



---

[www.niagaraspears.com](http://www.niagaraspears.com)

**March 8, 2005.**

**1) Introduction** Welcome to the second season of the **Niagara Landmark Window Spears** of the Ontario Varsity Football League. Building on the momentum of a very successful first season for the junior varsity (16 and under) squad, the introduction of a varsity (19 & under) team represents a natural progression. The purpose of this first Newsletter of 2005 is to provide players and parents alike with as much information as possible about the coming season - the who, what, where, when, why and how of team operations, and a clear articulation of the team's mutual expectations - what you can expect from the coaching and administrative staffs, and what the teams expect from their players and families. While we have tried to anticipate most questions, emerging issues will be addressed in future Newsletters and through the website at [www.niagaraspears.com](http://www.niagaraspears.com). Additional information on the OVFL can be also be found online at [www.ovfootball.ca](http://www.ovfootball.ca).

The **Niagara Varsity Football Club** is the "parent" organization to both Spears teams. A registered non-profit entity, the roots of the NVFC may be found in the Niagara Regional Minor Football Association. The NVFC was formed by present and past members of the NRMFA Executive, who were interested in providing a summer opportunity for "elite", high school-aged players from across the Niagara Region. The NVFC is bound by a constitution and is presently comprised of the following Directors:

<b>Ed Fortier</b> (President)	<b>Jamie Saunders</b> (Vice-President)	<b>Cindi Ingham</b> (Treasurer)
<b>Randy Nunn</b>	<b>Dave Howe</b>	<b>Brian Duguay</b>
<b>Tom Dagenais</b>	<b>Ted Nunn</b>	<b>Dave Whiteley</b>
<b>Greg Smith</b>	<b>Alex Tacinelli</b>	<b>Joseph Doucette</b>
<b>Stan Reid</b>	<b>Grant Phillips</b>	

**2) Equipment** All equipment (including practice and game jerseys and pants) is provided, with the exception of football cleats. Approximately 55 complete sets of equipment will be available for each team. Each set is worth in excess of \$450 - as such, we expect that appropriate respect will be shown with regard to its care and maintenance. Players/parents are responsible for keeping equipment tight, as well as bringing equipment problems/deficiencies to the attention of coaching staff. All equipment will be numbered prior to issue and players/parents will be responsible for equipment that is lost and/or damaged through negligence. Players wishing to supply any of their own equipment will require inspection/approval of coaching staff.

The extraordinary contributions of **Riddell Canada** are worthy of special mention. In short, the creation of this team would not have been possible without the generous and ongoing support of local Riddell representative **Dave Whiteley**. Riddell has donated literally thousands of dollars in equipment and continues to offer special pricing to the Niagara Spears and its players. A listing of some of Riddell's most popular equipment options was made available at registration and additional copies are available on request. Copies of the complete Riddell catalogue are available for loan, and Dave Whiteley (905-871-1453) would be pleased to answer your questions and provide information and guidance.

**3) Coaching Staffs** We (and you) are very fortunate that so many outstanding football coaches from across the Region have stepped forward to assist with this year's teams. 2004 OVFL Junior Varsity Coach of the Year **Randy Nunn** is back as Junior Head Coach, and **Dave Howe** will be taking on Head Coach responsibilities for the Varsity squad. Both coaches enjoyed tremendous success at the high school level in 2004. As co-Head Coach, Dave Howe helped lead Grimsby's Blessed Trinity to a Division 1 Senior championship, and Randy Nunn was an assistant coach with the Division 1 Junior champions at Holy Cross in St. Catharines. Their respective Spears staffs have been rounded out as follows (final staff lists and contact info will be provided at a later date):

Junior Varsity		Varsity	
General Manager	Jamie Saunders (905) 684-5785 (h) (905) 988-2104 (c) <a href="mailto:saunders@niagaraspears.com">saunders@niagaraspears.com</a>	General Manager	Ed Fortier (905) 356-6391 (h) (289) 241-3375 (c) <a href="mailto:fortier@niagaraspears.com">fortier@niagaraspears.com</a>
Head Coach	Randy Nunn (905) 685-0135 (h) (905) 980-1210 (c) <a href="mailto:rnunn@niagaraspears.com">rnunn@niagaraspears.com</a>	Head Coach /Def. Coordinator	Dave Howe (905) 938-0588 (h) (905) 321-0973 (c) <a href="mailto:howe@niagaraspears.com">howe@niagaraspears.com</a>
Off. Coordinator	Ted Nunn	Off. Coordinator	Adam Cook
Def. Coordinator	Alex Tacinelli	Strength & Conditioning	John Charette
Strength & Conditioning	John Charette	Off. Line	Mike Bracico Matt Wilson
Off. Line	Brian Duguay	Def. Line	Chris Blake
Def. Line	TBA	Special Teams /WRs/RBs	Geoff Keen
Special Teams	Geoff Keen	WRs/QBs	Larry Bone
Assistant	Tom Dagenais	DBs	Derek Stonier
Assistant	Tim Hough	Assistant	Stan Reid
Assistant	Joseph Doucette	Assistant	John DiPasquale

#### **4) Player Evaluations**

Both teams are expected to field final rosters of between 45 and 55 players. As many as 90 prospects are likely to participate in each team's evaluations, with final roster cut-downs expected by May 15<sup>th</sup>. Upon return of equipment, released players will be issued a refund cheque equivalent to their initial registration payment (usually \$195) less the non-refundable \$65 administration and insurance fee. Released players will also have the option to try out for another team (i.e. Hamilton, Halton), without risking their eligibility to try out for the Spears in subsequent years.

A player's athleticism, football skills and experience will naturally factor into the team selection process. However, the Niagara Spears coaching staff unanimously believe that these are not the only qualities, or even the most important qualities that we seek in a successful player. Football skills, knowledge of plays and formations, even athletic ability and aggressiveness can be taught and developed. **First and foremost, the Niagara Spears coaching staff will be watching for "coachability indicators", including: positive attitude, work ethic, leadership potential, self-discipline, ability to follow directions, team-focused behaviour and heart.** Needless to say, a demonstrated commitment to attendance at practices will also be an important factor.

In terms of assigned positions, we hope that you will respect that in all cases, decisions will be made with the best interests of the team in mind. Also, given the depth of our rosters, there will be minimal need for players to play both ways. However, in light of possible injuries, vacation or other unavoidable absences, and to increase the flexibility with which players are deployed, all players will be asked to learn and be comfortable playing at least one and possibly two additional positions, to ensure depth at each position.

Players and parents alike will need to appreciate that both Niagara Landmark Window Spears teams are elite travel football teams. **At this level, expectations of "equal playing time" or even assumptions that all players will participate in a given game are unrealistic.** That being said, the coaching staff will, in the interest of developing fundamentally sound players, make reasonable efforts to ensure that all players see the field during game situations.

#### **5) First Aid/Medical**

Nothing is more important than the safety and well being of our players. OVFL rules dictate that each team must provide their own qualified medical personnel at each home and away game. Last year, the Niagara Spears extended this policy to include practices, as well. While an official team athletic therapist has not yet been selected, it is expected that a crew of 2-3 therapists will attend each practice and game.

It is the responsibility of the parents/players to ensure that a player's health card (or copy) is available at all practices and games. Different hospitals invariably have different policies regarding acceptable ID, and we want nothing to compromise a player's ability to receive immediate care. Once the services of a team athletic therapist have been secured, players/parents will also be asked to complete a team medical form. **Please advise ASAP of any urgent medical concerns/issues.** In an effort to provide interested parents/players with sport-specific treatment options, a list of professionals who have offered to provide their services to Spears players on a priority basis will be distributed in the near future.

**6) Practices** As of Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, indoor practices are scheduled at the Niagara Falls Sportsplex on:

- Tuesdays** - 7:00-8:30pm (Junior Varsity), 8:30 - 10:00pm (Varsity)
- Thursdays** - 7:30-9:00pm (Junior Varsity), 9:00-10:30pm (Varsity)
- Weekends** - both teams at the discretion of the coaching staffs

Unless otherwise indicated, all players should wear non-cleated cross-trainers for indoor practices. Players are reminded to bring sufficient water to practice to avoid dehydration (water at games will be supplied). Practices will move outside (likely West Park Secondary School in St. Catharines) as soon as practicable, hopefully by mid-May. It is every player's responsibility to notify in advance the head coach (or his designee) if the player will be late or absent for any practice. Please also provide as much notice as possible for any games missed due to vacation or other known absence.

**7) 2005 Schedule** This tentative schedule is provided for planning purposes only - actual days/times have yet to be finalized. A confirmed schedule will be provided when available.

Date	Time	Team	Opponent	Home/Away
SAT. MAY 28	12:30	Jr. Varsity	STEEL CITY	HOME
SAT. MAY 28	4:30	Varsity	STEEL CITY	HOME
June 4 weekend		Jr. Varsity	Halton	Away
June 4 weekend		Varsity	Halton	Away
SAT. JUNE 11	12:30	Jr. Varsity	TWIN CITIES	HOME
SAT. JUNE 11	4:30	Varsity	HURONIA	HOME
SAT. JUNE 18	12:30	Jr. Varsity	BRANTFORD	HOME
SAT. JUNE 18	4:30	Varsity	BRANTFORD	HOME
June 25 weekend		Jr. Varsity	Etobicoke	Away
June 25 weekend		Varsity	Etobicoke	Away
FRI. JUNE 30	7:00	Jr. Varsity	Wentworth	Away
FRI. JUNE 30	8:30	Varsity	Wentworth	Away
July 16 weekend		Jr. Varsity	Toronto	Away
July 16 weekend		Varsity	Brampton	Away
SAT. JULY 23	12:30	Jr. Varsity	GUELPH	HOME
SAT. JULY 23	4:30	Varsity	GUELPH	HOME

Home games will be junior varsity/varsity doubleheaders and will take place at West Park Secondary School in St. Catharines. A \$5.00 admission fee will be charged, however a special family & friends ticket promotion (similar to last year) is in the works. It is again likely that some, if not all games will be covered by Cogeco TV.

Transportation will be provided for all away games. It is expected that all players will travel to/from away games on the team bus unless advance arrangements have been approved by the coaching staff. **Both Head Coaches' cell phone will be available during practices and en route to/from games in the event of an emergency.**

**8) Communications With Spears Coaching Staff** All of the time and energy of the coaching staff, particularly during the first six weeks, will be devoted to player assessment, development and game preparation. Your cooperation is sought in providing them with a necessary level of "insulation" from issues not related to these priorities. However, issues will invariably emerge and concerns/questions will need to be addressed. As a first option, we encourage players to attempt to directly resolve any issues through their coaches. Both head coaches have an open door policy with regard to players. Parents with issues that cannot be appropriately addressed at the player/coach level are encouraged to contact the appropriate General Manager. **Please do not contact any member of the coaching staff directly until the final roster has been determined.** Your assistance is appreciated.

We would also ask that parents/family/fans please respect our **"24 hour cool-off policy"**. Please wait a minimum 24 hours after a game before approaching coaches with "constructive criticisms" or concerns. However, compliments and congratulations are still welcome 24/7. Your assistance is appreciated!

**9) Sponsorship Leads and Volunteering** We are fortunate to have had **Landmark Window Systems** step forward as the team's principal "platinum" sponsor. As a namesake sponsor, their name/image will be prominently featured in all team advertising, promotions and apparel. However, there are a number of other reasonably priced opportunities for potential community sponsors. If you know of any local businesses who might be interested in supporting the team, please contact Tom Dagenais at (905) 227-9163 or at [dagenais@niagaraspears.com](mailto:dagenais@niagaraspears.com)

The team also appreciates your consideration in volunteering a few hours through the season to assist with a variety of game preparation activities. Additional information will be available on the website, or call Ed or Jamie. A minimum of two statisticians will also required for every game, home and away. Training will be provided.

**10) In Closing...** The arrival of the Niagara Landmark Window Spears is a labour of love for a few dozen committed volunteers who have already invested literally thousands of hours into making the franchise a success, both on and off the field. We are all in this for the right reasons - much like yourselves, we love football and recognize the potential for its positive influence on our children. Like all young organizations, mistakes have been and will continue to be made and we will

learn from them. But please never doubt that all decisions will always be based on the best interests of the team.

**What you can expect from the Niagara Spears Board of Directors and Coaches:**

- We will do our best to be good role models and set an example for players and parents alike...please join us in achieving this important goal;
- We will promote and maintain a positive environment for learning skills and developing teamwork;
- We will employ a zero tolerance policy towards foul language or behaviours/attitudes which are disrespectful to coaches, other players or officials.

**What your coaches and the league expect from parents, players and fans:**

- Please do not consume alcohol at practices or games;
- Cheer loudly, but verbal/physical abuse of officials, players or coaches will not be tolerated;
- During games (including halftime), please remain on the spectator side of the field;
- Check the website daily for updates on practices and other important info;
- Attendance will be taken at all practices and games; in the event a player cannot attend a practice/game, or to notify vacation absences, please call the designated attendance contact ASAP;
- Tell us what you think...we need to hear your comments, suggestions and constructive criticisms, but please respect our 24 hour cool-off policy; please consider an appropriate time and place; and please respect our philosophy on access to coaches during the six week assessment period.

**Thanks for your continued support and we look forward to a great season both on and off the field!**