

Norton Thunder loses to Holdrege in two games

By Dick Boyd

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The Norton Thunder 16 and Under girls softball team hosted a tough Holdrege nine on Tuesday evening at Blue Jay Park and lost 13-3 and 17-12.

First game

Holdrege scored four times in the top of the first inning, four times in the second inning, once in the third and four times in the top of the fourth stanza.

Norton's three runs came in the bottom of the fourth and final inning. Tara Brachtenbach walked, Shauna Gibson singled, Kirstin Georgeson walked and Kim Bradshaw and Ashley Hildebrand both singled. Brachtenbach, Gibson and Georgeson all scored.

Norton had six hits, two walks and four strike outs. Gibson, Bradshaw, Hildebrand, Shelby Mulford, Sabre Plante and Kristen Burge each had one hit.

Kirstin Georgeson was the Norton pitcher. She gave up eight hits, walked 12 and struck out five batters.

Second game

Holdrege started the nightcap with five runs in the top of the first inning.

Norton answered with 12 runs in the bottom of the first



The Norton Thunder's Skyler Davis beats a throw from the Holdrege catcher to the pitcher after a passed ball to score during girls softball action at Blue Jay Park on Tuesday evening.

—Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

to take a 12-5 lead. Gibson singled, Georgeson, Skyler Davis, Bradshaw and Bri Karnopp all walked, Hildebrand singled, Mulford walked, Burge singled, Jena Risewick and Brachtenbach both walked to bring the Thunder back to the top of the batting order.

Gibson singled, Georgeson was hit by a pitch and advanced, Davis singled and Bradshaw doubled. All except Mulford scored and Gibson, Georgeson

and Davis scored twice.

Holdrege tallied four times in the top of the second to cut the Norton lead to 12-9. Norton was scoreless in the bottom of the inning and Holdrege added two runs in the top of the third to make it 12-11. Norton failed to score in the bottom of the third and Holdrege scored six more runs in the top of the fourth to lead 17-12.

The Lady Thunder was unable to score in the bottom of

the inning.

Norton had eight hits, 11 walks and four strike outs. Leading hitters for Norton were Shauna Gibson and Ashley Hildebrand, both of whom were 2 for 3 with the bat.

Bri Karnopp pitched three and one-third innings for Norton and Kim Bradshaw relieved her for two-thirds of an inning. Holdrege had 11 hits, nine walks and three strike outs.

Coach's comments

"We knew Holdrege would be a good opponent so we scheduled these games as a warm-up for the state tournament," said Norton head coach Brandon Gay. "They were even better than we expected and provided

us with two very tough games. We didn't play well in the first game and when you have a bad day against a really tough opponent, you get stomped. But, we were really happy with how we played in the second game. Despite the loss, we hit well and played defense well. We gave up a lot of walks and they hit well. I'm not too worried about the walks because this is the first game this season we've had an issue with that. The box score isn't pretty but we feel good about heading into the state tournament after this game. We hit well off one of the best pitchers we've seen this year so, hopefully, we can put some numbers on the scoreboard this

weekend."

Next action

The Norton Thunder will be one of 14 girls softball teams competing in the Girls' 16C Fast Pitch State Championship, in Emporia on Friday-Sunday. They will not play until Saturday at 8 a.m. They will meet the winner of Friday's Moundridge A-Shock versus Emporia Energy game. If they win, they will play at 2:25 p.m. on Saturday and another win would put them in a 6:45 p.m. contest on Saturday. Championship and consolation finals will be played on Sunday.

Thunder defeats Smith Center

By Dick Boyd

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The Norton Thunder Girls 16 and Under softball team hosted Smith Center on Thursday, July 5 and won a double-header from the visitors.

The Thunder had little trouble defeating the Lady Red 13-1 in the opener then had more of a struggle before edging the visitors 8-7 as time ran out in the nightcap.

First game

Norton got off to an impressive start, scoring 10 runs in the bottom of the first inning and almost batting around twice.

Shauna Gibson walked, Kirstin Georgeson singled, Skyler Davis and Kim Bradshaw both walked, Bri Karnopp and Shelby Mulford both singled, Sabre Plante and Jena Risewick both walked. Starting the top of the order again, Gibson walked again, Georgeson walked, Davis doubled, Bradshaw and Mulford both walked. Everyone scored once and Gibson and Georgeson tallied twice.

Smith Center was three up, three down in the top of the second as Norton pitcher Georgeson struck out all three batters.

In the bottom of the second, Norton added three more runs. Tara Brachtenbach walked, Gibson singled, Davis walked and Bradshaw singled. All except Bradshaw scored.

In the top of the third inning, Smith Center scored once to make the final 13-1.

Norton had six hits, 11 walks and one strike out. Gibson, Davis, Bradshaw and Mulford were each 1 for 1 with the bat.

Kirstin Georgeson was the winning pitcher. She allowed no hits, walked two and struck out seven batters.

"Our girls put together a solid, all-around effort in this game," said Norton head coach Brandon Gay. "We drew a lot of walks but we also hit well when we saw strikes. Kirstin pitched great and we played defense for her. Our goal at this point in the season is to start putting everything together and

this game was a sign that we are getting there."

Second game

Smith Center scored one run in the top of the first inning and four in the top of the second to lead 5-0 after two innings. The visitors were scoreless in the top of the third, however, and Norton tallied seven times in the bottom of the inning to take a 7-5 lead.

Ashley Hildebrand and Plante both singled, Risewick, Brachtenbach, Gibson and Georgeson all walked, Davis singled, Bradshaw walked, Karnopp and Mulford both singled and Plante walked during her second time up in the inning.

All except Bradshaw, Karnopp and Mulford scored.

Smith Center added two more runs in the top of the fourth to make it a 7-all contest.

In the bottom of the stanza, Brachtenbach walked, Gibson singled and Georgeson walked and Brachtenbach scored the game winning run!

Norton had six hits, eight walks and one strike out. Gibson, Davis, Karnopp, Mulford and Hildebrand were all 1 for 2 with the bat and Plante was 1 for 1.

Kim Bradshaw was the winning pitcher. She allowed just four hits, walked nine and struck out six batters.

"We were missing four starters so we experimented with some players at new positions in this game," said coach Gay. "Early in the game, we made a few mistakes in the field and, although we hit well, we couldn't find a hole. Smith Center held a 5-0 lead after two innings but we battled back. This is probably a game we would have lost a month ago so I'm proud of how much our girls have matured. We didn't get frustrated but just kept playing hard, the mistakes stopped and our hits started finding holes. When time ran out we had runners on base with no outs and the middle of our order up. We really took control of the game from the second inning on."

K-18 team can't handle Plainville

By Dick Boyd

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The Norton K-18 baseball team traveled to Plainville on Thursday, July 5 and lost two hard-fought games to an excellent Cardinal team.

The score of the first game was 15-14 and the nightcap ended 16-9.

First game

Norton picked up one run in the top of the first when Clint Cole led off with a single and Brant Cox followed with a single. Cole was the only one to score.

Plainville scored four times in the bottom of the first, held Norton scoreless in the top of the second and added three more runs in the bottom of the second to lead 7-1.

The Blue Jays narrowed the Cardinal lead with three runs in the top of the third to make it 7-4. Cole, Cox, Mickey Hahn and Josh VanLaeyes all singled and all but VanLaeyes scored.

Plainville did not score in the bottom of the third and Norton tallied five times in the top of the fourth to lead 9-7. Kobie Unterseher singled, Jace Ruder and Caden Kinderknecht both walked, Cole got on base on a fielder's choice, Cox singled and Mickey Hahn slammed a home run. All except Ruder scored.

Plainville tied the score at 9-all with two more runs in the bottom of the fourth.

Norton continued to play well and broke the tie with five more runs in the top of the fifth to lead 14-9. VanLaeyes and Miller both walked, Unterseher singled, Kinderknecht walked, Cole and Cox both singled. All except Cox scored.

The Cardinals tallied four more runs in the bottom of the fifth to cut the Blue Jay lead to 14-13. Norton did not score in the top of the sixth and Plain-

ville ran two runs across home plate in the bottom of the inning for the win.

Norton had 14 hits in the game, seven walks and nine strike outs.

Leading hitters for the Blue Jays were Brant Cox, 4 for 4; Kobie Unterseher, 3 for 3; Clint Cole, 3 for 4 and Mickey Hahn, 2 for 4 with the bat.

Jacob Green was the losing pitcher. He allowed six hits, walked nine and struck out six batters in three innings. He was relieved by Clint Cole who gave up seven hits, walked five and struck out three batters.

Second game

Norton took an early 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning. Cole, Cox and Hahn singled in succession and Cole and Cox scored.

Plainville was three up, three down in the bottom of the inning. Norton did not score in the top of the second and Plainville scored once in the bottom of the inning to make it 2-1.

The Blue Jays scored six runs in the top of the third to take an 8-1 lead. Cox walked, Hahn belted a home run, Green was hit by a pitch and advanced, VanLaeyes doubled, Miller doubled and Unterseher singled. All of them scored.

Plainville narrowed the Norton lead to 8-5 with four runs in the bottom of the third.

The Blue Jays did not score in the top of the fourth and the Cardinals scored six runs in the bottom of the inning to take an 11-8 lead. Norton scored one run to make it 11-9 in the top of the fifth when Miller and Unterseher both singled, Ruder doubled and Miller scored.

Plainville scored five more runs in the bottom of the fifth to extend their lead to 16-9. Norton was unable to score in the top of the sixth and the score remained

16-9 in favor of the Cardinals.

Norton bats were very active in this game as well with the Blue Jays pounding out 13 hits. Leading hitters were Clint Cole, 3 for 4; Brant Cox, 2 for 3; Kendall Miller, 2 for 3; Kobie Unterseher, 2 for 3 and Mickey Hahn, 2 for 4.

Josh VanLaeyes was the losing pitcher. He allowed eight hits, walked 11 and struck out one batter in four and one-third innings. Clint Cole relieved him and gave up no hits, no walks and had no strike outs.

Coach's comments

"Our trip to Plainville was a bitter disappointment," said Norton head coach Rick Green. "We needed to win both games to move into a tie for the division lead.

"Don't get me wrong, I wasn't upset with our players as they played well enough to win but a bad call cost us the first game and we kind of let the second game slip away. This was understandable after the first game result.

"We came out and scored 14 runs on one of the best pitchers in the league so I was really happy about that.

"The strike zone was tilted one way and we allowed way too many walks. We have to find a way to limit the number of free bases allowed in all aspects of our defense.

"I am confident that we will bounce back and finish strong."

Next action

Norton will play this Saturday and Sunday in the Sub-Regional Tournament in Plainville. The Blue Jays' first game will be versus Russell at 11 a.m. on Saturday at Field One.

The winners of the Norton-Russell and Victoria-Phillipsburg/WaKeeney games will play at 8 p.m. on Saturday.

K-18 baseball team splits with Smith Center

By Dick Boyd

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The Norton K-18 baseball team split a make-up double-header at Smith Center on Sunday. The games were originally scheduled for June 14 but were rained out.

Norton won the first game 5-0 but lost the nightcap 6-2.

First game

In the opener, Norton took a 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning. Brant Cox and Mickey Hahn both singled and Josh VanLaeyes doubled both of them home.

The Blue Jays' other three runs came in the top of the fifth inning. Kendall Miller smashed a home run to start the inning, Jace Ruder walked, Trenton Wright doubled, Layton Miller singled, Cox singled and Clint Cole got on base on an error. Kendall Miller, Ruder and Layton Miller all scored.

Norton had eight hits, two walks and no strike outs. Leading hitters for the Blue Jays

were Cox and Hahn, both 2 for 3 with the bat.

Clint Cole pitched two innings, allowing one hit, walking five and striking out four batters. Jacob Green hurled three innings. He gave up one hit, walked one and struck out seven batters.

"After starting with a 2-0 lead, in the bottom of the third with a runner on first, we had to make some lineup changes to fit our personnel," said Norton head coach Rick Green.

"Jacob Green finished the first game on the mound and did an outstanding job of throwing strikes.

"It was nice to add to the lead with a lead off home run by Kendall Miller. We have now had three different guys hit home runs for us this season. Mickey Hahn and Jacob Green have both homered twice."

Second game

In the nightcap, Smith Center played what

Norton coach Green said was probably their best game of the year.

Norton scored their only two runs in the top of the second stanza. Kendall Miller walked, Wright and Ruder both singled and Miller and Wright both scored.

The Redmen tallied once in the bottom of the first, four times in the bottom of the second and once in the bottom of the fifth.

Norton had just five hits, one each by Cox, Hahn, Green, Wright and Ruder. The Blue Jays had one walk and three strike outs.

Clint Cole pitched the entire game for Norton. He gave up seven hits, walked five and struck out eight batters.

"In the second game, we hit the ball hard but right to their defenders," said coach Green. "To Smith Center's credit, they made the plays.

"Add that to a good pitching performance and that usually leads to a victory. That was probably their best game of the year."

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The Norton American Legion baseball team won two close games with a visiting Osborne nine on Tuesday at John Ryan Field.

Norton outscored the Bulldogs 10-7 in the opener and edged them 6-5 in the nightcap.

First game

Osborne took a 2-0 lead in the top of the first. Norton scored one run in the bottom of the inning when Dalton Miller walked, Tug Keiswetter got on base on an error and Andrew Ellis singled. Miller scored.

Osborne was held scoreless in the top of the second and Norton made a statement in the bottom of the inning, scoring six runs

to lead 7-2. Jordan Wahlmeier walked, Jacob Brooks tripled, John Risewick got on base on an error and Zach Hartwell also got on base on an error. Dakota Dreher walked, Miller singled, Keiswetter doubled, Ellis singled and Trever Lewis singled. Wahlmeier, Brooks, Risewick, Dreher, Miller, and Keiswetter all scored.

Osborne added two runs in the third and two more in the top of the fourth to cut the Norton lead to 7-6. One more run by Osborne in the top of the sixth tied the score at 7-all.

The Blue Jays broke the tie with two runs in the bottom of the sixth. Keiswetter doubled, and Ellis and Wahlmeier both singled. Keiswetter and Ellis tallied

Osborne was held scoreless in the top of the seventh and Norton scored once more to make the final 10-7. Hartwell doubled and Dreher singled him home.

Norton had 11 hits, four walks and eight strike outs. Leading hitters for Norton were Ellis, who was 3 for 4 and Keiswetter, who was 2 for 4 with the bat.

Trey Millan pitched the entire game for Norton. He gave up five hits, walked five and struck out 12 batters.

"We started off really well in the game," said Norton head coach Scott Ellis. "We had a commanding lead and they came back to make it a close game. Then, Trey went to his fastball only and gave up one run after that."

Second game

Norton held a 2-0 lead after two innings. The Blue Jays scored two runs in the bottom of the first inning. Millan tripled

to open the game. Miller and Keiswetter both singled, Ellis got on base on a fielder's choice and Lewis got on base on an error. Millan and Miller both scored.

Osborne took the lead with five runs in the top of the third but Norton scored two more times in the bottom of the inning to make it a 5-4 game. Dreher and Miller both singled and Ellis walked. Dreher and Miller scored.

The Bulldogs were held scoreless the rest of the way. Norton tied it at 5-all with one run in the bottom of the fourth when Hartwell and Drew Schrum both walked and Hartwell scored.

Norton's winning run came in the bottom of the fifth when Dreher bunted and Miller singled and Ellis singled to score Dreher.

The Blue Jays had nine hits, three walks, and one strike out. Leading hitters for Norton were Miller, 3 for 3 and Dreher, 2 for 3.

Tug Keiswetter pitched for Norton. He gave up only two hits, walked five and struck out eight batters.

"Tug pitched well," said coach Ellis. "Our defense was not good, however. We seemed to hit the ball hard all night. Numerous balls were hit to the fence.

"With the score tied in the bottom of the fifth, Dakota laid down a perfect bunt and then Andrew hit a line drive to right center field to bring Dakota home with the winning run.

"These were two good wins against a scrappy team from Osborne."