

Norton Blue Jay wrestlers prepare for busy season

By DICK BOYD

Coach Bill Johnson's Norton Community High School varsity wrestling team will open the 2003-'04 season on Saturday at the Hoxie Invitational Wrestling Tournament.

This early season test always proves to be one of the toughest invitational tournaments in Northwest Kansas.

Teams in the tournament, in addition to Norton and Hoxie, are Dodge City, Elkhart, Wichita, Kapaun-Mt. Carmel, Oakley, Oberlin, Plainville and Trego.

The tournament will begin at 8:30 a.m. Trophies will be awarded to the top two teams and medals to the first through fourth place wrestlers in each weight class.

Admission will be \$6 for adults and \$5 for students (K-12) for all day or \$4 for adults and \$3 for students (K-12) for session No. 3 only, which is the third and fourth place and championship matches.

The tournament will run continuously with minimum breaks of 15-20 minutes between sessions.

The Norton junior varsity wrestlers will also compete in a tournament Saturday in Alma, Neb.

Teams competing, in addition to the Norton junior varsity, will be varsity teams from Alma, S.E.M., Loomis, Overton, Pleasanton, Kearney Catholic, Eustis-Farnam, Wilcox-Hildreth, Wauneta-Palisade.

Competition will begin at 10 a.m. with the second session set for noon and the third session for 2:30 p.m. Admission will be \$5, all day, \$4, final session, adults; \$4, all day, \$3, final session, students.

Coach Johnson begins his 13th season as head wrestling coach at Norton High with 27 team members including a dozen lettermen, 10 of whom are returning starters. During his tenure at Norton, his Blue Jay teams have built a championship tradition. Norton placed second in the Class 3-2-1A State tournament in 1996-'97 and 1997-'98 and third in 1995-'96. After placing 13th in 1998-'99, the Blue Jay grapplers tied for fourth in 1999-'00 and placed third in 2000-'01. Norton moved up to Class 4A the next year and placed fifth in the State Tournament after winning the Regional Tournament.

Last season, Norton compiled a perfect 12-0 dual record and went undefeated in the Mid-Continent League to win the championship. Norton won the regionals and placed second to Hoxie in state.

Six returning state tournament placers will lead the team. Senior James Annon won the 125 pound state championship with a 32-1 record and senior Bo Pfannenstiel (26-11) placed fifth at 171 pounds. Junior Michael Sprigg (29-4) was state tournament runnerup at 275 pounds.

The other three returning state medal winners were all freshmen last season. Wrestling as sophomores this year will be Clay Madden (30-5), 103 pound state champion; Luke Pfannenstiel (26-11), 112 pounds, fifth place, and Lance Roe (29-9), 119 pounds, fifth place.

Two other wrestlers have state experience. Senior Jordon Haussermann (19-17), qualified last season at 152 pounds and senior Scott Goldsby (21-12), qualified in 2002 for the 4A State Tournament.

Other returning lettermen and starters from last season are C.J. Thiele, 140 pound senior, 19-12, and Sean Lauer, 189 pound senior,

17-10.

Also lettering last season were Curtis Black, 125 pound senior, 16-2, and Josh Green, 171 pound senior, 13-5.

Kai Mann, 215 pound senior letterman and starter, was 15-15 last season but suffered injuries in football and will not compete in wrestling.

Other team members and their tentative weight classes are: Mark Maybon, 189; Tom Graham, 189, seniors; Kyle Douglas, 152; Corey Look, 160, juniors; Jon Harding, 125; Jeremy Harding, 140; Davvid Stanley, 171; Blake Jacques, 215, sophomores; and Logan Keiswetter, 103; Jared Bebb, 119; Nathan Broeckelman, 119; Kent Mann, 119; Chris Davis, 140; Blake VanEaton, 140; Shane Stanley, 189, freshmen.

"Our strengths will include having six state medalists back in the practice room," said Coach Johnson. "That has a way of helping motivate wrestlers to work harder. Our numbers have also been our strength in the past couple of years and we expect that to continue."

"We have ten seniors and that should help us. Anytime you have that many seniors who have been through the routine the past three seasons, it is very beneficial to the program."

"With this depth, we have the luxury of being several wrestlers deep in most weights. We expect any of our junior varsity wrestlers to step into the varsity action in case of injury or sickness and do well."

"We have some quality freshmen but they must prove themselves at the high school level. With ten returning starters, it will be very tough for them to make the varsity team."

"Even though we graduated only three varsity wrestlers, we lost much experience. Those three wrestlers combined for eight state tournament appearances and six state medals. Four of those medals were won by Eric Johnson, who was a four-time state finalist and two-time champion. He will be missed but others will have to

take up the slack.

"We have a good base of wrestlers to build around and should still be pretty competitive in tournaments; however, many of our better wrestlers are close to the same weight so we will have to get them in different weight classes to be at our best in dual meet action."

Coach Johnson predicts the following Mid-Continent League finish without including the Blue Jays — Smith Center, Phillipsburg, Plainville, Ellis, Trego, Osborne, Stockton and Hill City.

He said he expects Hoxie to be a state power again.

"They return an unbelievable 151 points from last season's state championship team," said Coach Johnson. "They will be led by five returning state finalists. They should be heads and heels above everyone else."

"Other strong teams should be St. Francis, Norton, Oakley and Atchison County."

Assisting Coach Johnson with his coaching duties will be Deyton Hager and Doug Ray, coach's aides. Student managers are Kelli Johnson, Kayla Douglas, Alexi Wolf and Jessica Sprigg.

Coach Johnson is a graduate of Flinthills High School, Rosalia. He graduated from Fort Hays State College with a bachelor of science in health and human performance. His major was physical education.

As a wrestler at Fort Hays, he won the NAIA national championship at 118 pounds in 1987, was runnerup in 1986 and 1989 and placed fourth in 1988. He was an NAIA Wrestling Academic All-American in 1988 and 1989.

He was chosen the Outstanding Senior Male Athlete at Fort Hays 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. He was also inducted into the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame.

Coach Johnson has compiled a 91-34 dual record (73 percent) in his tenure at Norton. His career record is 97-52.



Curtis Black (right), 125 pound senior, made a single-leg move on Jon Harding, 125 pound sophomore, during last night's ranking matches for the Norton Community High School wrestling team. This weight class is one of the most competitive on the team with Harding, Black and sophomore Luke Pfannenstiel battling for the varsity position. At press time, the Blue Jays' varsity competitor in this Saturday's Hoxie Invitational Tournament had not yet been determined. The public was invited to the ranking matches and a large crowd attended. Admission was a non-perishable food item for God's Pantry.

— Telegram photo by Dick Boyd

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Norton High School 2003-'04 Wrestling Schedule

- Sat., Dec. 6 — Junior Varsity at Alma Tournament, 10 a.m.
- Sat., Dec. 6 — Varsity at Hoxie Invitational, 8:30 a.m.
- Fri., Dec. 12 — Junior Varsity at Southern Valley Invit., Oxford, Neb., 9 a.m.
- Sat., Dec. 13 — Varsity at Clay Center Invitational, 9:30 a.m.
- Fri., Dec. 19 — Phillipsburg/Stockton dual, Norton, 6 p.m.
- Sat., Dec. 20 — Goodland Holiday Classic (varsity and junior varsity), 10 a.m.
- Sat., Jan. 10 — Jake Durham Invitational, Norton, 10 a.m.
- Thurs., Jan. 15 — Smith Center/Trego Dual, WaKeeney, 6 p.m.
- Fri./Sat., Jan. 15-17 — Newton Tournament of Champions, 11 a.m.
- Fri., Jan. 17 — Junior Varsity at Elm Creek Invitational, 2:30 p.m.
- Fri., Jan. 23 — Atwood dual, 6:30 p.m.
- Tues., Jan. 27 — Hays/Kearney, Neb., dual, Hays, 4 p.m.
- Sat., Jan. 31 — League Tournament, Stockton, 10 a.m.
- Fri., Feb. 6 — Plainville/Ellis dual, Ellis, 5 p.m.
- Sat., Feb. 7 — Panther Classic (varsity and junior varsity), Phillipsburg, 9 a.m.
- Thurs., Feb. 12 — Hill City/Osborne dual, Osborne, 5 p.m.
- Sat., Feb. 14 — Colby Junior Varsity Tournament, 9 a.m.
- Fri./Sat., Feb. 20-21 — Class 3-2-1A Regional Wrestling Tournament, TBA, 1 p.m.
- Fri./Sat., Feb. 27-28 — Class 3-2-1A State Tournament, Fort Hays State University, 9 a.m.

Seventh-grade teams win, lose

Norton's seventh grade girls overpowered WaKeeney 41-17 on Nov. 25, but the seventh grade boys lost 22-16.

"The girls really handled WaKeeney well," said Coach Kim Pakkebier. "We were without one of our starters, but other players stepped in and played hard to compensate for that."

"This game was another example of how these girls work together and give a total team effort."

Hayli Bozarth was the team's lead scorer, making 13. Following were Laura Lee Baird, 11 points;

Ashley Colip, 7; Wiyanna Paxton, 6; and Amanda Delimont, 4.

Rebounding honors went to Paxton, with 13, and Colip, with eight. Baird had 7 steals.

The girls now have a 6-0 record. "WaKeeney came in undefeated, scoring in the 40 to 50 point range a game," said boys' Coach Jim Myers. "We held them to 22 points, but they again held us to 16 points, so this was a defensive, tough basketball game."

"I'm really proud of our kids' effort. As nobody has been close to WaKeeney all year, we weren't

only close we had a chance to win the game."

Breyer Simmons led scoring with 5, followed by Zac Dreher, 4; Brad Nuzum, Zach Bainter and Jordan Bebb, 2 apiece; and Matt Stanley, 1.

Dreher had nine rebounds, while Bainter led steals with three. The boys have a 3-3 record.

The junior varsity team lost 30-2. Josh Gallentine made the Jays' only two points.

The Norton Junior High basketball teams will next compete at 4:30 p.m. in Hill City on Thursday.