

Fans honor State Champion Norton Wrestlers

The 2013-14 Class 3-2-1A State and Regional Wrestling championship team from Norton Community High School was honored during a recognition ceremony in Wilmeth Kirk Memorial Gym on Wednesday, March 5.

The ten Blue Jay wrestlers who competed in the State Tournament at Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays along with their managers, assistant coaches and head coach were called onto the court where they received a loud ovation from Norton fans.

Present were wrestlers Skylar Johnson, Branson Addington, Toby Nickell, Alec Hager, Jared Tallent, Mike Kasson, Kendall Miller, Cole Renner, Kolton Harting and Jacob Green.

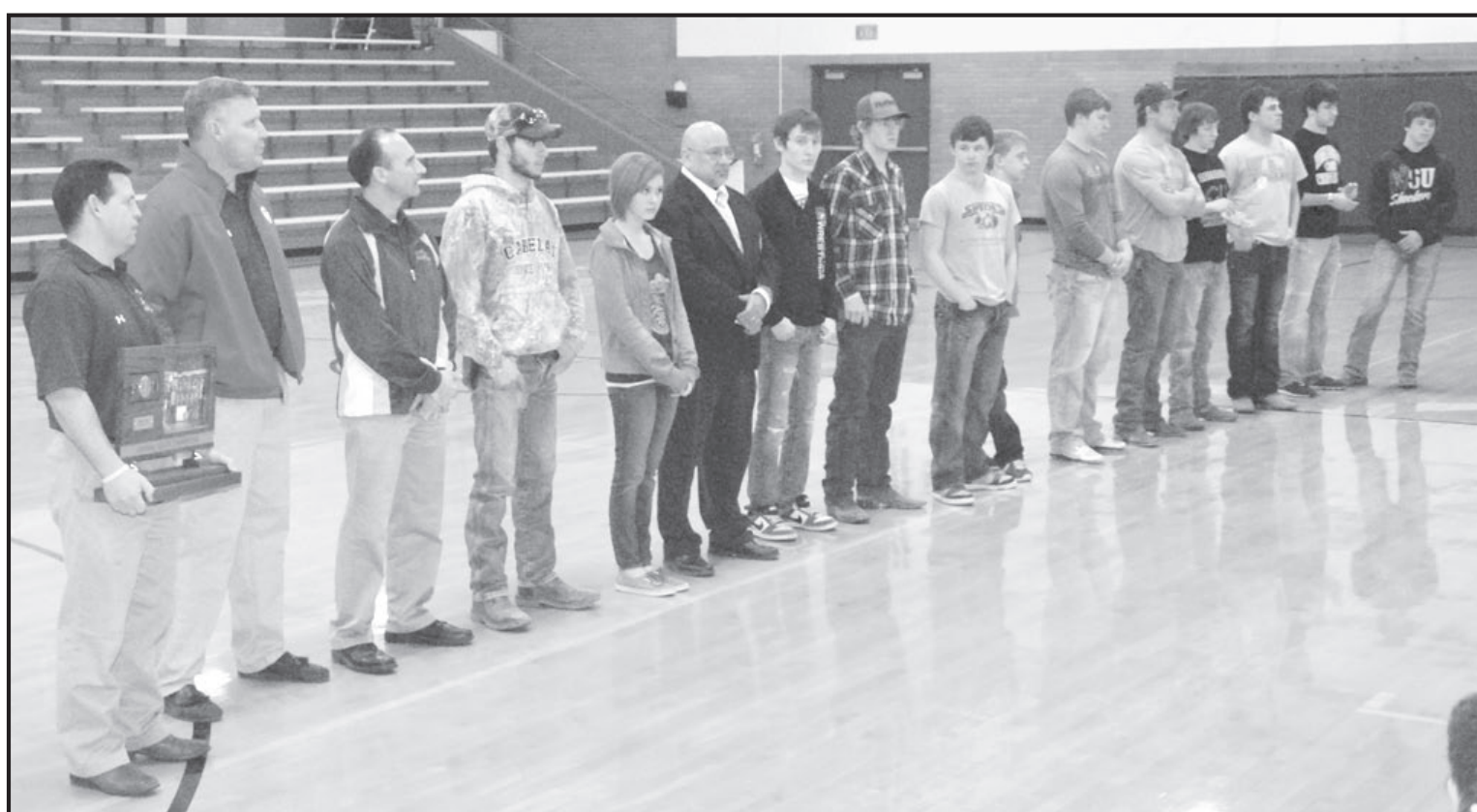
Also present were head coach Bill Johnson, assistant coaches Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Tony Fiscus, managers Jordyn Gosselin and Austin Hager along with principal Rudy Perez. Manager Lindsay Addington was unable to be present.

After introductions, the NCHS Wrestling Team presented the handsome State Championship trophy to principal Perez for permanent display in the high school.

Norton USD 211 superintendent Greg Mann spoke first to the large crowd.

"Over the weekend, the Blue Jay Wrestling Team again dominated the competition at the 3-2-1A State Wrestling Tournament in winning the State Championship," said Mann. "They finished ahead of the second place team Rossville by 46 points."

"The Blue Jays are also the 2014 Regional Champions. At the regional tournament in Wakeeney, Norton qualified ten



The Norton Community High School wrestlers, coaches, managers and principal listen while superintendent Greg Mann praises the team over the loud speaker system during their recognition ceremony in Wilmeth Kirk Memorial Gym on March 5. Pictured are, from left, head coach Bill Johnson (holding the state championship trophy), assistant coach Doug Ray, assistant coach Shane Miller, manager Austin Hager, manager Jordyn Gosselin, principal Rudy Perez (who received the trophy for permanent display at the high school), Branson Addington, Alec Hager, Jared Tallent, Skylar Johnson, Jacob Green, Kolton Harting, Toby Nickell, Cole Renner, Kendall Miller and Mike Kasson.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

wrestlers for the State Tournament. The regional championship was the ninth in the past ten years for Norton and the state championship is the Blue Jays' seventh since 2004.

"In what was truly a team effort, Norton had only one individual state champion but all ten wrestlers won at least one state match and seven of the ten qualifiers brought home state medals.

"At this time, we would like to recognize those ten wrestlers,

the managers and their coaches.

"At 152 pounds, sophomore Mike Kasson made his first appearance in the State Tournament. Mike went 1-2 and finished the season with a 30-12 record.

"Junior Kendall Miller's first trip to the State Tournament at 160 pounds ended with a 2-2 record and a 33-9 season record.

"Wrestling at 170 pounds, senior Cole Renner made his second trip to the State Tournament and went 2-2. Cole had a 35-12

season record.

"Bringing home sixth place medals in their first and only State Tournament appearance were seniors Toby Nickell and Kolton Harting. Toby wrestled at 132 pounds and had a season record of 14-12. Kolton was in the 195 pound class and his season record was 14-8.

"Earning third place medals were freshman Jacob Green, sophomore Skylar Johnson and junior Jared Tallent. Jacob wrestled at 220 pounds and had

a 34-8 season record. At 106 pounds, Skylar qualified for his first State Tournament and had a season record of 29-3. Jared made his second trip to the State Tournament and earned his second state medal. His season record was 40-9.

"Earning a second place state medal was senior Alec Hager at 138 pounds. Alec lost the championship match to the wrestler who became only the sixth four time state champion in 3-2-1A. This was Alec's third State

Tournament and third state medal. He finished the season with a 41-6 record.

"Senior Branson Addington was the single Blue Jay State Champion. Wrestling at 113 pounds, Branson was in his fourth State Tournament, having placed at 120 pounds last year. In the State Championship match, Branson defeated the No.1 ranked wrestler who was, up to that time, undefeated! Branson finished the season with a record of 32-6.

"A Bill Johnson coached wrestling team first won a state trophy in 1996. In the 17 seasons since then, his Blue Jays have brought home 14 state trophies, including the seven state championships."

Coach Johnson also spoke to the large crowd.

First, he thanked the wrestlers, coaches, the administration, parents and the community for another great season.

"Whether a Norton wrestler wins or loses, it's the effort that he puts in that counts," said Bill. "But, it takes the will and determination of a whole team to win a championship. The last two weeks, this team came together and rose to the highest level. These guys really cowboyyed up."

Coach Johnson also thanked former Norton wrestlers who visited with members of this year's team prior to the State Tournament.

Before dismissing, coach Johnson invited the rest of the Norton Wrestling Team out front and they received a round of applause for helping the team win the state title.



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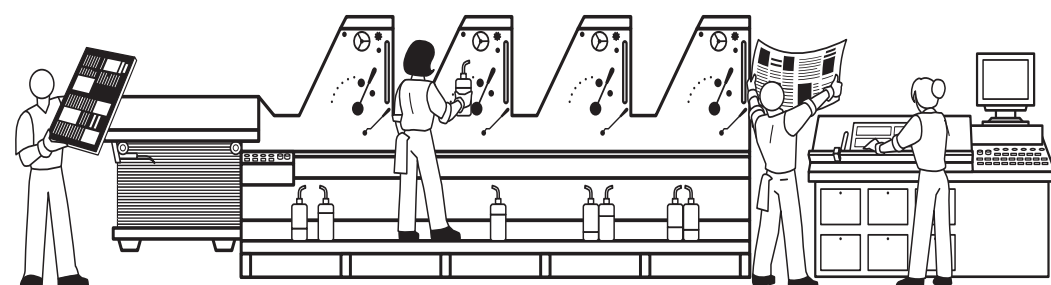
Darren McMullen of Norton was honored on Saturday, March 1 prior to the championship finals of the Class 3-2-1A State Wrestling Tournament in Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays. Darren received an "Outstanding Service Award" plaque from the Kansas State High School Activities Association in honor of his 20 years as a high school wrestling official. The plaque was awarded to him in front of the large crowd by David Cherry, Assistant Executive Director of the KSHSAA. Engraved on the plaque are the following words of congratulations from Gary Musselman, KSHSAA Executive Director: "In recognition and appreciation of your dedicated service to the KSHSAA and its member schools while serving 20 years as an active official." Darren is pictured here with Mr. Cherry and his handsome plaque award.

- Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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