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Spears Keep On Winning

Both the Junior and Varsity teams of the Niagara Spears boast perfect 4-0 records at the halfway mark of the 2007 Ontario Varsity Football League season. The Varsity Spears (4-0) coasted to an easy 45-0 win over the Lions (0-4) in Sarnia, while the Junior squad (4-0) played from behind to defeat the K-W Twin Cities Predators (1-3) 27-12 in Kitchener. Both teams also coincidentally recovered their own punts for touchdowns Saturday.

Ricky Savage put the senior Spears on the board with a 1-yard plunge in the first quarter. Later in the half, Ryan Chmielewski picked up his own punt and ran it into the end zone to make it 14-0 Niagara. Quarterback Evan Burke connected with Jerimy Hipperson for a 35-yard TD pass and then ran one in himself from 11 yards out to give the Spears a 28-0 halftime lead. In the third quarter, Hipperson added a 27-yard rushing touchdown and Brandon Carrier ran 26 yards into the end zone to extend the lead to 42-0. The only score in the fourth quarter was an OVFL record-setting 49-yard field goal off the toe of Spears kicker Julian Tropea. **Final score: Niagara Spears - 45 Sarnia Lions - 0.**

Head Coach Dave Howe was happy with his team's play and once again grateful for the opportunity to rotate through his entire roster. "This is how we create depth and get better as a team", said Howe. Evan Burke, making his first start at quarterback this season was especially impressive. "He showed a lot of poise and composure tonight and made a lot of smart decisions. I think having a little competition at some of our key positions can be a healthy thing in the long run", said Howe.

OFFENSIVE STATS – VARSITY

QB Evan Burke: 11/16 passing for 153 yds, 1 passing TD, 1 rushing TD

RB Ricky Savage: 11 carries for 42 yds, 1 TD

RB Jerimy Hipperson: 3 carries for 46 yds, 1 rushing TD, 4 catches for 59 yds, 1 receiving TD

RB Brandon Carrier: 5 carries for 52 yds, 1 TD

P Ryan Chmielewski: recovered own punt for TD

K Julian Tropea: 6/6 PATs, 1/1 field goals from 49 yds (*new OVFL record*; previous mark of 47 yards set by Ara Tchobanian of the Ottawa Myers Riders in 2004)

DEFENSIVE STATS – VARSITY

DL Steve Cecchini: 3½ tackles, 2 sacks

LB Ryan Chmielewski: 4½ tackles, 1 sack

LB Ricky Savage: 3 ½ tackles

DB Jordan Duncan: 1½ tackles, 1 INT

DL Shane Baxter: 2½ tackles, 1 BK

DL Alex Tacinelli: 2 ½ tackles, ½ sack

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In Saturday's early game, the Junior Spears got off to a slow start, giving up 9 quick points in the first quarter. Quarterback Matt Beardwood connected with Jake Harper in the second quarter for a 25-yard TD catch to narrow the lead to 9-6. Late in the half, Justin Hipperson gave the Spears a 13-9 lead when he streaked down the field to fall on his own booming punt in the end zone. After giving up an early field goal, the rest of the second half belonged to the Spears, as Beardwood connected with Joe Fowler for a 14-yard TD strike and with Gary Spero for a 20-yard passing major. Zack Davis added a 2-point safety when he sacked the Predator quarterback in the end zone. **Final score: Niagara Spears – 27 K-W Twin Cities Predators – 12.**

Head Coach Brian Duguay characterized his team's first half as "abysmal". "We didn't see a lot of the heart or effort that we've come to expect from the Niagara Spears", said Duguay. "These guys have to do more than just show up". Duguay credited Hipperson's head-up play as a key turning point. "Fortunately, Justin was able to swing the momentum our way with that punt recovery...that set the tone for the rest of the game. We played more as a team and with a lot more passion and focus in the second half".

OFFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

QB Matt Beardwood: 9/20 passing for 106 yds, 3 TDs, 1 INT, 4 carries for 17 yds
RB Andrew Barry: 17 carries for 85 yds
RB Devon Egerter: 17 carries for 52 yds
RB Nathan Zavarella: 8 carries for 39 yds
WR Jake Harper: 4 catches for 45 yds, 1 TD
WR Gary Spero: 3 catches for 31 yds, 1 TD
WR Joe Fowler: 2 catches for 23 yds, 1 TD
P Justin Hipperson: recovered own punt for TD

DEFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

DB Darren Butcher: 1 tackle, 2 INTs, 1 BB
LB Ryan Saunders: 5½ tackles, 1 BK
LB Cody Rempel: 5½ tackles
DB Matt Panetta: 3 tackles, 1 INT, 1 BB
DB Atley White: 3½ tackles, 2 BB

NEXT UP: Both Spears teams are back at West Park in St. Catharines for a doubleheader next Saturday, June 23rd. The Junior Spears (4-0) take on the Halton Invictas (2-1) at 1:00pm while the Varsity Spears (4-0) take on the Invictas (0-4) at 5:00pm.

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)682-3754 (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 may be found at www.ovfootball.ca.

Thank you for your continued support. For more information, please contact:

Jamie Saunders, President
Niagara Varsity Football Club
(905) 684-5785 - home
(905) 329-7104 - cell
saunders@niagaraspears.com