

# Former graduate honored at Fort Hays

By Diane Gasper-O'Brien  
HAYS DAILY NEWS

As the son of a high school football coach, Brad Brown had big dreams while growing up in Norton in the 1960s and '70s.

He had his sights set on being a starter on his high school team, going on to play in college and maybe even making it to the NFL one day.

Brown has watched all those dreams come true, despite hanging up his helmet and cleats after his first year of college.

Now in his 26th year as an NFL athletic trainer, Brown was honored at halftime of Saturday night's Fort Hays State University men's basketball game as the newest member of the Tiger Sports Hall of Fame.

Brown was part of the 2010 class selected last fall but was unable to make it to Hays for the ceremonies on the Hall of Fame weekend because his team, the Tennessee Titans, was playing the Philadelphia Eagles at home that Sunday.

Following a standout career at Norton Community High School in the early '70s, Brown came to FHSU on a football scholarship to play defensive back.

He hadn't yet declared a major but was interested in physical therapy, knowing little, if anything, about athletic training as a

profession.

"When I was playing, I realized the trainer was there," he said. "Then I got hurt, and I spent a lot more time in the training room and saw what it was all about."

It piqued his interest.

"I was around athletics all my life," Brown said. "Growing up, I wanted to be a professional ball player of some kind. I just didn't know which one. Then when I got to college to play football, I realized there were a lot of good players out there, better than me."

In a twist of fate, a back injury helped Brown make a career decision.

"When I got hurt, I started seeing Steve Antonopoulos a lot," Brown said of the head FHSU trainer at the time. "He started talking to me about (athletic training), and I hooked up with Steve, and that was my first introduction to athletic training."

The rest, as they say, is history, Brown said with a laugh.

At the time, there was no major for athletic training at the undergraduate level at FHSU. Students wanting to pursue that type of career could graduate with some type of bachelor of science degree then put in so many clock hours as a trainer before taking a certification exam.

"It was an apprenticeship-type program," said Brown., whose

bachelor's degree from FHSU is in physical education and his master's degree in physical education and secondary administration. "You put in so many hours under the direct supervision of a certified trainer."

That mentor for Brown was Antonopoulos, both at Fort Hays and at the professional football level.

After Antonopoulos left FHSU to become an assistant trainer for the Denver Broncos in the mid-'70s, Brown quickly worked his way up the ladder under new head trainer Bill Lyons.

When Lyons left for the University of Wyoming in 1978, Brown took over as the Tigers' head trainer before Antonopoulos came calling again in 1985. He needed an assistant on the Broncos staff.

Brown's time in Denver was short-lived.

After two years with the Broncos, the Houston Oilers needed a head trainer in 1987, and Brown was their choice. The Oilers moved to Nashville 10 years later, and that's where Brown and his wife, Kristi, and their family have made their home ever since.

Brown said he thoroughly enjoyed seeing all the changes in Hays and on campus this weekend.

"We got to meet up with a lot of



Brad Brown, FHSU graduate and head athletic trainer for the NFL's Tennessee Titans, waves to the crowd after receiving his Tiger Sports Hall of Fame award from Curtis Hammeke, athletic director at Fort Hays State University, Saturday night at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays.

- Courtesy photo by Raymond Hillegas, Hays Daily News

people we hadn't connected with in a long time," he said. "And it was a really nice honor to be recognized. I've been very fortunate. I got a lot of hands-on training at Fort Hays and this (profession) has been very good to me."

Following the 2000 season, Brad and his staff were awarded the National Football League Athletic Training Staff of the Year honor by the Ed Block Foundation and the Professional Football

Athletic Trainers Society.

In 2001, he was named the Southeast Athletic Trainers Association's Professional Athletic Trainer of the Year.

In 2002, Brad was a recipient of the FHSU Alumni Association Achievement and Distinguished Service Award.

In 2009, he was named the Joe Worden Clinic/Professional Athletic Trainer of the Year by the Tennessee Athletic Trainers

Society.

Brad and wife Kristi reside at 827 High Point Ridge Rd., Franklin, Tenn. 37069. They have two children, Kyle and Joel, both of whom are married. They have one granddaughter, Brein.

Brad's mother, Dorothy, is a resident of Bonner Springs. Brad's father is the late Roger Brown.

# Junior Varsity places fifth

By DICK BOYD

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The Norton Community High School junior varsity wrestlers placed fifth in the varsity Arapahoe Invitational Tournament last Saturday in Arapahoe, Neb.

Norton was the highest finishing junior varsity team in the tournament. Sumner Eddyville Miller (SEM) won the championship with 233 points, followed by Arapahoe, 155.5; Elm Creek, 106; Elwood, 103; Norton JV, 79; Hitchcock Co., 78; Eustis-Farnam, 75.5; Unified JV, 38; Cozad JV, 32; Axtell, 22.5.

Norton had one champion, two runners-up, one third place and three fourth place finishers.

Winning the gold medal for the Blue Jays was Alec Hager at 112 pounds. Finishing runner-up were Ethan Ross, 103 and Austin Hager, 135.

In third place was Cole Renner, 160.

Fourth place finishers for Norton were Garret Otter, 103; Cody Ellis, 140 and Treven Rossi, 152.

Others competing for Norton were Keith Sander, 130 and Lucas Engel, 171.

Cole Renner was named "Junior Varsity Wrestler of the Week" for his performance in a tough bracket.

"Even though some brackets were small, the quality of competition was better than our junior varsity wrestlers have seen," said Norton assistant wrestling coach Shane Miller.

"The upper weights proved to be some of the best competition that our junior varsity has seen so far.

"This was a round robin tour-

namment format that gave some wrestlers more mat time. The teams seemed to have more upperclassmen in their middle to upper weights. You expect this in a varsity tournament.

"The team from Sumner Eddyville Miller was probably the best team our junior varsity wrestlers have seen all year in a tournament.

"We had a good week of practice and our young guys are seeing the benefits of winning some matches in areas where we have stressed the importance of technique. It is fun to see these young guys improve like they have."

**Norton results:**

103 - Ethan Ross won a technical fall over Colby Cronin, Axtell; pinned Rogelio Lopez, Cozad JV, in 5:02, won a technical fall over Norton JV's Garret Otter and was pinned in 1:45 by Aaron Heuftle, Eustis-Farnam, to place runner-up.

103 - Garret Otter pinned Rogelio Lopez, Cozad JV, in 3:46; was pinned in 1:58 by Aaron Heuftle, Eustis-Farnam; lost by a technical fall to Norton's Ethan Ross and lost a 6-1 decision to Colby Cronin, Axtell, to place fourth.

112 - Alec Hager had one wrestler in his bracket. He pinned Brendan Molden, Cozad JV, in 3:59 to win the championship.

130 - Keith Sander lost a 12-2 major decision to Michael Erickson, Hitchcock County; was pinned in 1:06 by Bryce Brown, SEM; won a 12-4 major decision over Ace Bloom, Elm Creek and was pinned in 1:46 by Dallas Johnson, Axtell, to place sixth.

135 - Austin Hager won a 6-2 decision over Trevor Sutherland,

Elm Creek and was pinned in 1:23 by Cale Eaker, SEM, to place runner-up.

140 - Cody Ellis lost a 4-3 decision to Tyler Kipp, Arapahoe; won a 5-1 decision over Ryan Gardner, Unified JV and lost a 9-0 major decision to Jared Johnson, Elm Creek, to place fourth.

152 - Treven Rossi was pinned in 5:29 by Mitchell Kubert, Elwood; was pinned in 4:54 by Calvin Frerichs, SEM; won a 9-8 decision over Justin Cline, Axtell; was pinned in :38 by Patrick Gardner, Arapahoe and won an 11-2 major decision over Lane Kuper, Hitchcock County, to place fourth.

160 - Cole Renner won a 12-11 decision over Caden Weverka, Unified JV; was pinned in 1:34 by Treven Claffin, SEM and won a 16-6 major decision over David Acosta, Hitchcock County to place third.

171 - Lucas Engel was pinned in 1:29 by Hunter Ertz, Elwood; defaulted to Nathan Goodner, Elm Creek; defaulted to Hank Pfister, Cozad JV and defaulted to Dillon Thurn, Unified JV, to place eighth.

**Next action**

The Norton varsity and junior varsity wrestlers will both compete Saturday in the annual Panther Classic in Phillipsburg, beginning at 9 a.m.

Competing, in addition to teams from Norton and Phillipsburg, will be teams from Abilene, Beloit, Ellis, Ellsworth, Hill City, Hoisington, Hoxie, Lakin, Lincoln, Minneapolis, Oakley, St. Francis, Stockton and Thomas More Prep of Hays.



Norton sophomore Eli Bozarth was seeded No.2 at 145 pounds in the Mid-Continent League Wrestling Tournament on Saturday in Plainville but he put No.1 seed Matt Schneider, Phillipsburg, down for the count in 5:27 of their championship match!

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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