

# Football banquet honors Norton Blue Jays

By DICK BOYD

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

The 2013 Norton Community High School football team was honored by parents and fans for their outstanding season during the annual banquet sponsored by the Blue Jay Booster Club on Sunday, Dec. 15 in the high school cafeteria.

Lucas Melvin was the head coach for the eighth year in a row and his Blue Jay squad compiled a 5-4 record with their only losses coming to state playoff teams.

Norton just missed the playoffs with a four-point loss to long time rival Phillipsburg.

## Smith Center

Norton opened the season at Smith Center on Friday, Sept. 6. The very inexperienced Blue Jay team took on a senior dominated Redmen eleven and grew up a lot in the second half of a 34-13 Mid-Continent League loss. Norton trailed 22-0 at halftime but outscored the Redmen 13-12 in the second half, had double the rushing yardage of Smith Center and was the better team had they not suffered four costly fumbles after intermission.

Norton had only three returning starters from last year's 7-3 squad. "We did not make any changes at halftime," said coach Melvin. "We just reminded our players to trust what we'd been telling them and do it."

"I was proud of the way we played in the second half. Our defense held them twice inside the 20-yard line and we moved the ball on offense."

Norton averaged 4.45 yards per attempt on 178 rushing yards. Senior fullback Toby Nickell led rushing with 68 yards on 13 carries for a 5.3 yard average. Freshman tackle Jacob Green was leading tackler in his first high school game with 10 total stops.

## Goodland

Norton hosted Goodland, another experienced team, on Friday, Sept. 13 at Travis Field. Sophomore quarterback Trey Teeter, who led the northwest Kansas passing game in all classes all season, was very successful. He completed 25 of 39 passes with no interceptions in a 30-7 win. Goodland totaled 375 yards of offense to 76 yards for the Blue Jays.

Linebacker Nickell and sophomore safety Gavin Lively were leading tacklers with 9 each. Senior tailback Tanner Furbush led rushing with 47 yards on 19 carries.

"Our pass rush was not good enough and our defensive backs were also lacking," said coach Melvin.

"We need to play harder and make fewer mistakes."

## Plainville

Norton traveled to Plainville for a return to Mid-Continent League action on Friday, Sept. 20 and the result was a big positive! With both offense and defense clicking on all cylinders, Norton had their best performance of the young season with an impressive 28-8 win!

"Our offensive schemes fit their defensive schemes and our defense, except for their first possession, shut them out!"

The Blue Jays totaled 384 yards rushing for over 7 yards per carry! Plainville mustered only 132 yards rushing for a 3 yard average.

Furbush led the offensive assault with 198 yards on 22 carries for a 9 yard average! Nickell gained 97 yards on 7 attempts for a 13.9 yard average. Junior running back Jared Tallent rushed



Norton senior tailback Tanner Furbush receives great blocks from senior center Cole Renner, No. 54 and junior tackle Breven Sondergaard, No. 52, and eludes a possible tackler as he picks up much needed yardage during the Blue Jays' District loss to No.1 state ranked Beloit, who was undefeated at the time.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

10 times for 76 yards and a 7.6 yard average. Lively was leading tackler with 12 stops.

## Oberlin

Norton hosted longtime rival Oberlin on Friday, Sept. 27 at Travis Field in what was to be the final game between the two since the Red Devils will play eight-man football next season.

It took over half the game to take the lead but the final gun found Norton ahead of a determined Oberlin squad 21-13. The Blue Jays trailed 7-0 after one quarter and the score was tied 7-all at halftime. Norton edged ahead 14-13 in the third quarter. A 73-yard touchdown run by sophomore quarterback Jordan Dole gave Norton some insurance points in the final period. Dole was leading rusher, thanks to the long run. Nickell was leading tackler with 9 total stops.

"I'm proud of how hard we fought to get the win," said coach Melvin. "We did a better job of tackling and covering passes in the second half."

## Ellis

On Friday, Oct. 4, Norton fans and alumni were treated to a great train wreck when the Blue Jays derailed the Ellis Railroaders 61-13 in Mid-Continent League action during Homecoming Week!

After a 6-all first quarter, Norton scored four touchdowns and Ellis one in the second quarter to extend Norton's lead to 34-13. Three more Norton touchdowns in the first 1:23 of the third quarter lengthened the Norton lead to 54-13. The Norton reserves played the rest of the way.

The Blue Jays rolled up 330 yards of total offense in the win.

"We executed better both offensively and defensively and played with more energy than usual," said coach Melvin.

Dole was leading rusher with 88 yards on 8 carries for an 11 yard average. Furbush and sophomore linebacker Riley Hager led Norton in tackles with 7 each.

## Colby

Norton traveled to Colby for a non-conference

game on Friday, Oct. 11. The Eagles scored twice in the last 35 seconds of the first half to take a 22-10 halftime advantage. The Blue Jays were challenged by the coaches at intermission and the second half was an entirely different ball game. Norton dominated, shutting out Colby to win 37-22!

Norton ended with 385 total offensive yards!

Furbush ran for 151 yards on 26 carries for a 5.8 yard average; Dole gained 147 yards on 17 attempts for an 8.6 yard average. Lively was leading tackler with 12 total stops.

## Minneapolis

Norton took their four-game winning streak into District play and the Blue Jays hosted Minneapolis on Friday, Oct. 18.

"We're in the toughest 3A district in the state," said coach Melvin prior to the game. "Minneapolis is 3-3 but their losses were all to teams with a 16-2 record."

With members of Norton's 1983 state runner-up team watching with approval, Norton defeated Minneapolis 41-7!

Norton's defense shut down the Lions' running game, allowing only 60 yards while the offensive line opened holes for 422 yards rushing. Furbush was leading rusher again, this time with 261 yards on 26 carries for a 10 yard average! Nickell gained 107 yards on 12 carries for an 8.9 yard average. Lively was tackling leader with 9 total stops.

## Beloit

Sporting a 5-2 record, Norton played their second district contest at undefeated and No.1 state ranked Beloit on Friday, Oct. 25.

Beloit had a very physical, fast, strong team and took advantage from the start. "Execution and turnovers killed us," said coach Melvin. "The first quarter was really bad. We fumbled the ball away three times and allowed 30 points." Norton lost 46-7 but held Beloit scoreless in the second quarter, which ended with a 30-0 score in the home team's favor. The Trojans scored two more touch-

downs in the third quarter.

Norton's only touchdown came in the fourth quarter when Beloit was also scoreless.

"I was proud of our defense the last three quarters, only allowing them to score two touchdowns during that time," said coach Melvin, looking at the positive side.

## Phillipsburg

Norton's third and final district contest was on Thursday, Oct. 31 with Phillipsburg at Travis Field in Norton.

The game was as heated as ever as the two longtime rivals met to determine who would advance in the playoffs.

It was a very, very close game with Norton leading in total offense, yards per play, first downs and fewer punts but the Panthers ending with more points in a 20-16 victory to end the Blue Jays' season with a 5-4 record.

"This game not only meant a place in the playoffs but also a Mid-Continent League championship," said coach Melvin. "We came out and played well. We dominated the first quarter and really played well throughout, had a goal line stand near the end of the game but three turnovers and not catching any breaks hurt our chances to win at the end."

## Coach's comments

"Our seniors did a great job during the season leading us through growing pains and righting the ship," said coach Melvin. "Think about this, all of our losses were to teams that were not only in the playoffs but three of them won at least one game in the playoffs."

"Our junior varsity played hard and improved during the season. Several junior varsity players were on varsity on special teams and showed us a lot of potential."

He thanked the parents of the graduating seniors and said they will always be part of the Blue Jay football family.

Coach Melvin called each player from freshman to senior forward and made positive comments on each. He focused especially on the senior members of the team.

Seniors members of this year's team were: Trever Lewis, Austin Hager, Cole Renner, Toby Nickell, Drew Schrum, Tanner Furbush, Kolton Harting, Travis Cressler, Ethan Ross, Michael Johnson and Cody Temmel.

Coach Melvin also introduced his assistant coaches: Tony Fiscus, Jeremy Hawks, Ben Gordon and Kevin Jilka. They received a thank you round of applause.

## Thanks supporters

For all their support during the season, coach Melvin thanked his wife and family; all the players; managers Jarret Wente, Andrew Bashford, Trenton Sprague and Cruz Leon; school faculty and administration; the cheerleaders; the grounds keepers and chain gang; Rick Green, statistics; Dorla Jones, coordinating; Don Mordecai and the NCHS marching band; Blue Jay Booster Club; field painters; parents and families of the players; news media Dick Boyd of the Norton Telegram and KQNK Radio Station and the entire community for contributing to the successful season.

Coach Melvin presented a miniature Norton football helmet to each of the senior players.

The senior players presented a framed picture of themselves to coach Melvin and the assistant coaches.

## Statistics from an excellent season

By DICK BOYD

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Norton Community High School head football coach Lucas Melvin has released the statistics for the Blue Jays' excellent 5-4 season.

As a team, Norton rushed for 2,135 yards on 403 carries for an excellent average of 5.3 yards per carry. The Jays also passed for 496 yards for a grand total of 2,631 yards of offense!

Senior tailback Tanner Furbush was leading individual rusher for Norton, gaining 932 yards on 159 carries for an average of 5.9 yards per carry. He averaged 103.6 yards per game and rushed for 14 touchdowns.

Other major ball carriers were senior fullback Toby Nickell with 89 carries for 469 yards for a 5.27 yards per carry average and 3 touchdowns and sophomore quarterback Jordan Dole with 83 carries for 467 yards, a 5.63 average per carry, 9 rushing touchdowns and 4 passing touchdowns.

Dole also completed 25 of 66 pass attempts for 360 yards.

Furbush was also leading pass receiver with 11 catches for 113 yards and a 10.27 yard average. Nickell grabbed 6 receptions for 56 yards and a 9.33 yard average.

Furbush also led the team in all-purpose yards. In addition to 932 yards rushing and 113 yards in pass receptions, he had 392

yards in kick returns and 23 in punt returns for a total of 1,460 all-purpose yards and 162.2 all-purpose yards per game.

Nickell was second best in all-purpose yards with 469 rushing, 56 receiving, 7 yards on kick returns for a total of 532 yards and 59.1 per contest.

Third high in all-purpose yards was sophomore Gavin Lively. He had 17 rushing yards, 80 receiving, 97 on kick returns and 166 on punt returns for a total of 360 yards and a 40 yards per game average.

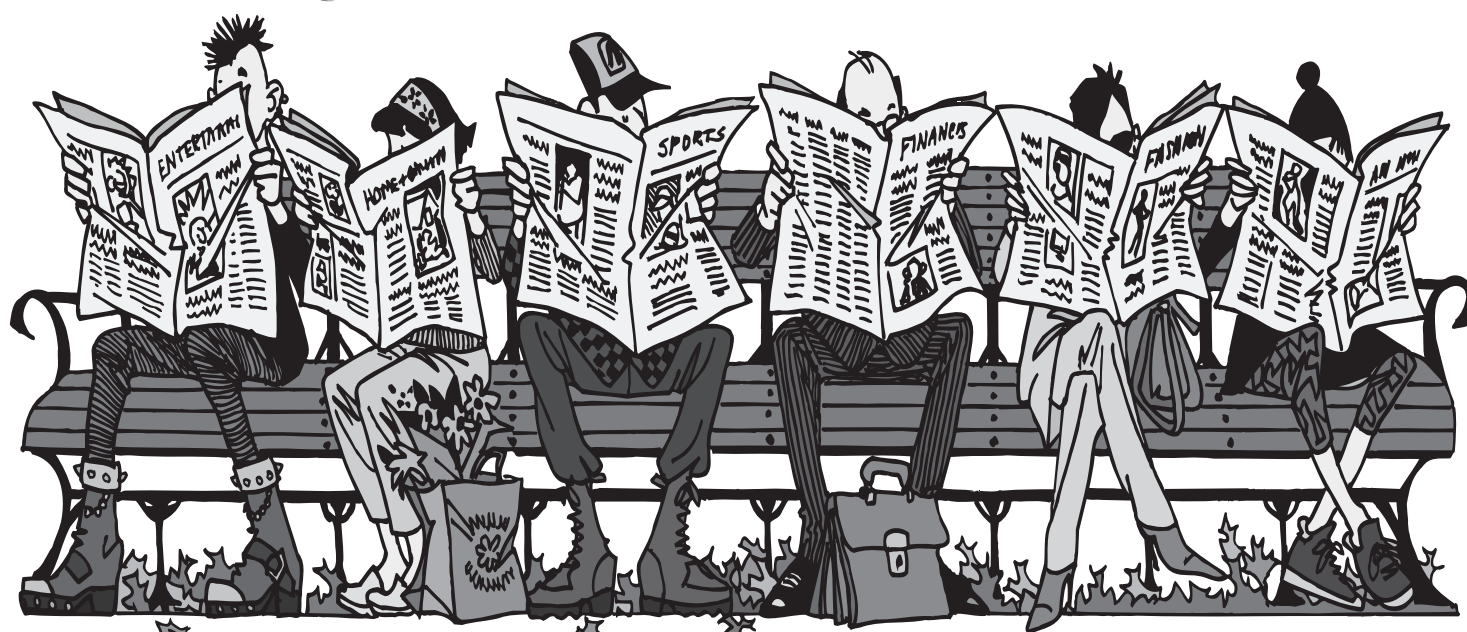
Senior Austin Hager was the main kicker for the team. He kicked off 62 times for 2,105 yards and a 34 yard average. He punted 7 times for 250 yards and a 36 yard average.

Hager also successfully kicked 23 of 28 extra point attempts for an average of 82 percent. Hager was also good on 2 of 3 field goal tries for 67 percent.

Nickell punted the pigskin 13 times for 356 yards and a 27 yard average.

Gavin Lively was leading tackler for the season with 69 total stops, followed by Tanner Furbush, 51; Toby Nickell, 51; Jared Tallent, 43; Cole Renner, 42; Stewart Whitney, 42; Jordan Dole, 40; Trever Lewis, 38; Austin Hager, 36; Christian Boser, 32; Mickey Hahn, 31; Jacob Green, 29; Breven Sondergaard, 28; Kobie Unterseher, 26;

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