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Late Rally Not Enough for Junior Spears

Despite 22 unanswered fourth quarter points, the Niagara Junior Varsity Spears (3-4-1) came up short Sunday, losing to the division-leading Steel City Ironmen (6-1) 38-25. The Ontario Varsity Football League game was played in front of a crowd of about 300 fans at West Park High School in St. Catharines.

It was all Ironmen in the first half, as quarterback Nick Williams connected with Nathan Lane for a 13-yard TD pass, and tailback Ryan Rowe rushed for two of his three touchdowns from 5 and 37 yards out. The Ironmen contained Niagara's usually potent ground attack, holding them to just 60 yards rushing on the day. Julian Tropea's 37-yard field goal was about all the offense the Spears could muster in the first half, going to the locker room trailing 20-3.

Steel City kicker Jordan Noble started the third quarter with a 33-yard field goal, Mitchell Callaghan ran the ball 26 yards for the major and Rowe's third rushing TD of the game stretched the Ironmen lead to 38-3. Things started to click for the Spears in fourth quarter however, as quarterback Matthew Beardwood threw back-to-back 5-yard TD passes to Wes Lund and Julian Tropea. Josh Hipperson's 1-yard rushing TD late in the fourth quarter made it interesting, but the Spears simply ran out of time.

Despite some impressive comeback wins this season, Head Coach Brian Duguay conceded that playing from behind finally caught up with his squad. "I've been telling our guys for a while now, that one of these days we're going to come up against a team who jumps out to a big lead and we're just not going to be able to catch them. Today was that day", said Duguay. "It's frustrating; we've got the players, but we really need to play 60 minutes of football."

Offensive Stats (Junior):

QB Derrick Peachy (Denis Morris): 5/10 for 36 yds
QB Matthew Beardwood (West Park): 6/8 for 91 yds, 2 TDs
RB Tyler Decou (St. Michael): 25 carries for 43 yds
FB Joshua Hipperson (Denis Morris): 4 carries for 14 yds, 1 TD
WR Gary Spero (Sir Winston Churchill): 6 catches for 89 yds
WR Wes Lund (St. Catharines Collegiate): 1 catch for 5 yds, 1 TD
K/TE Julian Tropea (St. Michael): 3/3 PAT, 1 rouge, 2 catches for 13 yds, 1 TD

Defensive Stats (Junior):

LB Adam Grilj (Blessed Trinity): 8½ tackles
LB Alex Hunchak (Centennial): 6½ tackles, 1 sack
DB Justin Hipperson (Denis Morris): 6½ tackles, 1 INT

Both Spears squads are back at home next Saturday in their final regular season games against the Mississauga Warriors. A JV Spears win over the undefeated Warriors or a Halton loss to Oshawa will send the Juniors to the playoffs. Meanwhile, the Varsity Spears (7-0) face a rematch of last years' thrilling OVFL Championship game, which the Spears won 25-22 in double overtime. The Juniors get under way at 12 noon and the Varsity game kicks off at 4:00pm at West Park.

Both Head Coaches would be pleased to speak with the media and may be contacted directly. Junior Varsity Head Coach Brian Duguay may be reached at (905)687-9396 (h), (905)327-2465 (c), or via e-mail at duguay@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 .

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

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