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SPEARS SWEEP DRAMATIC DOUBLEHEADER

For the faint of heart, Wentworth was not the place to be Thursday night, as both Niagara Landmark Window Spears teams staged dramatic comeback victories over the Wentworth Panthers. The Varsity Spears (5-1) came out on top 24-21 thanks to Ron Dith's game-winning touchdown scamper with only three seconds left in the game. Meanwhile, the Junior squad (6-0) rebounded from a dismal first half, scoring 29 unanswered second half points to take the 29-18 win. Both Ontario Varsity Football League games were played at Beverly Community Centre near Rockton.

After a scoreless first quarter, Varsity Spears QB David Benner connected with Dennis Allen for an 8 yard TD reception and Wentworth responded with a touchdown of their own. Jerimy Hipperson's 54 yard return on the ensuing kickoff then set up running back Ron Dith's 1 yard rushing major and the Spears took a 14-7 lead into halftime. Julian Tropea's 22 yard field goal extended the Spears lead to 17-7 in the third quarter, but Wentworth responded with two fourth quarter touchdowns to take a 21-17 lead. With time running out, Niagara mounted a last ditch 54 yard drive, highlighted by outstanding catches from Allen and Adam (Elmo) Petrina. With three seconds left in the game, Ron Dith took the hand-off from one yard out and with a great second effort, just barely lunged across the goal-line for the winning score.

With five starters not available for the game, Varsity Head Coach Dave Howe called the win a great confidence-builder for his squad. "We had some guys playing new positions tonight, but everyone was very focused on what they needed to do and kept a really positive attitude. This game was a real character-builder for us", said Howe, who was also quick to share the credit, especially on the game-winning drive. "(Offensive Coordinator) Adam Cook called a great game for us".

Offensive Highlights (Varsity):

QB David Benner (Lakeshore): 5/15 passing for 67 yds, 1 TD
FB Rick Savage (Port Colborne): 25 carries for 99 yds
RB Ron Dith (Collegiate): 16 carries for 92 yds, 2 TDs
WR Dennis Allen (Holy Cross): 3 receptions for 20 yds, 1 TD
K Julian Tropea (St. Michael): 2/2 in PATs, 22 yd FG

Defensive Highlights (Varsity):

LB Kirstyn Carruthers (Blessed Trinity): 9 tackles, 1 blocked kick
LB Andrew Holmes (Sir Winston Churchill): 8 tackles
S Dan Baronas (Denis Morris): 8 tackles
LB Martin Pytlewski (Lakeshore): 3 tackles, 2 fumble recoveries

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The Junior Spears suffered a setback on their first offensive series when cornerstone running back Jordan Barker was forced from the game with a knee injury. Seizing momentum, the Panthers scored two quick first quarter touchdowns, including a deflating 95 yard major from running back Jason Partridge. Trailing 18-0 at halftime, the Spears were a different team in the third quarter, as fullback Nick Moreau punished the Panthers defensive line and the Spears defensive secondary began to shut down the Wentworth passing attack. Moreau put the Spears on the board from two yards out and running back Paul Ricci exploded with two rushing touchdowns and a two-point conversion, propelling the Spears to a 22-18 lead. On the next series, Spears cornerback Jordan Johnson picked up a Panthers fumble and charged 45 yards into the end zone, cementing the Spears victory.

“This teams’s going to give me a heart attack before the year’s up”, said JV Head Coach Randy Nunn after the game. “As poorly as they played in the first half, everything clicked in the second. The offensive line fired off, the defense stepped up, there was a real fire in their eyes. But they need to do it for four quarters if we’re going to go anywhere in the playoffs.”

Offensive Highlights (Junior Varsity):

QB Jordan Nunn (Holy Cross): 5/14 passing for 62 yds, 3 INT
FB Nick Moreau (Stamford): 18 carries for 166 yds, 1 TD
RB Paul Ricci (St. Michael): 18 carries for 96 yds, 2 TD, 2-pt conversion
K Julian Tropea (St. Michael): 3/3 in PATs

Defensive Highlights (Junior Varsity):

LB Steve Cecchini (Denis Morris): 7 tackles
LB Ryan Chmielewski (St. Francis): 6 tackles, 1 INT, 2 blocked kicks
DB Jon Quagliariello (Westlane): 5 tackles, 2 BB
CB Jordan Johnson (St. Paul): 2 tackles, 1 INT, 45 yd fumble return for TD

Point of Interest... With Varsity kicker Carlo Turavani unavailable, Junior Varsity Kicker Julian Tropea played in both games in Wentworth. After going 3/3 in PATs in the JV game, Tropea entered the Varsity game just in time to convert Ron Dith’s second quarter touchdown. He added a second PAT and a 22 yard field goal in the second half.

Next Up... The Varsity Spears are on the road Sunday July 10th to face the Sudbury Northerners and the Junior Varsity Spears will travel to Toronto to face the Thunder on Sunday July 17th.

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Pictures are available upon request. Additional information on the Niagara Landmark Window Spears may be found at www.niagaraspears.com . Additional information on the OVFL, including standings, schedules and comprehensive individual and team statistics may be found at www.ovfootball.ca .

Both Head Coaches would be pleased to speak with the media and may be contacted directly. Junior Varsity Head Coach Randy Nunn may be reached at (905)685-0135 (h), (905)980-1210 (c), or via e-mail at rnunn@niagaraspears.com . Varsity Head Coach Dave Howe may be reached at (905)937-4699 (h), (905)321-0973 (c), or via e-mail at howe@niagaraspears.com .