

Jays finish season in sub-state game

By DICK BOYD

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 Coach Lucas Melvin's Norton Community High School football team completed an outstanding 2009 season just one game short of the state championship game with a 56-21 sub-state loss to a talented Wichita Collegiate eleven on Saturday afternoon at Travis Field in Norton.

Norton came into the game limiting opponents to an average of just 11.7 points per game and Collegiate had allowed just 10.3 points. On the offensive side, the Blue Jays had averaged 31.1 points per contest and the Spartans had scored 44.7 points on average. Although Norton scored 21 points in the game, second highest by any team against Collegiate all season, the Blue Jay defense was hurt by big plays from the Spartan offense which has scored more total points this season than any other Class 3A team in Kansas.

Collegiate surprised Norton by scoring two touchdowns in the first three minutes of the game to take a 14-0 lead. The two teams played on even terms in the second quarter when both tallied 7 points. Norton's touchdown came on a 30 yard pass from senior quarterback Connor Pfannenstiel to senior wide receiver Landon Hamel.

The Blue Jays came out of the locker room fired up for the second half and marched 65 yards in 8 plays to score. Pfannenstiel faked a pass and ran 5 yards to score and make the tally 21-14. Collegiate answered on the first play from scrimmage after the kickoff with a 78 yard sweep down the right sideline for a touchdown to make it 28-14.

Norton junior Terrell Lane returned the ensuing kickoff 80 yards for another touchdown and the Jays were within a touchdown again at 28-21.

Collegiate finished off the third quarter, however, with three more touchdown passes to put the game out of reach with a score of 49-21. One more Spartan touchdown in the hard-fought fourth quarter made the final 56-21.

"We came out a little nervous," said coach Melvin of his team. Norton hadn't made the sub-state playoffs since 1989. "After falling behind 14-0, we settled down a little and played better on defense. We scored once in the second quarter but were inside their 10-yard line one other time before half and couldn't score.

"After our 65-yard drive to score in the third quarter, we felt good about ourselves. They scored on a long run but we came

right back with a kickoff return for a touchdown by Terrell Lane and, with six and a half minutes left in the third quarter, we were down by only 7 points.

"Then, they cut loose with some big plays for three touchdowns in the final half of the third quarter and that took some wind out of our sails. When the score was 28-21, we had some momentum. If we could have stopped their big plays, we might have won in the fourth quarter.

"Collegiate has a great team and made the plays they needed to win the game. Their players are very talented."

Collegiate is now 13-0 and will play Marysville (12-1) for the Class 3A state championship on Saturday in Hutchinson. Marysville defeated Galena 31-21 in the other sub-state game on Saturday.

Norton finished the season 9-4. The Blue Jays had the second highest number of points scored against the Spartans all season. Nickerson lost to Collegiate 56-28. Norton's other three losses were to still unbeaten Smith Center 20-14, Ellis 22-14 and Scott City 14-6.

In Class 2A, Smith Center continued on to the state championship game with a 33-20 win over previously unbeaten Oakley on Friday night. The Redmen will play Centralia at 1 p.m. at Lewis Field Stadium, in Hays on Saturday. Centralia defeated St Marys 34-28 in the sub-state.

Also on Saturday, Quinter won the Eight-Man I championship by a 28-26 score over defending state champion Baileyville. In the Eight-Man II championship game on Saturday, Hanover outscored Quivira Heights 66-36 to take the title.

In Norton's final four, sub-state game Saturday with Collegiate, coach Melvin started on offense: 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; 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; senior Tyler

Cook, 215 pounds right tackle; junior Rylee Stanley, 150 pounds, right end; Lane, McKenna, Gall, linebackers; Draper, Hamel, Pfannenstiel, Perez, defensive backs.

Norton had 158 yards rushing on 56 attempts for almost 3 yards per carry average. The Blue Jays competed 3 of 10 passes for 61 yards and a total of 218 yards of offense.

Collegiate, who came into the game as primarily a passing squad, ran for more of their yards. They had 304 yards rushing on 29 carries for an average of 10.4 yards per carry. They also passed for 237 yards on 10 of 22 completed and ended with 541 total yards of offense.

Terrell Lane was leading ball carrier for Norton with 95 yards on 22 attempts for a 4.3 yard average. Zane Perez had 24 yards on 7 carries for a 3.4 yard average. Other Norton ball carriers were: Connor Pfannenstiel, 16 for 14; Landon Hamel, 6 for 14; Jeremy Sproul, 3 for 8; Spencer Shirk, 1 for 3.

Landon Hamel had 3 kickoff returns for 99 yards and Terrell Lane had 3 for 111 yards. Caleb Laughlin had 4 kickoffs for an average of 49.3 yards. Hamel had 1 punt return for 42 yards.

Leading ground gainer for Collegiate was Raymond Taylor with 145 yards on 9 carries. Brett LeMaster had 4 carries for 77 yards. Blake Jablonski completed 10 of 22 passes for 237 yards.

Leading tackler for Norton was Connor Pfannenstiel with 2 solos, 5 assists, 7 total. He was followed by Tyler Cook, Zane Perez, Jeremy Sproul, 4 solos each; Landon Hamel, 3 solos, 1 assist, 4 total; Kaid McKenna, 2 solos, 1 assist, 3 total; Landon Keiswetter, Terrell Lane, 1 solo, 2 assists, 3 total each; Rylee Stanley, 3 assists; Ashton Draper, Spencer Shirk, 2 solos each; J.D. Gall, 1 solo.

First quarter

Caleb Laughlin got a good kickoff into the end zone to start the game. Collegiate started on their 20-yard line. Quarterback Blake Jablonski ran for 5 yards before Jeremy Sproul and Terrell Lane tackled him. The next down, however, Raymond Taylor got loose up the middle and ran 75 yards for a touchdown.

Norton's Ashton Draper blocked the extra point kick attempt but the Spartans led 6-0 with 11:08 left.

Landon Hamel got a good return of the kickoff to the Norton 28. The Blue Jays were three-and-out and Gall punted. The ball went out of bounds on the Norton 42. The Norton defense



During Norton's sub-state football game with Wichita Collegiate on Saturday at Travis Field, the Spartans' Raymond Taylor had his eyes on the goaline but Blue Jay senior linebacker J.D. Gall had other ideas as he sent Taylor flying with a tremendous tackle that kept him out of the end zone!

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

forced Jablonski out of the pocket but he ran for a first down on the 30. Norton was offside and lost 5 yards. Taylor took advantage of two missed tackles and ran to the 15. Tyler Coughenour ran around right end for a touchdown. LeMaster ran around right end for two extra points and it was 14-0 with 8:59 left.

Hamel returned the kickoff to the Norton 36. Pfannenstiel gained 3 on a keeper and Perez picked up a first down on the Norton 49. Perez made another good run to the Collegiate 44 and a horse collar penalty on Collegiate moved the ball to the 29. The Norton drive bogged down and Collegiate took over. After one first down, Hamel intercepted a pass on the Norton 36.

Pfannenstiel ran a keeper for 5. Lane bulled to the Collegiate 45 for a first down. A Norton fumble three plays later turned the ball over to the Spartans on the Norton 43. The Norton defense forced a three-and-out and Hamel returned the ball to the last man on the Collegiate 48. Hamel got 2, then Pfannenstiel connected with Lane over the middle who made a catch in traffic on the Collegiate 28 as the quarter came to a close.

Second quarter

The Blue Jays were stopped on two running plays, then Pfannenstiel passed deep to Hamel and he raced into the end zone for a 30 yard touchdown! Laughlin split the uprights and it was 14-7 with 10:36 left.

After the kickoff by Laughlin, Collegiate got one first down on a pass to LeMaster, then another first down on a pass interference penalty against the Blue Jays. Another pass was good to the Norton 5, then they needed three plays before Coughenour scored from the 2. He also kicked the extra point, extending the Collegiate lead to 21-7 with 7:33 left in the half.

After the kickoff, Lane made most of the yards as Norton drove toward the goaline. The Blue Jays got to the Collegiate 7-yard line where a fourth down pass was incomplete in the end zone. Norton had the ball one more time and Collegiate had it twice but neither team could move the ball before halftime with the score still 21-7.

Third quarter

After intermission, the Blue Jays came out fired up and marched downfield for another touchdown. Lane returned the kickoff to the Norton 34, picked up 13 more yards, then gained 25 more before fumbling when hit. Marcus Herman recovered the ball on the Collegiate 21. Sproul drove to the 14 and Perez got a first down on the 10. Hamel ran to the 6 and Pfannenstiel ran right, faked a pass and ran into the end zone for the touchdown. Laughlin was perfect on the extra point kick and it was a 21-14 game with 8:13 remaining.

On Laughlin's kickoff, LeMaster's return was limited to the 22-yard line as Stanley and Keiswetter made a jolting tackle. Unfortunately for Norton, LeMaster was not slowed by the hit and



Norton senior Landon Hamel is shown eating up yardage during one of three kickoff returns he had totaling 99 yards against Wichita Collegiate. Nearby is Norton junior Terrell Lane, No. 1, who also had a big day returning kickoffs. Lane totaled 111 yards on three returns.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

sped 78 yards around right end on first down for another Spartan touchdown. Brendan Lowden kicked the extra point, making the score 28-14.

The fighting Blue Jays were not to be discouraged and came up with a big play of their own. On the kickoff, Lane gathered in the pigskin, got good blocking from his teammates and rambled 80 yards into the end zone! Laughlin split the uprights again and Norton had cut the Spartan advantage to 28-21 with 7:41 left.

Collegiate came right back for another touchdown. After a good kickoff return by Taylor to the Norton 39, they scored three plays later on a pass from Jablonski to Tre Bailey. Lowden kicked the extra point, making the score 35-21 with 6:30 left.

On Norton's next possession, Lowden intercepted a Pfannenstiel pass on the Norton 41. Jablonski passed to LeMaster and he sprinted into the end zone for another Spartan touchdown. Lowden's kick made it 42-21 with 4:53 left.

With Lane getting most of the carries after the kickoff, Norton moved into Collegiate territory but an intentional grounding penalty stopped the drive. Gall punted to the Collegiate 18. On first down, the 6'6" Bailey grabbed a Jablonski pass in the middle of Norton defenders and ran 82 yards for another Collegiate touchdown. Lowden's kick extended the visitors' lead to 49-21 with 54 seconds left.

After the kickoff, Norton was on their 34 when the quarter ended.

Fourth quarter

Norton got to their own 36, one yard short of a first down, and Collegiate took over. Taylor gained 9 yards and, on the next play, ran around right end for the Spartans' final touchdown. Lowden kicked the extra point and it was 56-21 with 10:43 left in the game. After the kickoff, Norton moved

to mid-field before giving up the ball. A big 11 yard loss by Collegiate on a tackle by Shirk caused Collegiate to punt to the Norton 23. Norton was three-and-out and Gall punted to the Collegiate 35. Collegiate picked up three more first downs before the final gun.

Coach's final comments

"Our youngsters did a good job this season and I'm really proud of them," said coach Melvin.

"We will really miss our seniors. They led us to a place Norton had not been in 20 years.

"This team came together and grew from our losses and got better and better. We beat a number of good teams and came close to beating some other good teams. I really hope our young men will grow from this season and have the desire to do even better in the classroom, other sports and the weightroom.

"A big thank you to all our fans, parents, administrators, mothers who worked on the signs and the guys who got the field ready before each home game.

"Our seniors were freshmen when I became head football coach and they compiled an impressive 32-13 record in four years.

"We have a lot of good players coming back. I hope they pick up where these guys put them."

The eight seniors on this Norton team were: Ashton Draper, Connor Pfannenstiel, Zane Perez, Landon Hamel, J.D. Gall, Tyler Cook, Marcus Herman and Jake Roney.

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Wichita Collegiate
10	First Downs 10
158	Yards Rushing 304
61	Yards Passing 237
218	Total Yards 541
3-10-1	Passes Compl 10-22-1
1-4	Fumbles Lost 0-0
4-27.5	Punts 3-39.7
3-35	Penalties 2-21



Norton Community High School Principal Rudy Perez held the sub-state runner-up trophy to the Blue Jay football team following their hard-fought loss to Wichita Collegiate on Saturday. The Norton players in this photo are, from left, seniors Ashton Draper, J.D. Gall and Connor Pfannenstiel.

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