

Wrestlers and coaches honored at Banquet

By DICK BOYD

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The 2013-14 state champion Norton Community High School Wrestling Team and coaches were honored during the annual Wrestling Banquet on Sunday, April 13 in the Norton junior high gym.

A very large crowd of wrestlers, coaches, family and fans were in attendance.

This was Bill Johnson's 25th year as the head wrestling coach at Norton. He started the season with a 79 percent winning percentage in Norton.

Norton won the state championship for the fourth time in five years and seventh time under coach Johnson.

Assistant coaches again this season were Doug Ray, Shane Miller and Tony Fiscus.

Student managers were Macayla Kent, Lindsay Addington, Austin Hager, and Jordyn Gosselin.

Norton had 10 returning lettermen: sophomore Gavin Lively, junior Caysean Campbell, 2012-13 state runner-up; junior Jared Tallent, 2012-13 sixth in state; junior Kendall Miller; senior Ethan Ross, 2012-13 fifth in state; senior Branson Addington, 2012-13 fourth in state; senior Alec Hager, 2012-13 state runner-up, 2011-12 fourth in state; senior Cole Renner; senior Kolton Harting and senior Michael Johnson.

"We have 30 wrestlers on the team which gives us much depth and competition for the 14 varsity spots," said coach Johnson.

Norton opened the season with a dual in Norton versus Phillipsburg on Friday, Dec. 6. The Blue Jays got the new season off to a great start with a 54-18 victory! Norton won seven matches wrestled and three by forfeit.

On Saturday, Dec. 7, Norton successfully defended their championship in the Hoxie Invitational by scoring 189.5 points. Oakley was second with 114.5, followed by Plainville, 85.5; Cimarron, 70; Scott City, 63; Hoxie, 56; Lakin, 22.

The Blue Jays had seven champions: Caysean Campbell, 106; Branson Addington, 113; Alec Hager, 132; Gavin Lively, 152; Kendall Miller, 160; Cole Renner, 182; Jacob Green, 220.

Also on Saturday, Dec. 7, the Norton junior varsity wrestlers competed in the varsity

St. Francis Tournament. They placed three wrestlers and finished seventh as a team. Skylar Johnson, 106, was a champion; Kade Unterseher, 113, was a runner-up; Mike Kasson, 152, placed fourth.

The junior varsity wrestlers competed in the varsity Southern Valley Tournament on Friday, Dec. 13 and placed third. Skylar Johnson, 106, was first; followed by Ethan Ross, 120, runner-up; Kade Unterseher, 113, runner-up; Mike Kasson, 145, runner-up; Dalton Vanover, 138, fifth; freshman Trenton Wright, 132, fifth; sophomore Riley Hager, 132, third; junior Derek Rowh, 138, fourth; freshman Layton Miller, 152, fifth; sophomore Weston Erbert, 152, fourth; sophomore Jordan Dole, 195, third and junior Lance Armbrister, 285, fifth.

The Norton varsity returned to action on Saturday, Dec. 14 in the tough Clay Center Invitational and placed third. Holton, ranked No.1 in the state in Class 4A, was the champion and Garden City, ranked No.1 in Class 6A, placed runner-up. Norton was ranked No.1 in the state in Class 3-2-1A.

Norton individual champions were Tallent, 145; Renner, 170 and Green, 220. Campbell, 106 and Addington, 113, placed runner-up and Nickell, 132 and Hager, 138, were each third.

On Friday, Dec. 20, the Mid-Continent League Round Robin Tournament was held in the Stull Gym in Norton. The Blue Jays successfully defended their title from the previous season. Norton scored 247 points, followed by Phillipsburg, 217; Oakley, 111; Ellis, 101; Plainville, 86; Thomas More Prep-Hays, 65; Stockton, 39; Hill City, 33; Smith Center, 5.

Norton had six champions: Campbell, 106; Addington, 113; Hager, 138; Kasson, 152; Kendall Miller, 160 and Dole, 195. Placing runner-up were Tallent, 145; Renner, 170; Green, 220. Michael Johnson, 285, placed third.

"Since we had some injuries and were wrestling with several backups, I feel we did extremely well," said coach Johnson.

The Norton junior varsity competed in the varsity Fran Jorgensen Wrestling Invitational in Cambridge on Saturday, Dec. 21 and placed ninth out of 19 teams. Norton placings were: Johnson, 106, first; Unterseher, 113, runner-up; Er-

bert, 145, third; Vanover, 138, fourth; Rowh, 138, sixth.

Also on Saturday, Dec. 21, with little rest from the league tournament the night before, the Norton varsity entered the grueling Holiday Classic in Goodland. The tournament consists of team duals. Norton defeated Scott City, 67-6; Leoti, 69-6; lost to Colby, 37-34; and outscored Baca County, 58-12. In the championship finals, Norton defeated Hugoton 53-26 to place third and Colby beat Goodland 33-30 to finish first.

Ethan Ross won the award for the fastest pin. He made a Hugoton wrestler count the lights in 14 seconds!

Norton opened the new year on Friday, Jan. 10 by hosting Ulysses in a dual. Norton won six matches wrestled and lost two that were wrestled in winning 50-15.

The dual win on Friday was a nice warmup for the annual J.R. Durham Wrestling Tournament held the next day in the Stull Gym in Norton. Garden City, the defending Class 6A state champion, dominated, winning the championship with 187 points. Norton, who had won the tournament nine of the last 10 years, placed runner-up with 149.5 points. Oakley was third with 87, followed by Cozad, 85; Beloit, 75; McCook, 74; Smith Center, 70; Ulysses, 67.5; Atwood, 60.5.

Norton had no champions but the following runners-up: Campbell, 106; Unterseher, 113; Ross, 120; Tallent, 145; Kendall Miller, 160. Skylar Johnson placed third at 106 along with Hager, 138; Renner, 170; Green, 220. Kasson finished fourth at 152 and Dole was fifth at 195.

The Blue Jays competed in their toughest tournament of the season, the prestigious 51st Tournament of Champions in Newton, on Friday, Jan. 17 and Saturday, Jan. 18. Norton was the smallest school to compete this year and is the smallest to have ever won the tournament. Taking 11 wrestlers, Norton finished 15th out of 27 teams. Grand Island, Neb., repeated as the team champion. Manhattan edged Garden City for runner-up and Ark City placed fourth. Five Norton wrestlers placed: Tallent, 145, third; Hager, 138, sixth; Green, 220, seventh; Campbell, 106, eighth; Renner, 170, eighth.

The Norton junior varsity be-

gan 2014 action in the varsity Elm Creek Tournament on Friday, Jan. 17 and placed third, just three points out of first. Skylar Johnson, 106, was Norton's only champion. Unterseher, 113 and Erbert, 152, each placed runner-up. Junior Chris Chastain, 170 and Michael Johnson, 285, each finished in third.

On Thursday, Jan. 23, Norton traveled to Colby for a dual versus the No.7 state ranked Eagles in Class 4A. Norton won nine matches in defeating Colby 40-22!. The Blue Jays won four matches by pins.

The Western Kansas Tournament of Champions was held on Saturday, Feb. 1 in Ellis. Norton held off a late challenge by Phillipsburg to successfully defend their 2013 championship in the third annual event. Norton scored 194.5 points, followed by Phillipsburg, 161; Smith Center, 128.5; Oberlin, 115; Oakley, 110; Plainville, 100.5; Ellis, 92; Atwood, 87; St. Francis, 79.5; Leoti, 59; Hill City, 51; Hoxie, 41; Trego Community, 35; Stockton, 33; Greeley County, 28; Thomas More Prep-Hays, 21.

Winning gold medals for Norton were Johnson, 106; Hager, 138; Kendall Miller, 160; Harting, 195; Green, 220. Third place winners were Addington, 113; Tallent, 145; Renner, 170. Kasson, 152, placed fourth and Wright, 126, finished sixth.

"Winning all five championship matches was great and put an exclamation point on the day!" said coach Johnson.

On Saturday, Feb. 1, the Norton junior varsity wrestled in the varsity Arapahoe Invitational Tournament and won the championship! The young Blue Jays amassed 161 points. Elm Creek scored 144 and Pleasanton tallied 81.5 for the top three teams.

All 11 Norton wrestlers placed. Lively, 152 and Dole, 195 were both champions and Unterseher, 113, placed runner-up.

"Senior Night" for Norton was held on Friday, Feb. 7 during a dual with Smith Center in Wilmett Kirk Memorial Gym. It was a big night for the seniors as Norton won 61-16. Senior athletes and managers and their parents were honored. Senior wrestlers were Alec Hager, Branson Addington, Cole Renner, Ethan Ross, Garret Otter, Kolton Harting, Michael Johnson and Toby Nickell. Senior managers were Jordyn

Gosselin and Austin Hager.

The annual Panther Classic was held in Phillipsburg the next day, Saturday, Feb. 8. Norton entered ten wrestlers and eight finished as the Blue Jays placed fourth. Phillipsburg won with 126.5 points, followed by Hoisington, 123; Marysville, 112.5; Norton, 103 for the top four teams. Hager, 138, was Norton's only champion. Campbell, 106, Addington, 113 and Tallent, 145, were runners-up. Renner, 170 and Harting, 195, each finished fourth.

In the junior varsity competition in the Panther Classic, Norton scored more points than any other team but point totals were not kept. Norton entered 11 wrestlers and nine placed in the top two in their weight class.

Norton completed the dual season on Friday, Feb. 14 when they competed at Goodland. Norton was ranked No.1 in Class 3-2-1A and Goodland was ranked No.4 in Class 4A. Norton won by a score of 33-27. Both teams won seven matches. "Kolton Harting stepped up and got a huge pin to seal our comeback-behind victory," said coach Johnson.

On Saturday, Feb. 15, Norton competed in the Bill Voss Novice Tournament in Colby to end the junior varsity season. The Blue Jays medaled nine wrestlers. Unterseher, 113, Nickell, 132 and Vanover, 138, all won gold medals.

The Class 3A Regional Tournament was held on Friday, Feb. 21 and Saturday, Feb. 22 in WaKeeney. Traditionally, it is the toughest 3A regional tournament in the state. Despite several junior varsity wrestlers in the lineup due to injuries, Norton took an early lead and built on it to score 230.5 points to repeat as the Class 3-2-1A Regional Wrestling Tournament champion!

No.7 state ranked Phillipsburg placed runner-up with 178 points, followed by No.8 state ranked Oberlin, 120.5. Norton entered 13 wrestlers and 10 qualified for the state tournament. Blue Jay regional champions were Johnson, 106; Addington, 113; Hager, 138; Kasson, 152; Kendall Miller, 160. Nickell, 132; Renner, 170 and Green, 220, each placed runner-up. Tallent, 145 and Harting, 195, each finished third.

The Class 3-2-1A State Tournament was held on Friday, Feb. 28 and Saturday, March

lin in the Gross Memorial Coliseum in Hays. After one day of wrestling, Norton led with 74 points but Rossville was close behind with 70. The Blue Jays were up to the task on Saturday and lived up to their "Cowboy Up" theme as they scored 53 more points compared to just 11 more by Rossville to win their fourth state championship in the past five years!

Norton won eight of ten matches coming through the back door to total 127 points. Rossville tallied 81 total points, followed by Beloit, 80; Atchison County, 78; Hoisington, 75; Phillipsburg, 67; Silver Lake, 66; Fredonia, 63; Smith Center, 56; Marysville, 54. There were 67 teams represented from all over the state.

Branson Addington was Norton's only state champion. He handed Ty Nienke, Ellsworth, his first loss of the season by a 3-2 decision at 113 pounds! Alec Hager wrestled Brogan Humphrey, Fredonia, who had only one loss for the season. Alec lost a hard-fought 15-6 decision to place state runner-up.

Skylar Johnson, 106; Jared Tallent, 145 and Jacob Green, 220, each placed third in their weight division. Toby Nickell finished sixth at 132 and Kolton Harting was sixth at 195.

"We didn't wrestle well on Friday but came back on Saturday and really turned it on!" said coach Johnson.

"Nickell and Harting wrestled five matches each on Saturday to earn medals and that's tough to do. We won all three third place matches and weren't favored in any of them. We weren't favored in either first place match either but won one."

Norton compiled a 30-16 won-loss record and had a 9-5 pin ratio in the state tournament.

Prior to the state tournament finals, coach Johnson received the National Coach of the Year Award from the National Federation of State High School Associations Coaches Association. David Cherry, Assistant Executive Director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, presented the award to coach Johnson.

Darren McMullen of Norton also received a plaque from Mr. Cherry honoring him for 20 years as an active wrestling official.

Awards presented to Norton wrestling team members

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Following the delicious potluck meal at the 2013-14 Norton Community High School Wrestling Banquet, head 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 senior Alec Hager, who placed runner-up in the State Tournament and compiled an impressive season record of 41-6. This is a winning percentage of 87 percent, which was highest on the team.

Alec led his team in three of the 10 statistical categories. Alec led the team in points scored with 191, had the most reversals with 25 and tied with Branson Addington for the most major decisions with six.

Receiving the "Coach Durham Award" were seniors Branson Addington and Kolton Harting. The award is based on hard work, sportsmanship, academics and good citizenship.

Seniors Toby Nickell and Cole Renner received the "Most Improved Wrestler" award.

Junior Jared Tallent led Norton in five statistical categories. He was the leader in most take-downs with 85, most 2 point near falls with 31, most 3 point near falls with 39, most decisions with 16 and most technical falls with 11.

Cole Renner had the most falls with 24. Kolton Harting had the fastest fall, which came in nine seconds in the State Tournament!



Norton senior Branson Addington was the 2013-14 state champion Blue Jay wrestling team's only state gold medal winner. He is shown here defeating Ty Nienke, Ellsworth, for the 113 pound state championship. Nienke came into

Academic awards for each class went to: Layton Miller, 4.0, freshman; Weston Erbert, sophomore, 4.0; Derek Rowh, junior, 3.42; Branson Addington, senior, 3.55.

Norton wrestlers also received academic awards from the Kansas Wrestling Coaches Association. The team received an honorable mention with a grade average of 3.08.

Branson Addington was named to the academic first team, followed by Ethan Ross, Cole Renner, Kolton Harting, honorable mention.

The "Most Promising Freshman" award went to Jacob Green. The "Outstanding Sophomore" award went to Skylar Johnson.

Kade Unterseher was named the "Outstanding JV Wrestler" and Dalton Vanover and Maverick Engel received the "Most Improved JV Wrestler" award.

The "Underdog Match of the Year" award went to Mike Kasson for his 4-1 upset win over No.1 seed Clint Rogers of Smith Center in the Regional Tournament.

Winning the award for "The Most Exciting Moment of the Year" were Kendall Miller and Mike Kasson for fighting off their backs to win by falls in the Regional Tournament.

The "Key Match of the Year" award winner was Toby Nickell for his 8-2 win over Trevor Hauser, Plainville in the Regional Tournament.

the match with a perfect 36-0 record but Branson prevailed 3-2 in a hard-fought match! Branson finished the season with an impressive 32-6 record which is 84 percent wins! - Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

The "Fan of the Year" award went to Fig Millan.

It was also announced that coach Tony Fiscus was named "KWCA 2013 Middle School Coach of the Year".

Coach Johnson presented "Four Year Senior Wrestler" awards to Branson Addington, Garret Otter, Alec Hager, Cole Renner, Kolton Harting and Ethan Ross. A "Senior Wrestler" award for less than four years went to Michael Johnson and Toby Nickell. "Senior Manager" awards went to Jordyn Gosselin, who was a manager for three years, and Austin Hager. Coach Johnson pointed out that Hager also wrestled two years.

Alec Hager completed his

four-year career with 108 wins, which ranks 18th among Norton career leaders. Branson Addington finished with 96 wins, ranking 26th most for a Blue Jay wrestling career. Ethan Ross ended with 71 wins for 48th best.

Receiving junior varsity statistical awards were: Kade Unterseher, points leader, 121; Kade Unterseher, most take-downs, 34; Derek Rowh, most reversals, 23; Kade Unterseher, Weston Erbert, most 2 point near falls, 9 each; Dalton Vanover, most 3 point near falls, 11; Derek Rowh, Dalton Vanover, most decisions, 7 each; Kade Unterseher, most falls, 14; Kyle Bell, fastest fall, 13 seconds.

The "Liver Shack Quacks"

who cook liver for the wrestlers prior to competition were introduced. Those present were John Millan, Jerry Darling, Rick Green, John Rowh and Kyle Wright.

Coach Johnson thanked his wife, his assistant coaches and their wives, school administration and staff, parents, Dick Boyd of the Norton Telegram, Fig Millan and Rick Green of KQNK Radio and all fans for their tremendous support of the Norton wrestling program. He especially thanked Angie Hager for all the photos of the wrestlers she took during the season.

Coach Johnson also handed out some "fun" awards. Winners were: Jordan Dole, "Quiz the Coach" award; managers Lindsay Addington and Jordyn Gosselin, "Clockwatcher" award; Caysean Campbell, "Six Pound Orange" award; Garret Otter, repeat of "Assistant Coach" award; Toby Nickell, "Porker of Year" award and Michael Johnson, repeat of "Leaner of Year" award.

During the evening, a highlight video of the Blue Jay wrestlers in action was shown. The video was prepared by assistant coach Shane Miller.

Coach Johnson reviewed the season for those in attendance. "We had some ups and downs but in the regional we showed a lot and put a great exclamation on the season by winning another state championship," he said.

"When you put it all on the line, emotion comes to play and it teaches a lot about life. We hope our wrestlers' successes will carry over into life."