senior wide receiver Landon Hamel made a diving catch of a Connor Pfannenstiel pass in the end zone. The extra point kick was blocked but the Jays had cut the deficit to just eight points.

After the kickoff by Caleb Laughlin, Hamel made another diving catch, this time of a Scott City pass and Norton had the chance to tie the game with a touchdown and two extra points. It didn't happen, however, as the Beaver defense held the Blue Jays and took over the ball on their 12 with 3:42 left and ran out the clock.

"We played hard but were in a position at times to make plays and didn't make them," said Norton head football coach Lucas Melvin.

"Our defense could have tackled better on occasion but overall played well. Offensively, we missed some opportunities. We were inside their 30-yard line three times in the game and didn't take advantage of it.

"We just need to do our jobs better offensively and defensively. We need to be more disciplined.

"It's frustrating that we had our chances and didn't get the job done. Now, we have to keep playing hard and must beat Good-

land in our final district game to continue the season.

"I'm proud of our team and how hard they play. We just need to keep working to get better in each game."

Statistics in the game were very close. Norton had 134 yards rushing on 32 carries for a 4.2 yards per carry average and Scott City had 180 yards rushing on 50 attempts for an average of 3.6 yards.

Norton had an advantage in the passing game where the Jays had 131 yards compared to 59 for the Beavers. Norton had total yardage of 265 yards compared to 239 for Scott City.

Both teams punted six times, return yards and penalties were similar and Norton lost just one fumble compared to none for Scott City.

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 were: senior Connor Pfannenstiel, 155 pounds, quarterback; senior Zane Perez, 180 pounds, fullback; junior Terrell Lane, 210 pounds, tailback.

Starting on defense were: junior Jeremy Sproul, 200 pounds, left end; junior Justin Griffith, 180 pounds, left tackle; Herman, nose guard; senior Tyler Cook, 215 pounds, right tackle; junior Rylee Stanley, 150 pounds, right end; Lane, McKenna, Gall, linebackers; Draper, Hamel and Perez, defensive backs.

Terrell Lane was leading rusher for Norton with 88 yards on 10 carries for an average of 8.8 yards per carry. Other Norton ball carriers were: Connor Pfannenstiel, 12 for 32 yards; Zane Perez, 7 for 15 yards; Jeremy Sproul, 2 for minus 3 yards and Landon Hamel, 1 for 2 yards.

Pfannenstiel was 7 of 17 passing for 131 yards.

Hamel was leading pass receiver. He caught 4 passes for 70 yards. Lane caught 2 for 29 yards and Draper had 1 reception for 32 yards. Hamel had 1 punt return for 10 yards and 2 kickoff returns for 25 yards. Perez had 1 kickoff return for 20 yards.

J.D. Gall punted 6 times for an average of 33.7 yards and Caleb Laughlin had 2 kickoffs for an average of 42.5 yards.

Leading rusher for Scott City was Jason Williams with 75 yards on 21 carries Dalton Smith had 10 carries for 67 yards.

Linebacker Kaid McKenna was leading tackler for Norton with 8 solos, 4 assists, 12 total, followed by Tyler Cook, 4 solos, 5 assists, 9 total; Terrell Lane, 5 solos, 3 assists, 8 total; Jeremy Sproul, 4 solos, 3 assists, 7 total; J.D. Gall, 5 solos, 1 assist, 6 total; Landon Hamel, 5 solos; Rylee Stanley, 4 solos, 1 assist, 5 total; Justin Griffith, Zane Perez, 3 solos, 2 assists, 5 total each; Landon Keiswetter, 1 solo, 3 assists, 4 total; Ashton Draper, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Marcus Herman, 2 solos; Caleb Laughlin, 1 solo; Luke Ninemire, 1 assist; Spencer Shirk, 1 solo.

First quarter

Norton kicked off to start the game and defense was the name of the game in the early going. Norton held Scott City to three-and-out, the Beavers held the Blue Jays to three-and-out and the "Blue Swarm" defense forced Scott City to another three-and-out.

Norton's second possession started on the Blue Jays' 9-yard-line after a long Beaver punt. Terrell Lane found a good hole opened over the left side of the line by Blue Jay blockers and ran all the way to the Scott City 21 yard line for a 70 yard gain! Hampered by a block in the back penalty, the Blue Jays were unable to score, however, and Scott City took over.

For the third time, the gang tackling Norton defense forced the Beavers into a three-and-out. Scott City punted to the Norton 43. Quarterback Pfannenstiel connected with Ashton Draper for a first down on the Beaver 27. Two plays later, Norton suffered their only lost fumble of the game and the Beavers took over on their 31.

Jason Williams broke several Norton tackles on a nice run to the Scott City 45 for the Beavers' first first-and-ten of the game. On second down, Alex Swan swept left end for the Beavers' second first down on the Norton 36. Williams gained 2 more yards as the first quarter ended in a scoreless tie.

Second quarter

A flat pass from quarterback Ron Baker to Swan got a first down on the Norton 25. The Beavers then got a first down by inches on the Norton 15. A quick pitch to Smith allowed him to scamper around end for the first touchdown of the game. Jordan Habiger kicked the extra point and Scott City led 7-0 with 9:57 remaining in the first half.

Hamel returned the kickoff to the Norton 28, a pitchout to Lane resulted in a 15 yard gain but the Blue Jays gained just 2 more yards in 2 plays before fumbling. Norton got back on the ball but didn't have a first down and Gall punted out of bounds on the Scott City 26.

A pass to No. 16 Dakota Hayes netted 17 yards, then Smith got a first down on the Norton 43. The Blue Jay defense held and, after an exchange of punts, Scott City downed a punt on the Norton 1-yard-line!. Gall punted out of his own end zone and Swan returned the pigskin 11 yards to the Norton 22. Sproul and Stanley came charging in from their defensive positions to sack the Scott City quarterback on the 34! Three incomplete passes later and Norton took over with 9.3 seconds left in the first half.

Pfannenstiel passed to Lane and he ran to mid-field. Then, Pfannenstiel ran the keeper 15 yards to the Scott City 35 as time ran out with the Beavers on top 7-0.

Third quarter

Hamel returned the second half kickoff to the Norton 28. Pfannenstiel connected with Hamel on a 37 yard pass to the Beaver 34. A pass to Lane carried to the 26 but Scott City held on fourth down and took possession of the ball.

Thanks to a diving catch of a pass by Jordan Funk on the Scott City 40, the Beavers got a first down. Smith then ran around right end for a first down on the Norton 25. The Beavers got a first down by inches on the 15, then a first down on the 3 and Williams scored from there. The extra point kick extended Scott City's lead to

14-0 with 4:58 left but the fighting Blue Jays did not give up, played even harder and almost rallied for the win.

Perez returned the kickoff to the Norton 23. After 2 incomplete passes and 1 run, Gall punted to the Scott City 35. After the Beavers got another first down by inches, the Blue Jay defense stopped the Beaver offense cold and they punted to the Norton 21. Lane gained 6 yards on 2 runs and the quarter ended with Scott City leading 14-0.

Fourth quarter

The Blue Jays were forced to punt again, however, and Gall's punt carried to the Scott City 25. The Beavers got another first down by inches on the 35 and a first down on the 47 before being hurt by several penalties and punting out of bounds on the Norton 45.

Gaining yardage on several keeper plays by Pfannenstiel and a 25 yard Pfannenstiel pass to Hamel on the 17, Norton drove down for their first touchdown. A personal foul against Scott City moved the ball to the 8-yard-line, then Pfannenstiel passed to Hamel in the end zone and he made a diving catch!

Laughlin's extra point kick was blocked, leaving the score at 14-6 with 5:32 left in the game.

Laughlin's kickoff was returned by Hayes to the Scott City 28. After one rushing play where the Beavers lost a yard, they went aerial. A flat pass headed toward a potential Scott City receiver but Hamel brought the Norton crowd to their feet as he suddenly bolted in front of the receiver-to-be, made a diving interception and rolled onto the turf on the Scott



Norton defensive back Landon Hamel surprised the Scott City quarterback when he bolted in front of a receiver-to-be, intercepted the pass and rolled onto the turf to give the Blue Jays one last chance to rally for a win over the Beavers.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd



Norton defensive end Jeremy Sproul wrapped up Scott City's Alex Swan for a one-yard loss during the second quarter of the Jays' game with the Beavers on Friday evening in Scott City. Also on defense for Norton were, from left, Terrell Lane, Tyler Cook and Marcus Herman.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

City 24!

Perez found a hole and scampered to the Scott City 11 as the Blue Jay fans went wild!

The Blue Jays chose to try to pass their next four downs and were unsuccessful in getting into the end zone. Scott City took over and moved the other direction, picking up several first-and-tens and running out the clock for the 14-6 win.

Next action

In the final district game which will decide the runner-up spot, Norton will host Goodland at 7

p.m. on Thursday at Ward Field.

Despite their 3-5 record, the Cowboys are a dangerous opponent. "They throw the ball a lot and they throw it well," said coach Melvin.

Goodland quarterback Reed Bellamy fills the air with passes. Prior to their 22-7 district win over Ness City-Dighton on Friday night, Bellamy had completed 82 of 144 passes for a 57 percent completion rate and an even 1,000 yards!

His top receivers were Brock Wilkens with 34 catches for 496

yards and Garth Helton with 15 receptions for 182 yards. Jay Cotter is a defensive standout for the Cowboys and had 93 total tackles for the season prior to last Friday night.

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Scott City
9	First Downs 16
134	Yards Rushing 180
131	Yards Passing 59
265	Total Yards 239
7-17-0	Passes Compl 6-18-1
1-2	Fumbles Lost 0-0
6-33.7	Punts 6-34.7
3-18	Penalties 6-39

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