

Relentless persistence wins the game over the Oberlin Red Devils in gridiron play on Friday

By **DICK BOYD**
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 The Norton Community High School football team used a relentless offense and air tight defense and shook off several early turnovers to defeat Oberlin 54-0 on Friday night in Oberlin.

The Blue Jays averaged 8 yards per carry in rushing for 262 yards and added 126 yards passing for 388 yards of offense. The Red Devils earned just four first downs, all in the first half, rushed for 25 yards and a .9 yard average and passed for 72 yards for 97 yards of offense.

Norton senior defensive back Spencer Shirk intercepted an Oberlin pass on their first possession. The Blue Jays drove toward the goal line but fumbled the ball away on the Red Devil 1-yard-line.

Oberlin was unable to advance against the veteran Norton defense and was moved backwards into the end zone. Norton senior defensive back Terrell Lane tackled the Oberlin quarterback in the end zone for a two-point safety with 9:42 left.

Three plays later, the Jays scored their first touchdown. Sophomore running back Jacob Brooks returned the Oberlin kickoff 33 yards to the Oberlin 37. Tailback Lane rambled 17 yards to the 20 and senior fullback Brett Terrell scored from there. Senior kicker Caleb Laughlin split the uprights and it was 9-0 with 9:02 remaining.

The Red Devils earned two first downs after Laughlin's kickoff but Norton stopped them on their 28-yard-line. The Jays fumbled again but held the Red Devils again and they punted into the end zone.

Norton opened the second quarter with a 25-yard touchdown pass from Shirk to Terrell. The extra kick made it 16-0 with 10:56 left in the half. Oberlin was three-and-out but defensive back Zach May intercepted a Shirk pass and returned the pigskin to the Norton 3-yard-line.

The Norton defense made a tremendous goal line stand and took over on their one-half yard line! Norton then proceeded to drive 99.5 yards for the Jays' third touchdown. Lane picked up most of the yardage on a 53 yard run to paydirt. Laughlin's kick made it 23-0 with 3:19 left in the first half.

Less than a minute later, thanks to an Oberlin fumble, the Blue Jays were back in the end zone. Norton senior cornerback Billy Broeckelman caught the fumble on the bounce and ran 7 yards to score. Officials said Laughlin's kick just missed its mark, making it 29-0 with 2:24 left.

Before halftime, Oberlin earned their final two first downs of the game but did not threaten to score.

Oberlin kicked off to start the second half and held the Blue Jays for the first time in the game. Lane boomed a punt 61 yards and it was downed on the Oberlin 1-yard-line! After the Norton "Blue Swarm" did another three-and-out number on the Red Devils, Lane returned the punt to the Oberlin 15 and, the next play, ran for another touchdown. After Laughlin's kick, it was 36-0 with 9:03 left.

After another Oberlin three-and-out, Norton got close enough for Laughlin to try a field goal. He booted the ball through the uprights for a 35 yarder! The field goal extended the Norton lead to 39-0 with 3:57 left.

Once again, Oberlin could not move on the Norton defense and a penalty found them on their own 11-yard-line and out of downs. The Jays scored on a pass from Shirk to senior tight end Dakota Dreher with 1:47 left in the third quarter. Laughlin's kick made it 46-0 and put the continuous clock into play.

The Norton junior varsity played the rest of the game for Norton and was able to score a touchdown versus the Oberlin varsity. Brooks got in the end zone from 14 yards out and sophomore quarterback Dalton Miller threw for two extra points to junior wide receiver Jordan Wahlmeier with 6:22 left to make the final 54-0.

Coach's comments
 "They ran a different defense that we hadn't practiced against so our offense was frustrated for

awhile," said Norton head coach Lucas Melvin. "The fumbles early hurt us, too.

"Our offensive line did a great job of making adjustment to their defense and just kept after it.

"Our defensive line also obviously did an outstanding job. They caused a safety and also had a goal-line stand."

Starting lineup

Coach Melvin started the following players on offense: senior Ryan Blecha, 185 pounds, left tackle; senior Landon Keiswetter, 190 pounds, left guard; senior Kaid McKenna, 185 pounds, center; senior Luke Ninemire, 215 pounds, right guard; senior Justin Griffith, 190 pounds, right tackle; junior Dillon McConney, 150 pounds, wide receiver; senior Billy Broeckelman, 170 pounds, wide receiver; senior Dakota Dreher, 170 pounds, tight end; senior Spencer Shirk, 180 pounds, quarterback; senior Brett Terrell, 160 pounds, fullback; senior Jeremy Sproul, 205 pounds, tailback.

On defense for the Blue Jays were: Dakota Dreher, Jeremy Sproul, ends; Luke Ninemire, Justin Griffith, tackles; Landon Keiswetter, Kaid McKenna, Brett Terrell, linebackers; Billy Broeckelman, Spencer Shirk, junior Tye Nickell, 150 pounds, cornerbacks; Terrell Lane, safety.

Individual statistics

Terrell Lane was nearly unstoppable from his tailback position. He gained 165 yards on 14 carries for an average of 11.8 yards per carry!

Other Norton backs and their yards gained were: Spencer Shirk, 6 for 26; Jeremy Sproul, 5 for 20; Brett Terrell, 2 for 30; Trey Millan, 2 for 5; Jacob Brooks, 1 for 14; Tye Nickell, 1 for 6; Dalton Miller, 1 for minus 1; Toby Nickell, 1 for minus 5.

Lane punted the ball once for 61 yards and had 2 punt returns for 46 yards.

Shirk completed 7 of 12 passes for 123 yards. Receivers were: Billy Broeckelman, 2 for 27; Dakota Dreher, 2 for 25; Jacob Brooks, 1 for 28; Brett Terrell, 1 for 25; Dillon McConney, 1 for 18; Jordan Wahlmeier, 1 for 3.

Brooks also returned 1 punt for 33 yards.

Caleb Laughlin kicked off 8 times and averaged 53 yards per kick. Austin Hager kicked off 1 time for 40.

Leading ball carrier for the Red Devils was Nolan Peters with 21 yards on 15 attempts.

Zach May completed 9 of 15 passes for 57 yards. Keithen Fortin caught 5 passes for 51 yards.

Tackles
 Kaid McKenna was leading tackler with 10 solos, 2 assists, 12 total; followed by Spencer Shirk, 7 solos, 1 assist, 8 total; Landon "Tug" Keiswetter, 4 solos, 3 assists, 7 total; Billy Broeckelman, 5 solos, 1 assist, 6 total; Tye Nickell, 1 solo, 3 assists, 4 total; Justin Griffith, 3 solos; Trey Millan, 3 solos; Luke Ninemire, 3 solos; Terrell Lane, 2 solos; John Rise-wick, 2 solos; Brett Terrell, 1 solo, 1 assist, 2 total; Jordan Wahlmeier, 2 solos; Robert Blecha, 1 assist; Ryan Blecha, 1 assist; Jared Bohl, 1 assist; Jacob Brooks, 1 assist; Kolton Harting, 1 solo; Tyler Lewis, 1 solo; Taylor Meder, 1 solo; Dalton Miller, 1 solo; Treven Rossi, 1 assist; Jeremy Sproul, 1 assist; Rylee Stanley, 1 assist; Casey Temmel, 1 assist; Justin Waggoner, 1 assist.

First quarter

Laughlin kicked off for Norton and Spencer Shirk intercepted an Oberlin pass and returned it to the Red Devil 32. Jeremy Sproul ran for 16 yards and Brett Terrell ran for 10 more. Norton fumbled on the Oberlin 1-yard-line.

Oberlin made 7 yards on 2 carries but lost yardage on a delay of game penalty. Terrell Lane sacked the quarterback for a two-point safety with 9:42 left.

Jacob Brooks returned the kickoff 33 yards to the Oberlin 37. Lane ran to the 20 and Terrell covered the last 20 yards for Norton's first touchdown. Laughlin's kick made it 9-0 with 9:02 left.

After Laughlin's kickoff, Oberlin earned two first downs but Norton held them on the Jays' 28. Shirk ran for 6, then Norton fumbled and Oberlin recovered on the 34. Broeckelman tackled Nolan Peters for a 5 yard loss and Shirk

stopped Keithen Fortin for no gain after catching a flat pass. Oberlin punted into the end zone.

After an incomplete pass, Lane gained 3, then appeared to have a first down on the 34 but a block in the back brought the ball back. Shirk passed to Dakota Dreher for a first down on the 35. Lane got 4, Shirk sneaked for a first down at mid-field as the quarter ended 9-0.

Second quarter

Broeckelman caught a flat pass for a first down, Lane ran to the Oberlin 33, Lane then ran to the 25 for another first down. Shirk passed to Terrell over the middle, he picked up several good blocks and sprinted into the end zone! The extra kick made it 16-0 with 10:56 left.

With linebackers Kaid McKenna and Landon Keiswetter leading the way, Norton held Oberlin to no yardage and they punted. Lane returned the ball to the Oberlin 45. After an incomplete pass, Shirk made a good gain but holding brought the pigskin back to mid-field.

Zach May intercepted Shirk's pass and returned it to the Norton 3-yard-line! The Blue Jay defense met the test and regained possession on their one-half yard line!

Norton had two off-sides, half-the-distance penalties, leaving the ball just outside the end zone. The Blue Jay line went to work and Lane found running room to the 40 on three carries. Sproul had a good gain but Norton was whistled for holding. Sproul carried again and got short yardage before Lane followed some good blocking 53 yards to paydirt! Laughlin split the uprights and it was 23-0 with 3:19 left.

Fortin returned Laughlin's kickoff but a blocking in the back penalty moved the ball back to the 10. Keiswetter sacked quarterback Zach May on the 7. Next down, Oberlin fumbled and Broeckelman caught the pigskin on the bounce and charged into the end zone for another Norton touchdown! Officials indicated that Laughlin's extra point kick just missed and it was 29-0 with 2:24 left.

Norton's defense gave ground grudgingly and Oberlin had a fourth and six situation. Instead of punting they went to the air and got their third first down of the game on the Norton 48 on a pass to Fortin. Another pass was good to the Norton 33 for their fourth and last first down.

Norton held this time and a pass from Shirk to Brooks was good to the Oberlin 36 as halftime arrived with Norton leading 29-0.

Third quarter
 Oberlin kicked off out of bounds and Norton got the ball on the 42. The Oberlin defense came out of the lockerroom fired up and stopped Norton cold. Lane punted for the only time in the game and boomed a 61-yarder which was downed on the Oberlin 1-yard-line!

After two no gains and an incomplete pass, Oberlin punted. Lane returned the ball to the Red Devil 15. Next down, Lane found a nice hole opened by the Norton line, cut back and sprinted into the end zone. Laughlin's kick made it 36-0 with 9:03 left.

Laughlin kicked off and Norton's Trey Millan came charging downfield, hit return man Nolan Peters with a full head of steam and the thud of the tackle was heard all over the stadium! While the Norton defense hit hard all night, there was no doubt that this was the hit of the game!

Peters got up and caught a flat pass on first down but was stopped for no gain by Broeckelman and Keiswetter. Josh Ritter caught a pass from May but an illegal formation brought it back. Oberlin punted to mid-field.

Shirk gained 9 on a keeper and Lane got a first down on the 37. Next down, McConney recovered a Norton fumble on the Red Devil 15. After an incomplete pass, a penalty on Norton and fumble in the backfield which Norton recovered, coach Melvin called for a field goal try. Laughlin booted the ball perfectly from 35 yards out for 3 more Norton points, making it 39-0 with 3:57 left.

The Blue Jay defense held again after the kickoff and a penalty for too many players on the field cost the Red Devils the ball and Nor-

ton got the pigskin on the Oberlin 11. Shirk passed to a wide open Dreher in the end zone. Laughlin's extra point kick made it 46-0 with 1:47 left.

The Norton junior varsity played the rest of the game and also held Oberlin out of the end zone while scoring once themselves.

Fourth quarter

After Laughlin's kickoff into the end zone, Oberlin tried to move the ball forward but had to give it up after four downs. With Trey Millan and Tye Nickell carrying, Norton moved close to the end zone. Jacob Brooks ran around right end for 14 yards and Norton's final touchdown. Quarterback Dalton Miller passed to wide receiver Jordan Wahlmeier for two extra points, making the score 54-0.

After the kickoff, Carson McKenna made a nice interception of an Oberlin pass but Norton fumbled the ball back to the Red Devils just prior to the end of the game.

Next action

Norton will face its toughest competition of the season so far on Friday night when the Blue Jays host Smith Center in a 7 p.m. Mid-Continent League game at Travis Field.

The Blue Jays are now 4-0 and Smith Center is 3-1 after losing 19-14 to Phillipsburg in the second week of the season. The Panthers are 4-0.

Smith Center's wins were 58-6 over Atwood, 22-12 over Ellis and 40-6 over Plainville last week.

Norton started with a 13-0 win over Ellis, 48-16 victory over St. Francis and 46-0 win over Plainville.

Prior to Smith Center's loss to Phillipsburg this season, the Redmen's last regular season loss was to Norton in 2003. Their 79-game winning streak ended with a 20-12 overtime loss to Centralia in 2009 in the Class 2A state championship game.

The Redmen are in Class 3A this season, the same as Norton.

Smith Center features a highly sophisticated wishbone offense in which any one of four backs could receive the ball on any given play. They pass few times in a game, preferring to grind it out on the ground.

"We'll have to play hard, focus on our defensive assignments and take care of the ball on offense," said coach Melvin.

"I'm sure they will play their best game against us. It will be our toughest game of the season so far."

GAME STATISTICS

Norton	Oberlin	
13	First Downs	4
262	Yards Rushing	25
126	Yards Passing	72
388	Total Yards	97
8-13-1	Passes Comp.	11-20-2
3-6	Fumbles Lost	1-1
1-61	Punts	5-36.2
5-51	Penalties	9-61



Helped by Caleb Laughlin's towering kicks, the Norton kickoff team has been very aggressive this season, limiting returns to little yardage. In this photo, Norton's Jordan Wahlmeier, No.10 and Carson McKenna, No. 30, are shown stopping Oberlin's Nolan Peters on one of the Red Devil returns.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd



Norton senior fullback Brett Terrell followed his blocking, broke into the open and sprinted 20 yards for the first Blue Jays touchdown in Norton's win over Oberlin on Friday night. No.3 for Oberlin is Dayton Dreher. - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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High School Sports This Week

Norton Blue Jays

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FOOTBALL:

Norton Blue Jays vs. Smith Center Redmen 7 p.m. Friday in Norton

Norton Junior Varsity vs. Phillipsburg 6 p.m. Monday in Norton

Northern Valley Huskies vs. Palco 7 p.m. Friday in Almena

Northern Valley Junior Varsity vs. Palco TBA Monday in Palco

Logan Trojans vs. Victoria 7 p.m. Friday in Logan

VOLLEYBALL:

Norton Lady Jays vs. Colby, Atwood V, JV 4:30 p.m. Today in Colby

Norton Lady Jays in Decatur Invitational vs. Oberlin, Hoxie, St. Francis, Atwood V, JV 9 a.m. Saturday in Oberlin

Norton Lady Jays vs. Trego, Smith Center V, JV 5 p.m. Tuesday in WaKeeney

Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Franklin 5 p.m. Today in Franklin

Northern Valley Lady Huskies in Ellis Tournament 8:30 p.m. Saturday in Ellis

Northern Valley Lady Huskies vs. Golden Plains, Triplains 4 p.m. Tuesday in Rexford

Logan Lady Trojans vs. Palco, Thunder Ridge 4 p.m. Tuesday in Kensington

CROSS COUNTRY:

Norton Cross Country V, JV in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Today in Oberlin

Northern Valley Huskies V, JV in Oberlin Invitational 5 p.m. Today in Oberlin

TENNIS:

Norton Lady Jays in Colby Tournament 3 p.m. Today in Colby

Norton Lady Jays in MCL Tournament 9 a.m. Saturday in Phillipsburg

Norton Lady Jays in Colby Junior Varsity Tournament 9 a.m. Saturday in Colby