

Area

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last two seasons — and 37 touchdowns, and also added 700 yards rushing.

"Dustin was the best quarterback I've coached at Norton because of his passing, running and leadership abilities," said Norton coach Neil Melillo. "Dustin worked harder to make himself an outstanding player than any other player I've been associated with."

McEwen is a 4.0 student, No. 1 in his class, and is one of only two players ever to start four years for Melillo.

As a junior, McEwen threw for 1,430 yards and 20 touchdowns in getting Norton to the Class 4A state championship game. This season, he passed for 949 yards in seven games. He missed the last two games with a broken hand.

Career highlight: "Beating Smith Center this year for the first time in four years was sweet, but an even bigger highlight came last season when we defeated Scott City in playoffs after having lost to them the previous two years. Even though we later lost in the state championship game, we realized our talent and potential that night."

College plans: Will play college football somewhere and major in secondary education. Several Division I schools are interested.

MATT McEWEN

McEwen (not related to Dustin) is the most prolific back on this year's Top 11. His 4,277 career rushing yards ranks eighth on the Kansas 11-man all-time chart.

McEwen rushed for more than 1,000 yards three straight years, including 1,716 yards and 19 touchdowns this season.

All numbers aside, however, Belleville coach Todd Halvorsen wouldn't have traded McEwen for any other back.

"I believe Matt was the best back in any class in this part of the state," Halvorsen said. "He was capable of breaking a long run every time he touched the ball. He was the type of back who rarely was tackled one-on-one."

McEwen who also ranked at the top of his class academically.

Career highlight: "Being a part of two district championship teams in a row at a school that had made the playoffs only once before was the highlight."

College plans: Considering Iowa State, Kansas State, Nebraska, Stanford, Air Force and Colorado State. Will major in engineering.

BRAD SHALZ

Before coming to Colby to coach football this season, Dave Carlson had coached several all-staters in Nebraska. None, however, measure up to Shalz.

"Brad has all the qualities you look for in a back: excellent size, speed (4.8 in the 40) and strength (305-pound bench, 800-pound with the hip sled)," Carlson said. "He also has excellent balance and vision."

Shalz rushed for 1,055 yards on 175 carries and scored 112 points this season in leading the Eagles to the state playoffs for the first time since 1984. He rushed for 1,918 yards and scored 180 points in his career.

As an All-Northwest Kansas League linebacker, Shalz had 52 solo tackles and 44 assists this season.

Career highlight: "Beating Norton in the first round of district play when they were No. 1."

College plans: Undecided, but Colorado, Kansas, Kansas State and Fort Hays State have expressed interest. Will major in pre-law.

KEITH SIDES

Sides proved that size is no barrier to excelling on the football field. Ask Centre. Sides rushed for 207 yards against the Cougars in this season's Eight-Man I state championship game, won by Northern Valley, 50-32.

Sides played quarterback last season, but after the first game of this season, Northern Valley coach Chuck Fessenden moved him to running back and Lance Kindernecht to quarterback.

"Keith gave us more speed and versatility in the backfield," Fessenden said. "He made the big plays all season for us and enabled us to get to the championship game."

Sides rushed for 1,461 yards on 167 carries (8.7 per carry); caught 21 passes for 381 yards and scored 234 points this season.

Career highlight: The state game against Centre this year (won by Northern Valley) and the sub-state win against Hanston when I was a sophomore. I threw a touchdown pass and the two-point conversion, and we won."

College plans: Wants to play basketball somewhere with his twin brother Kevin.

JEFF TAUSCHER

Hays High football coach Bob Danenhauer marvels at Tauscher's intellect.

"Jeff's never had a 'B' in his life," Danenhauer said. "He ranks number one in his class."

For those reasons, Danenhauer didn't worry about lack of leadership

on offense or defense. Tauscher was a first-team All-Western Athletic Conference pick both ways. He made many big plays on both sides of the ball.

"A play Jeff made that I'll always remember came against Salina South," Danenhauer said. "We lined up to try a 34-yard field goal. Jeff took the snap and took off. He made three great moves and scored a touchdown. That put us up 19-0, and we went on to win."

As a defensive back, Tauscher was a three-year starter, intercepting eight passes.

Career highlight: "Beating Dodge City for the first time in 18 years and making the playoffs."

College plans: Will weigh several college options after basketball and baseball seasons.

MARK WAHLMEIER

Wahlmeier comes from a family of 11 children, one of whom, Stan, was a Top 11 player in 1983.

Wahlmeier wore three different numbers at Norton. He started at a center and defensive end as a sophomore, moved to offensive guard and linebacker as a junior, and was a tight end and linebacker all of this season. He actually moved to tight end midway through his junior season.

"I think tight end may be Mark's position in college," Melillo said. "He always insisted that he could catch, and he proved it. Mark is an outstanding blocker and has soft hands."

Career highlight: "Making the 4A state finals in 1989. We came up short, but the experience was one I'll never forget."

College plans: Undecided. Plans to play football and major in business.

1990 all-area teams

Table with columns for Player, School, Hgt., Wgt., Yr., Position. Includes sections for SECOND TEAM and THIRD TEAM, each with Offense and Defense sub-sections.

Coach

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to win and may be taking it for granted," Fessenden said. "I think when we do have a losing season, people will be really disappointed, but I think then they'll look back at this time and realize how great this has been and how few people get to have that kind of success."

Whether or not the Northern Valley supporters have grasped the enormity of the Huskies' success, opposing coaches at the small school level certainly appreciate what Fessenden has accomplished.

"I would like to think a lot of other small football programs would like to model themselves after us, and a lot of other coaches would respect us at least."

Fessenden admits that with the success has come assorted offers for coaching positions at larger schools, but the small town atmosphere is where he and his wife, Jennifer,

Coaches of the year

Here is a year-by-year list of the Salina Journal Coach of the Year award winners since its inception in 1976: 1976 — Clayton Williams, Beloit; 1977 — Ed Buller, Clifton-Clyde; 1978 — Paul Dennis, Abilene; 1979 — Jon Bingesser, Sacred Heart; 1980 — Larry Friend, Plainville; 1981 — Robert Teater, Victoria; 1982 — Roger Barta, Smith Center; 1983 — David Johnson, Osborne; 1984 — Jeff Crockett, Minneapolis; 1985 — Neil Melillo, Norton; 1986 — Roger Barta, Smith Center; 1987 — Chuck Fessenden, Northern Valley; 1988 — Gary Sandbo, Smoky Valley; 1989 — Dan Lankas, Atwood; 1990 — Chuck Fessenden, Northern Valley.

would like to raise their two daughters.

"It's a good school system and good situation for them to grow up in, where they know everybody in town," Fessenden said. "And I'm pretty happy where I'm at."

"Winning at Northern Valley is probably just as enjoyable as winning anywhere else."

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