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SPEARS HEADED FOR CONFERENCE FINALS

Both the Junior and Varsity squads of the Niagara Landmark Window Spears are headed for the Ontario Varsity Football League Adam Conference finals after doubleheader victories Saturday in St. Catharines. The Junior Varsity Spears defeated the Brantford Bisons 42-27, while the Varsity Spears hung on for a 42-37 victory over the Essex Ravens.

The Junior Spears opened the scoring when quarterback Jordan Nunn connected with Jon Quagliariello on a 30-yard TD pass. Brantford quarterback Jake Cooper returned the favour with a 75 yard strike to receiver E.J. Bosse, but a missed PAT left the Spears clinging to a 7-6 lead. An 8-yard rushing TD from fullback Ben DiMartino and a 20-yard TD pass from Jedd Gardner to Jordan Salvatore on the halfback option gave the Spears a 20-6 halftime lead. Nunn again connected with Quagliariello in the third quarter for a 45-yard TD pass and linebacker Ryan Chmielewski got into the offensive act with a 10-yard rushing TD. Two late Brantford TDs weren't enough, as Spears fullback Nick Moreau put the game away with what was unquestionably the most jaw-dropping TD run of the season from 35 yards out. Moreau broke several tackles, appeared to be wrapped up and then literally dragged three Bison defenders into the endzone.

“That was one of the most determined, refuse-to-quit runs I’ve ever seen”, said JV Head Coach Randy Nunn. But overall, Nunn conceded that a stronger, more mentally disciplined performance will be required against the London Falcons next Saturday. London advanced to the conference final with a convincing 30-9 win over the Essex Ravens Friday night in London. “The game we played today will simply not be good enough to beat London”, said Nunn. “We’re still making some mental mistakes and taking too many dumb penalties. We’ll have our work cut out for us shutting down a very strong running game”. The cornerstone of the Falcon running game, running back Ben Roberts, smashed the OVFL’s Junior rushing record this year with 1,837 yards. Roberts racked up another 255 yards in Friday’s win over Essex.

The Varsity game that followed was a good old-fashioned shootout. Essex got on the board first when running back Rondell Roberts scored his first of two TDs on a mammoth 90-yard run. Spears quarterback Ben Wilsack responded with a 22-yard TD strike to Jake Maxwell and a 62-yard bomb to receiver Adam “Elmo” Petrina. The teams traded touchdowns in the second quarter, with Wilsack’s 22-yard TD pass to Petrina giving the Spears a 21-14 halftime lead. Blake Allan’s 35-yard interception return for a touchdown and fullback Rick Savage’s 12-yard TD run stretched the Spears lead to 35-17 after three quarters. But once again, the Spears left the door open, as Ravens substitute quarterback Mike Hockshaw sent the air attack into overdrive with TD passes of 55, 43 and 52 yards. But interceptions saved the day for the Spears, as linebacker Kirstyn Carruthers returned one for a touchdown and Blake Allan’s second pick of the game snuffed out a last minute Essex drive to preserve the win.

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While Varsity Head Coach Dave Howe was frustrated by yet another fourth quarter defensive stumble, he was pleased with his squad's ability to put points on the board against a usually stingy Ravens defense. "They've built their reputation on tough defense. We're only the second team this year to score more than 20 points on them", said Howe. "The offense was firing on all cylinders today, and we were very disciplined in terms of penalties". With the win, the Senior Spears will host the Guelph Bears in the Adam Conference final next Saturday. Guelph advanced with a 43-15 thrashing of the Sault Ste. Marie Sabrecats on Saturday. The Spears narrowly defeated the Bears 48-42 in the last game of this year's regular season. According to Howe, his players are eager for a re-match after nearly letting that game slip away thanks to four fourth quarter Bears touchdowns. "That game is still pretty fresh in their memories", said Howe.

Next Up: Spears Doubleheader August 13th

The Junior Varsity Spears (8-0) host the London Falcons (7-1) in the Adam Conference championship game on Saturday, August 13th at 12:00 noon at West Park High School in St. Catharines. The Ottawa Myers Riders (7-1) will host the Ottawa-Cumberland Panthers (7-1) in the Wettges Conference Junior final.

The Varsity Spears (7-1) host the Guelph Bears (5-3) in the Adam Conference championship game on Saturday, August 13th at 4:30pm at West Park High School in St. Catharines. The Metro Toronto Wldcats host the Mississauga Warriors in the Wettges Conference Varsity final.

Wettges and Adam Conference champions in both Varsity and Junior Varsity divisions will play each other for the T. Litzten Bowl trophy on Saturday, August 20th at T.D. Waterhouse Stadium in London.

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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 .