

Blue Jays wrap up season with 12-10 record

By Dick Boyd

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Coach Doug Reusink's Norton Community High School boys basketball team had another successful season in 2011-12 and finished with a 12-10 winning record, very similar to 12-9 marks the past two seasons.

The Blue Jays were very competitive and gave their fans many exciting moments, including two wins over an outstanding Smith Center quintet who was state ranked part of the season. Two of Norton's losses came to state ranked Plainville with both losses coming down to the wire.

Seeded just No.7 in the Mid-Continent League Tournament, Norton surprised both No.2 Smith Center and No. 3 Hill City before losing to Plainville in the championship game to place runner-up.

"It was a good year with a few ups and downs but our boys competed well all season," said coach Reusink. "We are losing a great group of seniors, some who have been a major part of our varsity the last three years. They will definitely be missed.

"We will have some boys returning that gave us good minutes but, with only one returning starter, we have our work cut out for us to be successful next year.

"A big thank you for the Community and Student Body support during the season, especially in the Sub-State Tournament. It was great!"

Norton had four returning starters: Jordan Wahlmeier, 6'3" senior power forward; Dillon McConney, 6' senior guard; Tye Nickell, 5'9" senior point guard and Jacob Brooks, 6'2" junior guard. A fifth letterman was Zach Hartwell, 5'6" senior guard.

Wahlmeier was the second leading returning scorer and rebounder. He averaged 14.7 points per game and 8.5 rebounds per contest the previous season. Brooks came into the season averaging 10 points and 5.3 caroms.

David Stover returned as an assistant coach and Chris Henson was added as an assistant coach. Damien Davis, Travis Cressler, Jesika Smith and Sheridan Delihay were student managers.

The Blue Jays opened the season by competing in the annual Topside Tip-Off Tournament in Goodland, which began on Thursday, Dec. 8. Norton's first game was versus Sharon Springs. The Blue Jays trailed 28-21 at halftime but rallied to win 48-44. Wahlmeier led Norton in scoring with 18 points; Brooks added 10.

In the championship semi-finals, Norton played an outstanding Ottawa five and lost 77-28. Wahlmeier led Norton with 10 points. "It was a good learning experience for our boys," said coach Reusink.

Ottawa won the tournament championship and continued on to win the Class 4A Kansas state championship at the end of the season.

In the third place game, Norton lost to Goodland 49-41 after leading 21-12 at halftime.

McConney scored 15 points and Wahlmeier added 12. "We had a comfortable lead at half but failed to be mentally tough enough to hold off their second half run," said coach Reusink.

On Tuesday, Dec. 13, Norton was scheduled to host Stockton but the game was postponed until Thursday, Jan. 26 due to inclement weather.

Norton traveled to Phillipsburg to play the longtime rival Panthers on Friday, Dec. 16. It was another hard-fought battle between the two teams. Only a few points separated them until Phillipsburg pulled away for a 49-45 win. Wahlmeier led Norton with 20 points and Brooks added 14.

"We played hard but not consistently for the whole game," said coach Reusink.

On Tuesday, Dec. 20, Norton ventured out of state to Cambridge, Neb. and returned with an impressive 60-45 victory. The score was tied 24-all at halftime but Norton pulled away with a good second half. Wahlmeier scored 18 points, Brooks hit 13 and Nickell tallied 12.

Norton began the new year on Friday, Jan. 6 by hosting Osborne in Mid-Continent League play and whipping the Bulldogs 48-22. Defense was the name of the game in the first half which ended with Norton on top 34-4! Wahlmeier and Brooks each scored 15 points.

On Tuesday, Jan. 10, No. 7 seeded Norton began Mid-Continent League Tournament play at No. 2 seeded and No.8 state ranked Smith Center. Someone walking in off the street and not knowing would have reversed the seedings. Shooting more accurately than all season and playing their usual aggressive defense, the Blue Jays jumped out to an early lead and never let up in winning 65-58!

Norton hit 54 percent from the field as a team, outrebounded Smith Center and had more steals. Nickell hit 5 of 7 shots for 71 percent accuracy, including 3 of 5 from beyond the arc for 14 total points. Wahlmeier also ended with 14 and Brooks with 12. "This was our best game offensively and our defense was good, too," said coach Reusink.

On Friday, Jan. 13 in Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays, the Blue Jays played No.3 seed Hill City in the tournament semi-finals and edged them 41-39. Norton held a small lead throughout the game but a three-point basket and two free throws by Hartwell at the end of the game made the difference. Wahlmeier led Norton in scoring with 14 points.

The win over Hill City propelled Norton into Saturday's championship finals game against No.1 seeded, No.4 state ranked and unbeaten Plainville in Gross Memorial Coliseum. Norton played hard but the Cardinals pulled away for a 64-46 win and the Blue Jays had to be content with a runner-up finish after coming in seeded No.7. Wahlmeier led Norton with 16 points; Brooks added 10.

"I'm proud of the way we competed," said coach Reusink. "A couple of times we got close but then they'd go on a run."

As the luck of the schedule would have it, Norton got another chance to upset Plainville when the Blue Jays visited the Cardinals the next Tuesday, Jan. 17 for a regular Mid-Continent League contest.

Knowing from the tournament finals that they could play with Plainville, the Blue Jays traded baskets with them for most of the game before the Cards pulled away on the strength of free throws to win 55-48. The final 7 point winning margin was Plainville's largest lead of the game!

Wahlmeier led Norton with 16 points and Brooks added 14. "I was really proud of the way we played," said coach Reusink. "We competed well and had our opportunities to win. We just couldn't quite finish it."

Norton hosted Trego Community on Friday, Jan. 20 in the NCHS Stull Gym. The Blue Jays held a comfortable lead for three quarters until the Eagles made a run. Norton hit enough free throws to hold them off for a 72-66 win. The Blue Jays hit a whopping 30 of 43 free throws in the game for 70 percent accuracy at the charity stripe!

Norton had four players in double scoring figures. Brooks led with 16 points, followed by Nickell, 12; Hartwell, 11; Wahlmeier, 10; Dalton Miller, 10. The victory extended Norton's record to 6-5.

On Tuesday, Jan. 24, Norton traveled to Goodland and avenged the earlier 49-41 loss in the Topside Tip-Off Tournament with a 73-70 win in a shootout with the Cowboys! The final score was as close as Goodland got after a 10-all first quarter tie. Eight different players scored for Norton, led by Brooks with 19, Wahlmeier with 18 and Hartwell with 13. Norton had a season high 8 blocked shots.

Norton hosted Stockton in the NCHS Stull Gym on Thursday, Jan. 26 in a game postponed due to inclement weather in December. Brooks got the Norton offense going with 15 points in the first quarter as the Blue Jays pulled away for a 48-38 win. Brooks finished with 24 points on net-smoking 70 percent field goal accuracy.

On Tuesday, Jan. 31, Norton hosted Smith Center and won for the second time over the talented Redmen. This time the Blue Jays outscored Smith Center 74-66 to extend their win streak to four straight. Hartwell led Norton in scoring with 5 of 9 treys and 19 points. Brooks added 22 and Wahlmeier 15.

"We played the entire game without losing our intensity," said coach Reusink. "We stayed pretty focused and sharp."

At this point, Norton had won 8 of their last 10 games with the only losses to Plainville, producing an overall record of 9-5.

Norton was scheduled to play at Hill City on Friday, Feb. 3 but the game was postponed until Thursday, Feb. 16 due to inclement weather.

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, Norton traveled to Oberlin for non-league play and outscored the Red Devils 48-42. Wahlmeier smoked the nets with 67 percent accuracy for 18 points. Hartwell



Norton's senior power forward Jordan Wahlmeier leaps in the lane to hit a jump shot over an Atwood defender during the Blue Jays' 65-50 win over Atwood in the NCHS Stull Gym on Friday, Feb. 10. Wahlmeier scored 20 points as Norton extended their season record at that time to 11-5.

-Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

continued to hit treys and ended with 12 points.

Norton extended their record to 11-5 with a 65-50 win over Atwood on Friday, Feb. 10 in the NCHS Stull Gym in Norton. The Blue Jays' offense was helped by hitting 21 of 32 free throws for 66 percent accuracy. Wahlmeier hit 20 points, Nickell 16, Brooks 13 and Hartwell 10.

On Tuesday, Feb. 14, Norton hosted an outstanding Hoxie quintet and suffered a 55-35 loss to end their win streak. The No.9 state ranked Indians were beaten by Norton in every category except field goal shooting. Hoxie hit 50 percent from everywhere on the court while Norton managed just 31 percent. Brooks led Norton with 12 points.

"We did not defend very well; we got beat off the dribble," said coach Reusink. "Offensively, we got good shots early but couldn't get them to go down, then tried to hurry to catch up instead of being patient."

Hoxie continued on to place third in the state of Kansas in Class 1A-I.

The inclement weather make-up game with Hill City was played on Thursday, Feb. 16 in Hill City. There were several ties in the game but Norton led most of the way and played well enough to win until a Ringneck three-point basket with two seconds left produced a 54-52 Hill City league win. Wahlmeier led Norton with 21 points; Brooks added 13. "We competed and played hard but just didn't play very smart," said coach Reusink.

The next night, Norton had to travel to Ellis for a regu-

larly schedule Mid-Continent League game. "We competed but just didn't play our best," coach Reusink said after a 52-45 loss. Brooks scored 19 points but Wahlmeier was injured early in the game and was not a factor.

On Tuesday, Feb. 21, Norton hosted Colby to end the regular season and lost 55-44. Wahlmeier did not play in the game. Brooks led Norton with 13 points and Nickell added 10.

It was "Senior Night" for Norton. Honored along with their parents were senior players Jordan Wahlmeier, Tye Nickell, Zach Hartwell, Alec Gilgenbach, Dillon McConney, Joe LeClair, cheerleader Rhees Carlson, dance team members Brae Bigge, Mariah Farber and Kylie Nuzum.

On Monday, Feb. 27, No.3 seeded Norton hosted No.6 Southwestern Heights in the first round of the Class 3A Sub-State Tournament in the NCHS Stull Gym in Norton. The Blue Jays played another solid game and won 62-52. Wahlmeier returned to the lineup and scored 27 points; Brooks and McConney scored 10 each.

The win qualified Norton for the semi-finals against No.2 seed Holcomb on Thursday, March 1 in host town Scott City. Norton stayed with Holcomb for a half before losing 67-45. Brooks scored 18 points and Wahlmeier added 10.

"We competed and hung in there the first half," said coach Reusink. "The separation came in the second half. I'm proud of our young men and how hard they played."

Coach Reusink thanked the players, fans, assistant coaches

and student managers for all they did for the team this season.

Season statistics

As a team, the Norton boys averaged 51.5 points per game this season, compared to opponents' 53.1 points. The Blue Jays hit 40 percent of their field goal attempts and opponents swished about the same at 41 percent. From the free throw line, the Blue Jays connected on 53 percent while opponents hit 62 percent.

Norton had 143 steals on defense for an average of 6.5 thefts per contest. The Norton defense caused 301 opponent turnovers for 13.6 per contest.

Norton had 204 offensive assists which is 9.2 per game.

The Blue Jays grabbed a total of 593 rebounds during the season for an average of 27 per game.

Wahlmeier was leading scorer with an average of 14.7 points per game, followed by Brooks, 13.4 points. Wahlmeier also led in field goal percentage with 46.1 percent. Andrew Ellis was top three-point shooter at 37.5 percent.

Leading rebounder for the Blue Jays was Wahlmeier with 170 caroms for an average of 8.1 per game. Brooks had 127 boards for 5.8 per contest. McConney followed with 97 rebounds for 4.6 per game.

Wahlmeier blocked 53 shots during the season.

Nickell and Brooks were steals leaders with 30 each, followed by McConney, 29; Wahlmeier, 21.

Assists leader was Nickell with 56, followed by Brooks, 40; McConney, 31; Hartwell, 23; Wahlmeier, 23.

BB Gun

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which finished in 15th place. Team members were: Evan Chambers, 13; Miles Harrington, 11; Nick Davis, 10; Alexzander Olliff, 9; Riley Goss, 9.

The Norton Blue team finished with a shooting total of 1,580, written test of 430 and total score of 2,010.

Coaches for the Blue team were Marty Harrington and Cris Mulder.

Jeff Elliott was assistant coach for the Yellow team.

Valerie Elliott was Norton's statistician for the shoot.

BB Gun shooting consists of very precise accurate marksmanship. Shooters fire their BB gun from a distance of 16 feet, 4.75 inches and the center of the target is the same size as a BB. A perfect shot comes when the BB hits exactly in the center of the target. A bull's eye can be a few millimeters off center but not much.

Individual awards

In addition to all members of the top three teams each receiving a medal, the top three individuals in each shooting position as well as the top three

aggregate shooters also received medals.

One of the two experienced shooters for the Norton Yellow team received individual awards and the other just missed two medals with fourth places.

Erin Archer was runner-up for the aggregate award with a 383 shooting score. She missed the gold medal by two points.

Erin won the gold medal for the top shooting score from the prone position by recording a 99 and was runner-up in kneeling with a 97. Faith Hofaker of Phillips/Rooks shot a 99 in kneeling.

In standing, Erin was third best with a 93. Just missing medals due to fourth places was James Berry. In the aggregate scoring, he had a 374 shooting score and missed a third place on a tiebreaker.

James also placed fourth in prone with a 97, also missing third on a tiebreaker.

Individual scores

Scores of the Norton Yellow team shooters were: Dylan Goss, 87 prone, 83 standing, 87 sitting, 78 kneeling, 335 shooting total, 84 test, 419 total score; Stacie Elliott, 87 prone, 80 standing, 90 sitting, 88 kneeling, 345 shooting total, 92 test, 437 total score; Erin Archer, 99 prone, 93 stand-

ing, 94 sitting, 97 kneeling, 383 shooting total, 96 test, 479 total score; James Berry, 97 prone, 88 standing, 95 sitting, 94 kneeling, 374 shooting total, 98 test, 472 total score; Colton Mulder, 85 prone, 79 standing, 88 sitting, 80 kneeling, 332 shooting total, 92 test, 424 total score; alternate Tia Paxton, 82 prone, 67 standing, 75 sitting, 79 kneeling, 303 shooting total, 62 test, 365 total score.

Norton Blue team shooters' scores were: Miles Harrington, 81 prone, 60 standing, 82 sitting, 75 kneeling, 298 shooting total, 76 test, 374 total score; Alexzander Olliff, 90 prone, 68 standing, 83 sitting, 78 kneeling, 319 shooting total, 76 test, 395 total score; Evan Chambers, 80 prone, 70 standing, 79 sitting, 77 kneeling, 306 shooting total, 96 test, 402 total score; Riley Goss, 81 prone, 72 standing, 82 sitting, 69 kneeling, 304 shooting total, 88 test, 392 total score; Nick Davis, 94 prone, 78 standing, 92 sitting, 89 kneeling, 353 shooting total, 94 test, 447 total score.

Lots of support

Coach Archer said he really appreciated the large crowd of fans who traveled to Alma to support the young Norton County marksmen. Norton had by far the most fans present to boost their

team.

He also thanked the assistant coaches and other volunteers for helping out.

The parents who encourage their children to do their best and practice regularly were also thanked along with the parents who help out during the Monday night practices throughout the year.

Began in October

Norton's preparation for the state shoot began in October when the shooters entered the gun safety program, sponsored by Daisy and the National Rifle Association. After passing the course, the young girls and boys began practicing marksmanship in each of the four positions and studying for the written test of gun safety knowledge. Practices are held every Monday evening and shooters are encouraged to also practice at home.

Coach Archer thanked the Norton Rotary Club for sponsoring the program and Alberta Slaby for providing a place to practice. He also thanked the Norton Telegram for continued news coverage and the entire community for always supporting in any way possible.

Shoot officials included James Eberwein, match director, Dwayne Seamatter, range officer and Dee Eberwein, chief statistical officer.