

Lady Jays spent season rebuilding

By DICK BOYD

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
With only one returning starter and three other letter winners, the 2009-10 Norton Community High School girls basketball team was in a rebuilding mode and by season's end they had definitely rebuilt.

They started slowly but, by mid-season, they were very competitive and gave opponents all they wanted despite losing to some excellent teams, two of whom competed in the state tournament.

The Lady Jays hosted Atwood on Saturday, Dec. 5 to open the season. Returning starter Ashlie Stewart, 5'3" senior guard, hit 50 percent from the field in tallying 18 points and returning letter winner Kaitlyn Wolf, 5'11" senior post, swished 11 points but Norton couldn't keep up at the free throw line and lost 47-41.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, Dec. 10-11-12, Norton competed in the annual Topside Tip-Off Tournament in Goodland. In the opener, they lost 55-34 to Goodland. Erin Terrell, 5'10" sophomore post, hit 13 points on 85 percent shooting.

In the semi-finals on Friday, the Lady Jays broke open a game with Sharon Springs in the third quarter for a 59-36 victory. Stewart scored 15 points with 60 percent accuracy.

In the fifth place contest on Saturday, Norton took an early lead against Burlington, Colo. before losing 51-47 in overtime. Wolf scored 12 points and Terrell had 11.

On Thursday, Dec. 17, Norton hosted Stockton in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium in their first Mid-Continent League game of the season. It was a solid 48-43 win. Amanda Ray, returning senior 5'10" post letter winner, led the way offensively with 19 points on 56 percent shooting; Stewart

featured 61 percent shooting by the team. Stewart and Ray led the way with 17 points each.

The annual Mid-Continent League Tournament started on Monday, Jan. 18 and the No. 7 seeded Norton quintet had to travel to No. 2 Osborne for their first round contest. The Lady Jays played them somewhat closer this time around but still lost 43-27. Wolf was high scorer with 13 points.

In the consolation semi-finals on Thursday, Jan. 21, Norton defeated No. 6 seed Trego Community 47-34 in WaKeeney and led from start to finish as they had in the first meeting of the two schools. Stewart and Ray each scored 14 points.

The tournament's fifth place game was played on Saturday in Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays. Norton played No. 1 seed Smith Center, who had lost their first game of the season earlier in the tournament.

It was another hard fought game between the two rivals which was not decided until a Lady Redmen basket at the buzzer produced a 37-36 win for Smith Center. Stewart led Norton in scoring with 9 points.

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, Norton returned to Goodland to play the Lady Cowboys, who had beaten them 55-34 in the Topside Tip-Off.

It was the Lady Jays' time for revenge and they outshot and out-rebounded the Goodland quintet and played aggressive defense in a satisfying 40-23 victory! Ray hit 18 points and Stewart added 11.

On Tuesday, Feb. 2, the Lady Jays hosted Smith Center in Mid-Continent League play and hoped to win this time around on their NCHS Stull Gymnasium home floor. Norton got a good start against the Lady Redmen, who were now rated No. 10 in the state

to 9-8 by denying a visiting Hoxie quintet's fourth quarter rally for a 43-36 win on Tuesday, Feb. 16 in the NCHS Stull Gymnasium. Wolf scored 13 points and Ray added 10.

On Friday, Feb. 19, the Lady Jays had to go on the road again as they traveled to Ellis to return to Mid-Continent League play. Norton trailed 25-16 at halftime but rallied in the second half to take the lead. Ellis came back to edge the Lady Jays 40-38. Ray was leading scorer with 17 points.

In a rare Monday game on February 22, Norton closed out Mid-Continent League play in a game at Plainville.

The Lady Jays were competitive again but were outscored 46-38. Terrell had one of her better games with 14 points, 7 rebounds and 4 steals.

Twenty-four hours later on Tuesday, Norton hosted Colby in the final regular season contest. The Lady Jays played well on "Senior Night" against an excellent Lady Eagles quintet. Statistics were fairly even in every category except field goal shooting where Norton could only manage 28 percent accuracy, which contributed to a 38-22 loss. Ray hit 9 points and Stewart 8. Honored senior players were Kendra Engelbert, Amanda Ray, Ashlie Stewart and Kaitlyn Wolf.

Class 3A Sub-State Tournament action began on Tuesday, March 2 with No. 6 seeded Norton traveling to play No. 3 seeded Beloit. Although the Lady Jays lost 50-32 to an outstanding Lady Trojan five, the game was much closer than the final score.

Both teams hit 14 field goals but Beloit was 19 of 22 from the free throw line for 86 percent!

Stewart and Wolf completed their Lady Jay basketball careers by hitting 12 points each. "We played well but didn't have enough offensive power," said coach Jilka.

Beloit continued on to win the sub-state championship and compete in the Class 3A State Tournament in Hutchinson where they lost their first game. Hill City and Osborne both proved that they were quality teams as the Lady Ringnecks placed runner-up in the Class 2A State Tournament in Manhattan and the Lady Bulldogs finished right behind them in third.

"Our girls went through a lot of adversity this year but never complained," said coach Jilka. "They didn't quit and that's what I'm most proud of."

"It was a pleasure to coach them. We lost four seniors who played a lot of good basketball for us but we'll have some good returning players as well."

Norton finished the season with a 9-12 record and fifth place finish in the Mid-Continent League.

Assistant coaches again this season were George Rossi and Joan Bolt.

Student managers were Bryan Henry, Julia Kent and Carla Jo Robinson.

Season statistics
As a team, Norton averaged 39.4 points per game compared to an average of 41.3 points for opponents.

The Lady Jays hit 41 percent of their field goal attempts while opponents only averaged 36.4 percent. From the free throw line, Norton hit 56.9 percent, almost the same as opponents' 57 percent.

The Lady Jays had 165 steals on defense for an average of almost eight thefts per contest. Norton's aggressive defense caused 298 turnovers by the opposition for an average of 14 per game.

On offense, Norton had 180 assists for nine per game. The Lady Jays had 409 total rebounds for an average of 19.5 per game.

Amanda Ray was leading scorer with 10.3 points per game. She was also the most accurate free throw shooter, averaging 75.6 percent and third best field goal shooter at 44.3 percent. Amanda also led Norton in rebounds with an even 100 and was offensive assists leader with 41. She was also third best on the team with



Norton senior guard/post Amanda Ray was closely guarded by a Beloit player as she put up a shot during the Sub-State Tournament game in Beloit on Tuesday, March 2.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

29 steals.

Ashlie Stewart was second high scorer with an average of 9.9 points per game and was steals leader with 43 total thefts. Ashlie was second in assists with 40.

Third high scorer was Kaitlyn Wolf with an average of 7.8 points per game and led the team in field

goal percentage, hitting 54.4 percent of her shots. She was third high in rebounds with 71, second high in steals with 30 and third high in assists with 22.

Erin Terrell was second high in rebounds with 80 total and averaged 6 points per game for fourth best on the team. She was second

most accurate field goal shooter on the team, hitting 51.4 percent of her shots.

Dustyna Sprigg was fourth best in rebounds with 48, fourth in steals with 21 and fourth in assists with 20.



Lady Jay senior point guard Ashlie Stewart hurried down court with the basketball as a Beloit player trailed during the Sub-State Tournament action on Tuesday, March 2 in Beloit.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

finished with 11 points.

The Lady Jays traveled to Phillipsburg the next evening and returned with an impressive 47-33 win to go 2-0 in Mid-Continent League play. Ray hit 13 points, Stewart 12 and Wolf 11. "It was a great game in all phases," said Norton head girls basketball coach Kevin Jilka.

On Monday, Jan. 4, Norton got the new year off to a winning start by edging Oberlin 33-31 on the Lady Red Devils' home court. Stewart hit 21 points and swished Norton's final two points from the free throw line.

Norton hosted Osborne in Mid-Continent League play on Friday, Jan. 8 and stayed within striking distance of the Lady Bulldogs for three quarters before losing 52-31. Stewart, Terrell and Ray each scored 8 points against Osborne, the eventual third place Class 2A winner in the state.

On Friday, Jan. 15, the Lady Jays hosted Trego Community in another league contest and led from start to finish in a 56-37 victory that made their record 5-4. It was a solid performance that

of Kansas, but couldn't hold on and lost 42-31. Stewart led Norton in scoring with 12 points. Lady Jay junior guard Kaylen Rossi was lost for the season with an injured knee suffered in practice several days prior to the game.

Norton traveled to Hill City on Friday, Feb. 5, to take on another outstanding Mid-Continent League team. The Lady Ringnecks were the league tournament champions and were setting records for three-point baskets. The Lady Jays appeared to be equal to the task and hit 53 percent from the field. The Lady Ringnecks were not to be denied, however, as they hit 13 three-point baskets and 51 percent overall en route to a 61-40 win. Wolf hit 16 points and Terrell swished 12 to lead Norton in scoring. Lexi Hardiek led Hill City with 30 points, 24 of her points coming on three-point shots.

On Tuesday, Feb. 9, Norton hosted Oberlin and got back on the winning trail with a 37-32 win after holding off a Lady Red Devil rally. Ray hit 17 points on 78 percent shooting.

Norton ran their season record

Sports Correspondent

The Norton Telegram is seeking two correspondents for Northern Valley High School and Logan High School sports. This is a part time position including writing and taking photos. Call The Telegram at 877-3361 for more information.

THE NORTON
TELEGRAM

215 South Kansas, Norton, Kansas - Phone 785-877-3361
e-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com