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Media Release – July 24, 2005.

SPEARS FINISH STRONG

Both the Junior and Varsity squads of the Niagara Landmark Window Spears finished the regular season in winning fashion Saturday in a doubleheader against the visiting Guelph Bears. The Junior Spears (8-0) exploded for 46 first half points, and easily defeated the Bears (0-8) 76-6, while the senior Spears (7-1) outlasted the Varsity Bears (5-3) 48-42 in a highly entertaining, offensive shootout. Both Ontario Varsity Football League teams have earned first round playoff byes and will host second round games on Saturday, August 6th.

Seven different players scored touchdowns for the Junior Spears, and Head Coach Randy Nunn began pulling starters in the second quarter. "The last thing we wanted to do was run up the score, but it was tough sometimes", said Nunn. "We had a punt and two interceptions all returned for touchdowns, and they turned the ball over on downs several times deep in their own end. But it was nice for all of our players to get some extended playing time". Nick Moreau, Ryan Chmielewski, Jedd Gardner and Steve Cecchini each had two touchdowns for the Spears, while James Savoie, William Van Ruyven and Josh Hipperson had one major each.

Despite finishing the 2005 regular season with the League's only undefeated record, Coach Nunn is focusing all of his attention on the playoffs. "8-0 is a great accomplishment and something we should be very proud of, but it's a whole new season now. Every game from here on in will be very tough, against the very best in the League", said Nunn.

The Varsity game was also a high scoring affair, but not nearly as one-sided. Fullback Rick Savage got the Spears on the board in the opening quarter with a 16-yard touchdown run and Spears quarterback Ben Wilsack connected with receiver Adam Petrina for touchdowns twice in the second quarter, including an 86-yard strike. A subsequent 13-yard field goal from Spears kicker Carlo Turavani and back-to-back rushing touchdowns from running back Ron Dith extended the Spears lead to 38-14 after three quarters. Dith finished the day with 136 yards on 19 carries.

But the game was far from over, as Guelph narrowed the lead to 38-28 with two quick fourth quarter touchdowns. The two teams then traded shots for the remainder of the game, as Carlo Turavani's 31-yard field goal was quickly answered by a Guelph touchdown. Then it was Spears quarterback David Benner's turn to connect with Petrina, this time for a 55-yard major. The Bears closed the gap to six points with their fourth touchdown of the quarter, but ultimately ran out of time, as the Spears killed the last minute of the game on four kneel-downs.

Despite the near-disastrous defensive letdown in the fourth quarter, Spears Head Coach Dave Howe was happy with the overall effort against the Bears. "I'm very happy with the progress the offense has shown over the past four weeks", said Howe. "But this was the first time we've had to face such an elusive quarterback who throws the ball 80% of the time", said Howe.

Howe was especially pleased with the Spears passing attack against Guelph. Wilsack finished 11/14 for 257 yards and two touchdowns, Benner went 4/8 for 100 yards and one major, and Petrina racked up a staggering 244 yards and three touchdowns on 8 receptions. There's a reason Wilsack and Petrina look like they've been playing together much longer than this inaugural Varsity Spears season. In fact, the standout tandem is now in their sixth season together, having both played for Blessed Trinity High School since the ninth grade. The chemistry is not lost on Coach Howe, who coached both players last year at B.T. "They just read each other so well", said Howe. "Ben just knows where Adam's going to be...it's quite remarkable to watch".

Next Up... Both the junior varsity and varsity Spears squads have clinched Horseshoe Division titles and will receive first round playoff byes. Both Spears teams will be at home Saturday, August 6th to face the highest ranked wildcard winner from the previous weekend.

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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.