

Norton Football edged by TMP in District matchup

By Dick Boyd

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Coach Lucas Melvin's Norton Community High School football team lost a hard-fought District game to Thomas More Prep of Hays by a 20-19 score when Monarch senior quarterback Nick Hammeke completed a touchdown pass in the corner of the end zone to senior wide receiver Taylor Pfeifer with just a minute left in the game on Friday night at Lewis Field Stadium in Hays.

Norton was leading 19-14 at the time, despite numerous turnovers throughout the contest, and limiting Hammeke's passing efficiency. Hammeke entered the game having completed 126 of 222 passes for 57 percent and 1,700 yards this season. He was averaging 243 yards passing per game.

Norton allowed TMP only 134 yards passing and 94 yards rushing for 228 total yards while the Blue Jay offense rolled up 222 yards rushing and had 78 yards passing for 300 total yards of offense.

The gang tackling Norton defense allowed TMP only six first downs in the game while the Blue Jays earned 19 first downs but Norton was hampered by turnovers once again. The Blue Jays had three pass interceptions and lost two fumbles.

Norton took the opening kickoff and scored when senior quarterback Jordan Wahlmeier passed 18 yards to junior wide receiver Jacob Brooks. After sophomore kicker Austin Hager split the uprights, Norton led 7-0 with 10:21 left in first quarter.

TMP missed a field goal try in the first quarter and had another field goal attempt blocked by Brooks in the second quarter before Hammeke connected with senior wide receiver Jacob Fouts on a 60 yard touchdown pass. Senior kicker Drew O'Brien tied the score at 7-all with an extra point kick.

The only scoring in the third quarter came when TMP drove down after the opening kickoff to score when senior running back Dylan Gottschalk tallied from 1 yard out. O'Brien kicked the extra point, putting the Monarchs ahead 14-7.

After Norton senior Trey Millan intercepted a Hammeke pass late in the third quarter, the Blue Jays drove down for another score early in the fourth period. Wahlmeier sneaked the final yard but the extra point kick missed and Norton trailed 14-13.

A 66-yard drive by the Blue Jays produced their final touchdown. Wahlmeier sneaked the last yard once again. A pass for extra points was unsuccessful but Norton led 19-14 with just 3:23 remaining in the game.

TMP drove downfield and reached the Norton 3-yard line. They fumbled on third down and players from both teams scrambled for the ball. The Monarchs recovered it on their 10 and passed for the winning touchdown on fourth down.

It was the second District loss for Norton, who was shutout 17-0 by Goodland the week before. The loss will prevent the Blue Jays from competing in the post-season playoffs.

Coach's Comments

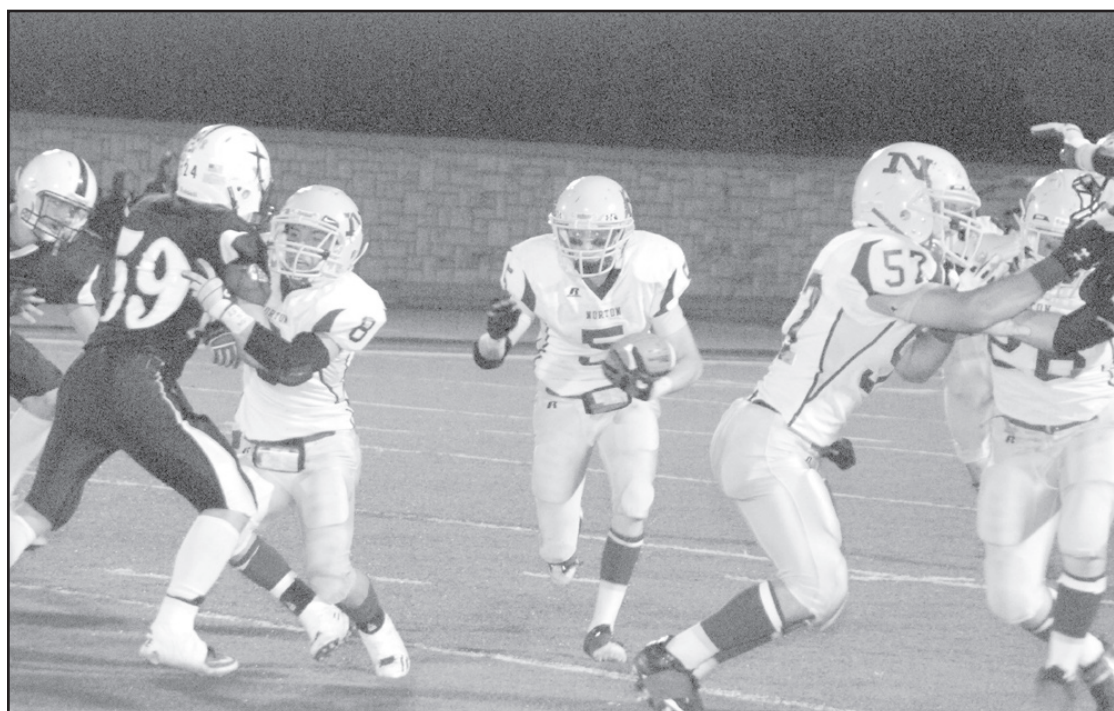
"We had five turnovers compared to two for them and that hurt quite a bit," said coach Melvin. "We missed some opportunities and made mistakes we couldn't overcome."

"We played hard and it hurts. I feel bad for our players."

Coach Melvin lamented that Norton did not recover the third down fumble by TMP. That one play would have made a difference in the outcome of the game.

Starting lineup

Coach Melvin started the following players on offense: senior Damian Davis, 165 pounds, left tackle; junior Eli Bozarth, 160 pounds, left guard; junior Lane Bigge, 200 pounds, center; senior Kurt Douglas, 175 pounds, right guard; freshman Wyatt Harting, 210 pounds, right tackle; senior Robert Blecha, 180 pounds, tight end; junior Jacob Brooks, 175 pounds, wide receiver; senior Dillon McConney, 150 pounds, wide receiver; senior Jordan Wahlmeier, 180 pounds, quarterback;



Norton's senior tailback Tye Nickell, No. 5, had plenty of room to run for big yardage on this play Friday night versus Thomas More Prep when he received outstanding blocks from senior fullback Trey Millan, No.8; senior tackle Casey Temmel, No. 57 and senior tight end Robert Blecha, No. 26. Nickell gained 99 yards and averaged 4.3 yards per carry in the game.

—Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

senior Trey Millan, 165 pounds, fullback; senior Tye Nickell, 150 pounds, tailback.

Starting on defense were: Eli Bozarth; junior Lucas Engel, 180 pounds; Damian Davis; senior Justin Waggoner, 145 pounds, ends; Trey Millan; senior Taylor Meder, 145 pounds; junior John Risewick, 140 pounds; junior Dalton Miller, 185 pounds, linebackers; Jacob Brooks, junior Carson McKenna, Tye Nickell, cornerbacks.

Individual statistics

Seniors Tye Nickell and Trey Millan both had solid rushing games. Nickell gained 99 yards on 23 carries for a 4.3 yard average and Millan picked up 86 yards on 25 totes for a 3.4 yard average.

Jordan Wahlmeier had 9 carries for 32 yards and a 3.6 yard average. Jacob Brooks had 2 carries for 5 yards.

Wahlmeier completed 8 of 19 passes for 78 yards. Receivers were: Carson McKenna, 4 for 39 yards; Brooks, 2 for 19 yards; Millan, 2 for 15 yards.

Austin Hager had 4 kickoffs for an average of 33.5 yards. Nickell had 2 kickoff returns for 69 yards.

TMP's Hammeke completed 12 of 25 passes for 134 yards. Leading rusher for TMP was Hammeke with 11 carries for 53 yards; Gottschalk had 7 carries for 38 yards.

Tackles

Carson McKenna and Trey Millan led Norton in tackles with 7 each. McKenna had 7 solos and Millan had 5 solos, 2 assists, 7 total. They were followed by Eli Bozarth, 4 solos, 2 assists, 6 total; Taylor Meder, 4 solos, 2 assists, 6 total; Damian Davis, 3 solos, 1 assist, 4 total; John Risewick, 2 solos, 2 assists, 4 total; Lucas Engel, 1 solo, 2 assists, 3 total; Dalton Miller, 2 solos; Justin Waggoner, 2 solos; Jacob Brooks, 1 solo; Kolton Harting, 1 solo; Tye Nickell, 1 assist.

First quarter

Tye Nickell returned the opening kickoff to the TMP 30. Nickell gained 1, Trey Millan got 3 and TMP was offside, giving Norton a first down on the 18. Jordan Wahlmeier's first pass was a strike to Jacob Brooks in the end zone! Austin Hager split the uprights and Norton led 7-0 at 10:21.

TMP returned the ball to their 30 and got short shortage on two plays where Engel and Waggoner made tackles. Bozarth led a third down pass rush and, after a 5-yard motion penalty, TMP punted to the Norton 15.

Millan gained 5, Brooks got 2 and Nickell gained 8 more yards for a first down on the 30 as the line just kept driving Monarchs backwards! Millan carried 2 more times before Wahlmeier

fumbled and TMP recovered on the Blue Jay 30-yard line.

After an incomplete pass, Hammeke ran to the Norton 15 where Bozarth made the tackle. Hammeke got 1 and Bozarth again made the stop. TMP lost 5 for illegal motion and Hammeke got 0. A good rush caused an incomplete pass and a field goal try was no good.

Norton took over on their 20. After a 5 yard gain by Nickell and 2 incomplete passes, Wahlmeier punted to the TMP 37. Shane Zimmerman picked up 4 before Millan and Dalton Miller tackled him. Hammeke was sacked, a pass was incomplete and TMP punted to the Norton 26.

Nickell gained 8, Millan 1 and Millan just missed a first down. A fourth down sneak by Wahlmeier was good but illegal procedure against Norton nullified it and Wahlmeier punted to the TMP 25.

Hammeke passed in the flat to Zimmerman but Millan threw him for a 4 yard loss as the quarter ended with Norton leading 7-0.

Second quarter

Dylan Lang gained 3 before Meder tackled him. After an incomplete pass, TMP punted to the Norton 24. Norton fumbled and recovered, Brooks gained 5, a pass was incomplete and Wahlmeier punted. It was a short punt that carried to the Norton 36.

McKenna tackled Hammeke after 2, two passes were incomplete and TMP tried another field goal. This time Brooks came charging in to block it! Millan and Nickell each gained 7, a pass was incomplete, Nickell and Millan each gained 4, Wahlmeier sneaked for a first down on the TMP 35. Wahlmeier was sacked, then passed to Millan on the 39. Illegal procedure cost Norton 5, then Millan ran to the 35. A fourth down pass by Wahlmeier was intercepted by TMP and a block-in-the-back penalty moved the ball back to the Monarch 39.

Zimmerman caught a pass from Hammeke but Miller tackled him after 1. Next, however, Hammeke hit Jacob Fouts over the middle and he was able to outrun the Norton defense for a 60-yard touchdown. O'Brien kicked the extra point, tying the score at 7-all with 2:23 left.

After the kickoff, Nickell carried the ball 3 times but did not get a first down. Wahlmeier's punt was blocked and TMP got the ball on the Norton 40. The Norton defense was equal to the occasion and TMP punted to the Norton 4 with 39 seconds left. Millan got 3 and Brooks 3 before halftime arrived with the score still 7-all.

Third quarter

Hager's kickoff was returned to the TMP 38. With Hammeke mainly running the ball, the Monarchs moved downfield to score. Gottschalk ran the final yard, O'Brien kicked the extra point and TMP led 14-7 at 9:59.

After the kickoff to the Norton 31, the Blue Jay offensive line really started to open the holes. Nickell got a first down on the 41, Norton was offside and a pass was incomplete but Nickell got loose for a first down on the TMP 46. Millan gained 4, Nickell got 2, then a first down on the 36. Nickell ran around left end to the 32, then ran

up the middle for a first down on the 25.

TMP's defense stiffened and Nickell and Millan gained 0. A pass was incomplete and a fourth down pass was intercepted on the TMP 25. The Blue Jay defense held and TMP punted to the Norton 34. Millan made 2 good runs to the 47 before a fumbled handoff was recovered by TMP. The next play, however, Millan intercepted a TMP pass and returned it to the TMP 46.

Millan got 3, Nickell 3, Millan 1. Wahlmeier sneaked for a first down on the TMP 34. Wahlmeier ran the keeper for a first down on the 18. Nickell got 2 and the quarter was over with Norton trailing 14-7 but knocking on the door.

Fourth quarter

Nickell got 0 but Wahlmeier passed to Millan for a first down on the 5. Nickell plunged to the 3 and Millan got to the 1. Wahlmeier sneaked the ball into the end zone. The extra kick was wide and Norton still trailed 13-14 at 10:07.

TMP fumbled on the kickoff and Meder recovered on the TMP 25. A pass was incomplete, Millan gained 2 and Wahlmeier passed to Brooks on the 20. Norton attempted a field goal but it was unsuccessful.

TMP received the ball on their 20. On first down, Miller led the way as Hammeke was sacked on the 15. After a short pass and an incomplete pass, TMP punted and Brooks made a fair catch on the Norton 34 with 7:02 left in the game.

There was no denying Norton this time as the Blue Jays moved downfield to score and take the lead. Nickell gained 8, then got a first down on the Norton 46. Wahlmeier ran the keeper to the TMP 42 for another first down. He passed to McKenna who stepped out of bounds on the 32, then ran the keeper to the 24. Millan earned a first down on the 15. Nickell powered to the 4, Millan ran to the 2 and then to the 1. Wahlmeier sneaked it in for the touchdown. A pass for extra points was unsuccessful but Norton led 19-14 at 3:23.

After the kickoff, TMP had the ball on their 44. Hammeke completed a pass to Fouts on the Norton 36. Another pass netted 5 yards and Gottschalk was run out of bounds on the 18. Hammeke passed to Zimmerman to the 10 and Gottschalk ran to the 7. Hammeke was run out of bounds on the 9 for a 2 yard loss. Hammeke passed to Fouts on the 3. The next down, TMP fumbled in the backfield and, after a wild scramble by both teams, recovered on their 10. Hammeke passed to Pfeifer who made a great catch in the corner of the end zone. A pass for 2 was incomplete but TMP led 20-19 with 1:01 left.

Norton made a valiant effort to move through the air to retake the lead. Nickell returned the kickoff to the Norton 33. Wahlmeier threw 3 consecutive passes to McKenna on the Norton 44, Norton 49 and TMP 34 and he stepped out of bounds after each to stop the clock. Millan ran the ball once, then a Wahlmeier pass was intercepted by Pfeifer to end the drive and game.

Next action

Norton's final game of the season will be on Thursday when the Blue Jays play host at Travis Field to Phillipsburg in a 7 p.m. District contest.

The Panthers have defeated TMP and Goodland in the District so will move into the playoffs regardless of the outcome of this game. Their only losses have been to Plainville and Smith Center.

"Phillipsburg has a very good team with a good quarterback who can run and pass," said coach Melvin. "They have good team speed and really fly to the ball. They are playing well."

"This is an opportunity for us to end our season on a good note."

"We are learning more how to play as a team and be more accountable as individuals. We need to realize all the good things we have done this season and finish the right way this week."

"We want our young men to learn the lessons that life is teaching them and grow from it."

Senior Night

Thursday will also be "Senior Night" and the seniors from the football, cross country and tennis teams will be honored at 6:40 p.m. at Travis Field along with their parents.

GAME STATISTICS

Norton		TMP
19	First Downs	6
222	Yards Rushing	94
78	Yards Passing	134
300	Total Yards	228
8-19-3	Passes Compl.	12-25-1
2-4	Fumbles Lost	1-1
4-24.25	Punts	6-42.33
3-15	Penalties	6-36

Northern Valley X-C headed for State

By Kirk Kasson

For the first time in recent memory, Northern Valley Cross Country will have a Men's Cross Country Team at the State meet. The Huskies have a tradition of great individuals who have qualified and placed at the State Meet, but not since 2006, when the girls team of Megan Cole, Amanda Hopkins, Jessie Redeker and Jena Jessup qualified have they had a team represented.

Once again, returning state champion Gunnar Hays led the way with a first place finish. His time of 16:56 is a career best on a 5000m course, and he led from start to finish. His closest competition pulled back less than a mile into the race, and Gunnar was on his own to push himself for a fast time. Finishing second was talented freshmen Caden Callaway of Scandia-Pike Valley in 17:30, and third went to Gunnar's long time rival Luke Friess of Hoxie.

Pike Valley teammates Quinton Isaacson and Kameron Blanding finished fourth and fifth.

The Huskies, Junior runner Jon Compton posted a personal best time of 19:10 to finish sixth. Freshmen Philip Rupp

and Macy Kasson were not far behind, each posting career best times of 20:37 and 21:01 respectively, to finish 13th and 17th. Senior Brandon McDowell rounded out the team effort with a 38th place finish and a time of 30:47.

Pike Valley won the regional championship deservedly, scoring 18 points with six of the top nine place winners, but Northern Valley finished well ahead of third place with a team total of 32 points and an average team time of 19:26! Stockton qualified for state with 59 points and an average time of 21:03. Hoxie's team did not qualify, as they finished fourth with 64 points, even though their average time of 20:56 was faster than Stockton's.

Coach Kasson sees the State Cross Country Meet as a challenge as well as a reward for his team. "We have worked so hard, knowing that this goal was attainable. I am so proud of the four boys who posted career best times today. They met or exceed the goals I had set for each of them. This is a great way to end the season."

Gunnar Hays will defend his 2010 state championship

running against some familiar faces. "Gunnar will have his severest test of the year. Last year, second place finisher Troy Weininger of Tribune-Greeley County will be there, and Lukas Koch of Centrailia has the state's best time so far this year. We are hoping that Gunnar's proficiency in the hills will serve him well. It will be a very exciting race."

"Jon has a legitimate chance to medal in the top twenty, and as a team we may not be looking to place in the top 3, but with 12 schools competing I would like to see us finish in the top 6."

"I'd like to thank so many who have supported the team this year, from our administrators, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Gebhard, to the parents, cheerleaders, Booster Club, support staff, the newspapers and radio and my wife and daughter. Thanks to everyone who supports these runners."

The Husky boys will run at 12:30 p.m. on the Wamego Country Club golf course. A sendoff for the team is planned in front of the school on Friday at 1:30 p.m.

High School Sports This Week



Norton
Blue Jays



Northern Valley
Huskies



Logan
Trojans

FOOTBALL:

Norton Blue Jays "Senior Night" vs. Phillipsburg 7 p.m. Thursday in Norton

Northern Valley Huskies vs. Natoma 7 p.m. Thursday in Natoma

Logan Trojans vs. Golden Plains. 7 p.m. Thursday in Logan

VOLLEYBALL:

Logan Lady Trojans in Class 1A, Division II State Tournament

. 4:30, 5:30, 7:30 p.m. Friday; finals Saturday in Hays

CROSS COUNTRY:

Norton Cross Country in Class 3A State Meet Girls 11 a.m., Boys 12:20 p.m.

. Saturday in Rim Rock, 11 miles north of Lawrence

Northern Valley Cross Country in Class 1A State Meet. . 12:30 p.m. Saturday in Wamego