

Norton wrestling banquet was well attended

By Dick Boyd

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The 2011-12 Norton Community High School Wrestling Banquet was held on Sunday, April 1 in the Junior High Gym to honor the team's accomplishments and say good-bye to the senior class.

Over 120 wrestlers, coaches, family and fans were in attendance.

"To say this is a rebuilding year is a major understatement," said veteran Norton head wrestling coach Bill Johnson at the beginning of the season. "We have grown used to returning six to eight prior state medalists per year over the last decade but this season begins with only one returning state medalist. Junior John Risewick was state runner-up at 112 his sophomore year and was the 103 pound state champion his freshman year."

In addition to Risewick, sophomore Branson Addington qualified for the state tournament at 103 pounds in 2011.

The Blue Jays started the season as the two-time defending Class 3-2-1A state wrestling champions.

"In order to be competitive, we'll have to improve each and every week," said coach Johnson, who was beginning his 23rd year as Norton's head coach. Assisting him again this season were coaches Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Tony Fiscus. Student managers were Juliana Miller and Stephanie Hager. Student managers for the junior varsity were Kenzie Esslinger and Jordyn Gosselin.

Returning lettermen, in addition to Risewick and Addington, were senior R.J. Ellis, three-year letterman; senior Justin Waggoner, two-year letterman; senior Cayleb Campbell, one-year letterman; junior two-year lettermen John Risewick, Eli Bozarth and Jared Bohl and sophomore lettermen Branson Addington and Kolton Harting. Bozarth was injured in practice prior to competition and lost for the season.

Season review

Norton expected to open varsity competition on Saturday, Dec. 3 in the annual Hoxie Invitational but it was canceled due to inclement weather.

The Norton junior varsity intended to open competition the same day in the Alma Invitational, a varsity tournament, but it was postponed until Monday, Dec. 5.

The Blue Jay junior varsity wrestlers were very impressive in the Alma tournament in winning the team championship. Earning individual gold medals were freshmen Caysean Campbell, Dalton Vanover, Jared Tallent and Stewart Whitney.

The junior varsity also saw their second competition of the season on Friday, Dec. 9 in the Southern Valley Tournament in Oxford, Neb., also a varsity tournament. The junior varsity had another good outing, placing third. Caysean Campbell, 106 and Jared Bohl, 160, both won gold medals. Bohl was a varsity wrestler who would miss the varsity tournament on Saturday due to a schedule conflict.

The Saturday tournament was the annual Clay Center Invitational Round Robin Tournament on Dec. 10. Norton finished eighth just 15 points out of fifth place. Risewick wrestled at 126 and repeated as a champion. Other Norton placers were sophomore Alec Hager, third, 120; Harting, third,

182; Waggoner, fourth, 132; Addington, fifth, 106; R.J. Ellis, fifth, 138; sophomore Ethan Ross, sixth, 113.

On Friday, Dec. 16, the second annual Mid-Continent League Dual Tournament was held in Plainville and Norton earned a runner-up team finish behind champion Phillipsburg. Norton's dual scores were: 66-12 over Stockton, 60-14 over Ellis, 35-34 over Smith Center, 84-0 over Osborne and 48-21 loss to Phillipsburg.

The next day, Saturday, Dec. 17, Norton traveled to Goodland to compete in the Holiday Classic, where the Blue Jays finished in fourth place out of 10 quality teams. Norton defeated Cherokee Trail, Colo., 37-33; lost to Goodland, 54-19; outscored Leoti, 48-27; beat Hugoton, 45-36 and lost in the consolation finals 45-26 to Baca County, Colo. Colby defeated Goodland 40-33 for the championship.

The injury-riddled Blue Jays had their first home action of the season on Tuesday, Dec. 20 when they hosted Phillipsburg in a dual in Wilmeth Kirk Memorial Gym in Norton. The Panthers prevailed 61-12. Hampered by injuries, Norton had only 16 of their 31 wrestlers available to wrestle. Risewick, 126; Bohl, 152 and Harting, 195, won matches.

Norton began the new year on Friday, Jan. 6 by edging Silver Lake 36-34 in an exciting dual in Wilmeth Kirk Memorial Gym.

On Saturday, Jan. 7, the Blue Jays hosted the annual J.R. Durham Invitational Tournament in the NCHS Stull Gym. Norton tied for fourth in the always tough tournament. Hoxie edged Cozad, Neb., 135-134 for the team championship. Scott City was third with 104 points and Norton and Oakley each earned 93 points.

Placing runner-up for Norton were Addington, 106; Risewick, 120; Hager, 126 and Cayleb Campbell, 195. Placing fourth for Norton were Waggoner, 126; junior Cody Ellis, 145 and Bohl, 152. Norton had a 20-16 won-loss record and a 10-9 pin ratio.

"For us to tie for fourth in this very competitive tournament is a big improvement from earlier in the year," said Norton coach Johnson. "Our wrestlers are young and inexperienced but are wrestling hard and showing signs of getting better."

On Friday, Jan. 13, the Norton junior varsity wrestlers tied for eighth in the varsity Elm Creek Invitational. They were just 8 points out of fourth place. Harting was the only gold medal winner for Norton.

The biggest test yet for the Norton varsity came on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 13-14 when they entered the 49th annual Tournament of Champions in Newton. Norton was the second smallest school in the tournament and, due to injuries, only nine Blue Jays were able to compete. Despite the lack of numbers, Norton placed 17th out of 25 teams from all classes in the toughest tournament in the state.

Tulsa, Okla., repeated as the tournament champion.

Placing for Norton were Risewick, 120, fourth; Bohl, 152, sixth; Addington, 106, seventh. Hager, 138 and R.J. Ellis, 132, were each one match from a top eight finish. "Our wrestlers were at an extreme disadvantage sometimes in strength and



Norton junior John Risewick received the "Most Outstanding Wrestler" award during the recent Norton Community High School Wrestling Banquet. Risewick, who compiled a 35-5 record this past season, is pictured here en route to a 9-1 major decision over Andrew Beck, Central Burden, to place third in the State Tournament at 120 pounds. He led his team this season in six of 10 statistical categories.

—Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

experience," said coach Johnson. "I was really pleased with the way we competed."

On Thursday, Jan. 19, Norton traveled to Colby for a dual and lost 43-23 to the No. 7 in Class 4A state ranked Eagles. Norton was missing about half of their varsity team due to injuries, sickness and school activities. Norton had three wins: Hager, 126; Bohl, 152 and Harting, 182.

The first Mid-Continent League/Northwest Kansas League Tournament of Champions was held in Smith Center on Saturday, Jan. 28. Norton had only 9 wrestlers out of the 14 weight classes but seven of the nine placed and the Blue Jays finished fifth out of 14 schools.

Addington, 106 and Risewick, 120, won gold medals. Hager was a runner-up at 126. R.J. Ellis, 132, and Bohl, 152, each placed third. Ethan Ross, 113, was fifth and Cody Ellis, 145, finished sixth.

"We took a step up," said coach Johnson. "We had good hustle and determination. Our young wrestlers are learning and doing their best."

Also on Saturday, Jan. 28, the Norton junior varsity competed in the varsity Arapahoe Warrior Invitational with nine wrestlers out of 14 weights and placed sixth. Freshman Jared Tallent was the 126 pound champion. Sophomore Garret Otter was runner-up at 113. Placing third were freshman Dalton Vanover, 120; sophomore Toby Nickell, 132 and freshman Kendall Miller, 138.

Due to inclement weather, the scheduled dual with Smith Center on Friday, Feb. 3 was postponed and the Panther Classic in Phillipsburg on Saturday was canceled.

Norton's dual with Smith Center was combined with a dual at Plainville on Friday, Feb. 10. Norton lost 37-30 to Plainville but defeated Smith Center 35-33. "I was proud of our boys finishing the dual meet season with a victory," said coach Johnson. "Overall, we competed well."

The Norton junior varsity saw their final competition of the year in the Bill Voss Novice Tournament in Colby on Saturday, Feb. 11. Norton earned 11 medals, four of them gold. Winning championships were: freshman Caysean Camp-

bell, 106; freshman Jared Tallent, 126; sophomore Cole Renner, 160 and junior Lucas Engel, 170.

The Class 3-2-1A Regional Wrestling Tournament was held on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 17-18 in Lakin. Known as the toughest regional tournament in the state, six of the top 10 ranked teams were among the 24 teams represented. Two of Norton's wrestlers were state ranked: Risewick, No. 2, 120 and Hager, No. 6, 126.

Norton placed fifth and qualified four wrestlers for the State Tournament. Three Blue Jay wrestlers just missed qualifying by one match.

Addington, 106 and Risewick, 120 were regional champions. Hager placed third and Cole Renner fourth. The regional champion was Oberlin with 134 points, followed by Goodland, 133; Scott City, 130.5; Hoxie, 121; unranked Norton, 114.5.

"Every member of the Norton team wrestled above their seeding," said coach Johnson. "We didn't care about records; we just came in and wrestled to the best of our ability."

The Class 3-2-1A State Tournament was held Thursday and Friday, Feb. 23-24 at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays. Norton's four wrestlers scored 39 points to tie Beloit for 16th place. Scott City was the champion with 93.5 points, followed by Hoisington, 78; Hoxie, 77.5; Goodland, 63; Oberlin, 60.5; Marysville, 58.5; Smith Center, 54.5.

"We finished with two strong state medalists," said coach Johnson. Risewick, 120, placed third and Hager, 126, was fourth. Addington, 106, came within one match of placing and Renner came within two matches of placing. A total of 224 wrestlers from 93 schools competed in the tournament. Norton had a 10-7 won-loss record and 4-2 pin ratio.

"We only brought home two state medals but we are a very young team and a team that fought through a great deal of injuries," said coach Johnson. "I'm confident that we will be much improved next year."

Many individuals honored at Norton wrestling banquet

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Following the potluck meal at the 2011-12 wrestling banquet, coach Bill Johnson and his assistant coaches spoke to the large crowd and presented awards.

The "Most Outstanding Wrestler" award, the most prestigious of all, was awarded to John Risewick. Risewick compiled a 35-5 record this season. He led his team in six of 10 statistical categories. He was the leader in team points with 178, most 2 point near falls with 18, most 3 point near falls with 24, most major decisions with 5, most technical falls with 4 and most falls with 17.

Receiving the "Coach Durham" award was R.J. Ellis. The award is based on hard work, sportsmanship, academics and good citizenship. R.J. also won the senior class academic award with a 3.56 grade point average. He was also honored by the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association with a fourth place and 3.36 grade point average.

Other classroom "Academic Award" winners and their grade point averages were: junior Cody Ellis, 3.58; sophomore Austin Hager, 3.38 and freshmen Derek Rowh and Stewart Whitney, 3.71.

Named the "Most Improved Wrestlers of the Year" were Jared Bohl and Alec Hager.

The "Most Promising Freshman" award was won by Jared Tallent and the "Outstanding Sophomore" award went to Alec Hager.

Jared Tallent and Caysean Campbell both received the "Outstanding JV Wrestler" award. Javen Colip was the winner of the "Most Improved

JV Wrestler" award.

Ethan Ross won the "Underdog Match of the Year" award for his 4-2 win over Earnest Jones of Newton, who was state ranked in Class 5A and a state tournament qualifier.

The "Most Exciting Match" award went to Cody Ellis for his 3-2 win over Kolton Paul, Scott City, in the last eight seconds of their match.

The winner of the "Key Match of the Year" award was Lucas Engel for his 7-5 dual win over Dalton Morgan, Silver Lake.

The "Fan of the Year" award went to Mike Terrell.

Winners of the varsity statistical awards for the season were: John Risewick, most

points, 178; Jared Bohl, most takedowns, 60; Alec Hager, most reversals, 17; John Risewick, most 2 point near falls, 18; John Risewick, most 3 point near falls, 24; Jared Bohl, most decisions, 13; John Ridweick, most major decisions, 5; John Risewick, most technical falls, 4; Cayleb Campbell, fastest fall, 17 seconds.

Receiving junior varsity statistical awards were: Kendall Miller, most points, 105; Jared Tallent, most takedowns, 31; Kendall Miller, most reversals, 21; Jared Tallent, most 2 point near falls, 12; Jared Tallent, most 3 point near falls, 15; Kendall Miller, most decisions, 11; Kendall Miller, most major

decisions, 3; Jared Tallent, most technical falls, 3; Jared Tallent, most falls, 10; Caysean Campbell, fastest fall, 20 seconds.

Coach Johnson had awards for the two seniors, R.J. Ellis and Cayleb Campbell, who completed four years for Norton.

Receiving "Liver Shack Quack" awards were Chad Engel and Drew Knuth. They are among the volunteers who encourage the wrestlers to eat their liver before competition.

Coach Johnson presented an award to Angie Hager for taking action photos of the team members throughout the season.

It was also announced that the Kansas Wrestling Coaches

Association will honor two former outstanding Norton wrestlers, brothers Nathan and Billy Broeckelman. Both are assistant coaches for Class 6A state champion Manhattan High and they were named "Assistant Coaches of the Year".

Also to be honored by the KWCA are John Lippelmann, Scott City, 3-2-1A "Coach of the Year"; Rob Ross, Colby, "Official of the Year"; Rick Williams and Ed Schmitt, Colby, "4A Assistant Coaches of the Year"; Dylan Schumacher, Thomas More Prep-Hays, 3-2-1A "Senior Wrestler of the Year"; Kyle Mines, former St. Francis coach, KWCA Hall of Fame inductee; Conor Nicholl, Nick McQueen, Randy Gonzales, Nick Schvien, Hays Daily News, "Media of the Year".

All of these individuals will be honored at the KWCA Awards

Banquet luncheon on Saturday, Oct. 27 at the Salina Ramada Hotel & Convention Center.

Coach Johnson thanked his wife, his assistant coaches and their wives, school administration and staff, parents, the Norton Telegram, KQNK Radio and fans for their tremendous support of the Norton wrestling program. He especially thanked Vicki Bainter for all the photos of the team she took during the season.

Coach Johnson also handed out some "fun" awards. Winners were: Lucas Engel, second year for "Quiz the Coach" award; Eli Bozarth, "Clockwatcher" award; Christian Boser, "Six Pound Orange" award; Michael Johnson, "Assistant Coach" award; John Risewick, "Porker of the Year" award; Garret Otter, second year for "Leaner of the Year" award.

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