

Blue Jay wrestling kicks off this Saturday

By Dick Boyd

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Coach Bill Johnson's Norton Community High School wrestling team will open the 2012-13 season this Saturday in the annual Hoxie Invitational, beginning at 9 a.m.

Competing, in addition to Hoxie and Norton, will be teams from Cimarron, Oberlin, Holcomb, Lakin, Oakley, Plainville, Scott City and Trego Community.

After winning the Class 3-2-1A state wrestling championship the previous two years, the Blue Jays were in a re-building mode last season when they finished an uncharacteristic 16th in the state tourney in Hays.

The Norton junior varsity wrestlers will also open the season this Saturday when they compete in the St. Francis Invitational, which begins at 9:30 a.m. Schools represented, in addition to St. Francis and Norton, will be Atwood, Colby, Leoti, Tribune, Goodland, Sterling, Wray, Holyoke and Pine Creek JV.

Prior to the Hoxie and St. Francis competition, ranking and exhibition matches for public viewing were held on Monday evening in the annual Blue & Yellow Classic in the Norton

Junior High Gym.

After winning the state championship three years in a row, Norton missed the championship by one and one-half points to place third in 2006-07, then finished fourth in the state in 2007-08 and third in 2008-09 before winning it all in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Norton had a 9-6 overall record last season. The Blue Jays were 5-3 in Mid-Continent League action and placed runner-up in the league. Norton finished fifth in last year's tough regional tournament.

Coach Johnson is starting his 24th year as the head wrestling coach at Norton. His career record at Norton is 204-54 which is winning 79 percent of all matches.

His assistant coaches again this season are Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Tony Fiscus.

Student managers are: Austin Hager, Jordyn Gosselin, Riekele Green and Lindsay Addington.

Returning lettermen

Norton has 13 returning lettermen, 11 of them starters. There are five senior lettermen: John Risewick, 120, three-year letterman, three-year state placer, 35-5 record last season; Cody Ellis, 145, two-year letterman, 14-21 record last season;

Eli Bozarth, 145, two-year letterman, missed 2012 due to injury, 25-14 record previous season; Jared Bohl, 152, three-year letterman, 30-11 record last season; Lucas Engel, 170, one-year letterman, 6-13 record last season.

Five juniors are returning lettermen. They are: Branson Addington, 103, two-year letterman, two-year state qualifier, 23-11 record last season; Ethan Ross, 113; two-year letterman, 12-19 record last season; Alec Hager, 126, two-year letterman, one-year state placer, 20-10 record last season; Cole Renner, 160, one-year letterman, one-year state qualifier, 9-11 record last season; Kolton Harting, 215, two-year letter winner, 12-14 record last season.

Three sophomores return as lettermen. They are: Caysean Campbell, 103, one-year letterman, 2-3 varsity, 12-5 junior varsity records last season; Jared Tallent, 132, one-year letterman, 4-2 record last season (injured); Kendall Miller, 138, one-year letterman, 4-3 varsity, 23-11 junior varsity records last season.

Top wrestlers

"Senior John Risewick looks to finish his high school career with a fourth state medal," said

coach Johnson.

"Junior Alec Hager made the most of his first year in the varsity line-up last season by placing fourth in the state.

"Junior Branson Addington made it to the state tournament as a freshman and sophomore the past two seasons but has yet to come away with a state medal. He hopes to change that this season.

"Junior Cole Renner was a surprise state qualifier at 160 pounds last season. After going 2-2 at the state tournament, we look for good things out of him.

"Senior Jared Bohl at 152 pounds was winner of 30 matches last season and was fourth in the Newton Tournament of Champions but failed to qualify for the state in a very tough regional tournament. He will be ready to bring home his first state medal.

"Eli Bozarth returns for his senior season after sitting out all of last year with an ACL injury. We expect him to bring home his first state medal."

Top newcomers

Seniors Cody Ellis, 152 and Lucas Engel, 170 and juniors Ethan Ross, 113, and Kolton Harting, 182, all had losing records last season in their first

year in the varsity line-up.

Sophomores Jared Tallent, 132; Caysean Campbell, 106 and Kendall Miller, 152, all spent some time in the line-up and earned varsity letters.

Coach's comments

"Our strength is our 11 returning varsity starters," said coach Johnson. "Most of these were in the varsity line-up for the first time last season but they gained valuable experience and have paid their dues. In 2012-13, we look for them to reap the rewards of their hard work.

"We also have strength in overall numbers. Over 30 athletes have started the season with us. These numbers will give us much depth and competition for the 14 varsity weights."

Squad members

Norton wrestling squad members by class and weight are: Caysean Campbell, 10; Jordan Baker, 10; Skylar Johnson, 9, 106; Branson Addington, 11; Ethan Ross, 11, 113; Garret Otter, 11; Dalton Vanover, 10; Riley Hager, 9; Kyle Bell, 9, 120; Alec Hager, 11; Weston Erbert, 9, 126; John Risewick, 12; Keith Sander, 10; Mike Kason, 9, 132; Toby Nickell, 11; Jared Tallent, 10; Derek Rowh, 10, 138; Eli Bozarth, 12; Gavin Lively, 9, 145; Cody Ellis, 12;

Kendall Miller, 10, 152; Jared Bohl, 12; Travis Cressler, 11, 160; Cole Renner, 11; Chris Chastain, 10; 170; Kolton Harting, 11, 182; Lucas Engel, 12; Chandler Sumner, 9, 195; Andre Valencia, 11, 220; Michael Johnson, 11, 285.

A graduate of Flinthills High School, Rosalia, coach Johnson wrestled for Fort Hays State University. In addition to winning the national championship, he was national runner-up twice and placed fourth once.

He was chosen the "Outstanding Senior Male Athlete" at Fort Hays State in 1989. He also placed tenth in the wrestling Olympic trials at 114.5 pounds in 1988.

Coach Johnson was inducted in the fall of 1999 into the Tiger Sports Hall of Fame at Fort Hays State University. He has also been inducted into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame.

In 2005, he was named the Head Coach of the Year in Kansas by the National High School Wrestling Coaches Association.

He was also one of the 18 coaches and boosters of high school wrestling named "2005 Man-of-the-Year" by Wrestling USA Magazine.

Norton Boys basketball teams are ready to take the court

By Dick Boyd

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Coach Doug Reusink's Norton Community High School boys basketball team will host Goodland this Friday evening in the NCHS Stull Gym in Norton to open the 2012-13 season.

A boys C-team game will be played at 4 p.m. in Wilmeth Kirk Memorial Gym, followed by the boys junior varsity game. The varsity contest will follow the girls C-team, girls junior varsity and girls varsity games in the Stull Gym.

Coach Reusink has welcomed 26 players for this season's Blue Jay basketball squad. Included are returning starter 6'2" senior guard Jacob Brooks and other

returning lettermen 6' senior guard Dalton Miller, 6'2" senior forward Andrew Ellis and 5'10" senior guard Carson McKenna.

Brooks was a second team all-Mid-Continent League player last season. He was second leading scorer for the Blue Jays with a 13.4 points per game average and was second leading rebounder, averaging 5.8 cars per contest.

Other squad members are: John Renner, 6'; Ryan Bainter, 6'; Lane Bigge, 6'; seniors; Marc Miller, 5'11"; Drew Schrum, 5'10"; Tanner Furbush, 6'; Trever Lewis, 5'8"; juniors; Breven Sondergaard, 6'; Derick Campbell, 5'8"; Connor Cox, 6'5"; Connor Griffey, 5'11";

Kobie Unterseher, 5'11"; Noah Johnson, 6'3"; Tyler Kuhn, 6'5"; Jordan Karnopp, 6', sophomores; Quinton Porter, 5'7"; Jeremy Ulmer, 5'3"; Brendon Frack, 5'9"; James King, 5'8"; James Berry, 6'; Adam Baughman, 5'11"; Andrew Bashford, 5'8", freshmen.

David Stover and Chris Henson will be assistant coaches again this season.

Student managers are Jesika Smith and Sheridan Dillehay.

Coach's comments

"With just one starter returning, we will need for some young men to step in and help replace the scorers we lost from last season," said coach Reusink.

"This group will play hard and compete, which is going to help us win games.

"As a whole, the league will be tougher and, on paper, we will be predicted to be in the bottom half but I know our boys have greater expectations."

Coach Reusink stated that Ellis and Stockton will return all five starters from last season, Phillipsburg will have at least three returning starters and Trego will also have three returning starters. He said Plainville, Smith Center and Hill City all have two starters returning and they are very good players.

Veteran head coach Reusink is beginning his 34th year of

coaching high school boys basketball teams and has compiled an overall record of 474 wins and 240 losses for an excellent 66 percent victory record. This is an average of 14.4 wins and 8 losses per season.

Under the tutelage of coach Reusink, the 2002-03 Norton quintet won the Class 3A state basketball championship with a 22-5 record and the 2003-04 squad was also outstanding, compiling an 18-4 record. The 2004-05 Blue Jays were 15-7.

The Norton boys' 2005-06 record was 12-8 and they finished second in the Mid-Continent League tournament. The 2006-07 squad was 14-7, tied for second in the league and placed sec-

ond in the league tournament. The 2007-08 Blue Jays went 15-7, placed third in the league and third in the league tournament but left Norton without any returning starters and only three lettermen for 2008-09.

The next two seasons, Norton compiled identical 12-9 records before finishing 12-10 last season when they defeated a state ranked team, lost some close games to state ranked teams and finished runner-up in the Mid-Continent League tournament.

Coach Reusink's overall record in Norton is 260 wins and 194 losses.

Lady Jays start basketball season this Friday at home

By Dick Boyd

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For the first time in 30 years, Kevin Jilka will not be guiding the Norton Community High School girls basketball team when they host Goodland this Friday evening in the NCHS Stull Gym to begin the 2012-13 season.

The girls will play a two-quarters C-team game, beginning at 4 p.m., followed by the junior varsity and varsity contests. All three games will be in the Stull Gym.

Coach Jilka produced many outstanding Lady Blue Jay teams during his tenure. During the 30 years, his Norton teams won 489 games and lost 185 for a winning percentage of 73 percent. His teams averaged winning 16.3 games per season and losing just 6.2.

The new head coach is George Rossi, who is not a stranger to Norton athletics. He was coach Jilka's assistant coach the past 22 years. Before that, he was the junior high assistant coach for Joan Bolt for three years. He is also the cross country head coach and has been assistant junior high track coach for the past 24 years.

Assistant coaches this year will be Joan Bolt and Cheri Brooks. Joan has also been an assistant coach quite a few years in high school. Cheri is one of

the best players in Norton prep history and played four years for the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

"When coach Jilka told me he was retiring from coaching basketball, I threw my hat in the ring," said coach Rossi. "I am the head coach but I can't replace coach Jilka. He taught me almost everything that I know about basketball and I and our girls all hope we can make him proud."

Coach Rossi has 22 players on this year's team: three seniors, seven juniors, two sophomores and ten freshmen. Eight of them are returning letter winners: Tawni Griffey, 5'6"; Alec Melvin, 5'7"; Kamilla Jones, 5'8"; seniors; Marisa Maddy, 5'2"; Katelyn Engelbert, 5'10"; Darcy Bainter, 5'7"; Bailey Ambrosier, 5'9" and Johnnye Ruder, 5'5", juniors.

Returning starters are Griffey, Jones and Engelbert. Melvin and Ambrosier saw quite a bit of varsity time last year. Probable starters this season will be Griffey, Melvin, Jones, Ambrosier and Engelbert. Top reserves will be Ruder, Bainter and sophomore Katie Bohl, 5'11".

Marisa Maddy is sidelined for the first part of the season with an ankle injury. Freshmen Peyton Renner, 5'6" and Hanna Brooks, 5'6", will round out the varsity squad to begin the season.

Other squad members are: Sophie Manegold, 5'8"; Cristine Nelson, 5'8"; juniors; Sierra Griffith, 5'7", sophomore; Molly Maddy, 5'2"; Kylie Perez, 5'; Casey Ambrosier, 5'9"; Alexus Hartwell, 5'1"; Carmen Ball, 5'2"; Lexi Voss, 5'6"; Morgan Olliff, 5'6"; Lauren Mordecai, 5'11", freshmen.

Raenee Patterson will be the student manager.

Senior point guard Tawni Griffey is a returning all-Mid-Continent League player. She received honorable mention as a junior and was a second team all league selection as a sophomore. Tawni has been Norton's leading scorer the past two years, averaging 12.5 points per game last season. She was also the team's leading three-point and free throw shooter.

Coach's comments

"Our girls have been wonderful to work with so far this season," said coach Rossi. "They are willing to put in the work, sweat and long hours to wear the blue and yellow.

"This is a new experience for all of us and we have been working together very well. I am very happy with the work ethic of this group and how well they work together.

"The league should be good again with Smith Center probably the best team. Other good teams will be Osborne, Ellis and Phillipsburg."

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**Come out and cheer on our local teams this season!
Good Luck to the
Blue Jay Wrestling and Basketball Teams!**