

Team Expectations

All players from both teams will be subject to a common set of team rules, which have been developed to promote the understanding of expectations and to ensure consistency across both squads. These expectations will be distributed at, or before first indoor practice. Questions should be directed to the respective coaching staffs or the Governor/G.M.

2007 Schedule

The 2007 OVFL schedule has not yet been finalized, but will be posted on the Spears website as soon as it is available. It is expected that most home games will be played on Saturdays. However, unlike previous seasons, not all home games will be doubleheaders. Away games may be played on Friday night, Saturday or Sunday. It should not be assumed that JV and Varsity games will be played on the same day. All home games will take place at West Park Secondary School in St. Catharines. A \$5.00 admission fee will be charged. Some games are expected to be covered by TV Cogeco. Transportation will be provided for all away games. 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 phones will be on during practices and en route to/from games in the event of an emergency.**

Sponsorship and Volunteering

The Niagara Spears offer a number of innovative and mutually beneficial sponsorship opportunities. While the Niagara Spears Football Club does not rely on traditional fundraising programs, we do count on parents and players to actively promote Spears sponsorship opportunities where possible and appropriate. Anyone interested in obtaining or passing along information on Spears sponsorship are encouraged to contact Director of Sponsorship Andrea Bone at (905)358-0009 or bone@niagaraspears.com. Your efforts will help keep registration fees in check this season and in future.

The team also counts heavily on the generosity of our players' families and friends by volunteering a few hours through the season to assist with a variety of gameday activities. For additional information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Gerarda Savoie at (905)295-7580 or volunteers@niagaraspears.com. A minimum of two statisticians will also be required for every game, home and away. Training will be provided.

In Closing...

The Niagara 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 will 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.

2007 Niagara Spears Executive

Jamie Saunders - President
Alex Tacinelli - Vice-President
Andrea Bone - Treasurer
Tim Hough - Secretary
Mark Fortier - Governor/G.M. - Junior
Grant Phillips - Governor/G.M. - Varsity

Brian Duguay - Head Coach - Junior
Dave Howe - Head Coach - Varsity
Ed Fortier - Director
Stan Reid - Director
Greg Smith - Director
Dave Whiteley - Director



2007 Player and Parent Handbook

Welcome to the fourth season of **Niagara Spears Football!!!** The purpose of this handbook is to provide players and parents with the who, what, where, when, why of the coming season, along with a clear picture of what you can expect from the Spears and what your team expects from its players and families. While we have tried to anticipate most questions, emerging issues will be addressed in newsletters, by coaching staffs and on the Spears website, located at www.niagaraspears.com.

A Brief History

The Niagara Varsity Football Club was formed as a non-profit corporation in 2003 with a goal of fielding a Junior Varsity (16 & under) and a Varsity (19 & under) football team in the Ontario Varsity Football League. The NVFC, in conjunction with the Region's Minor and High School programs, is committed to building bridges of opportunity through football for the youth of the Niagara Region. A Junior Varsity Niagara Spears team took the field for the first time in 2004. A Varsity squad was added in 2005, turning heads across the province as they stormed their way to an OVFL championship in just their first season of competition. Notably, both Spears Head Coaches received "Coach of the Year" honours in their respective rookie seasons, and Varsity Coach Dave Howe also received the 2005 City of St. Catharines "Sportsman of the Year" award.

In 2007, the Ontario Varsity Football League will field over two dozen teams from across the province in each Division. The OVFL's mandate is to encourage the upgrading of skills at an elite level, while enhancing opportunities for players to continue their post-secondary education. Hundreds of OVFL alumni are today playing University football in both the U.S. and Canada, and several have gone on to professional careers in both the CFL and NFL. In three short years, the Niagara Spears have made a tremendously positive first impression with players, parents, and the community. Home games, which routinely attract 400+ fans, receive extensive media coverage and are broadcast locally by TV Cogeco. In 2007, both Spears teams are looking forward to another year of outstanding football, while promoting the concepts of teamwork, commitment and mutual respect.

Coaching Staffs

We are truly fortunate that so many outstanding football coaches from the Region have stepped up to assist with this year's teams. Both Dave Howe (Varsity) and Brian Duguay (Junior) will be returning to the Spears as Head Coaches in 2007. Coaching staffs from both teams are once again committed to a "program" approach to conditioning, practice structure, drills, even play-calling. Having both teams working together whenever possible will help ensure consistency and ease the transition for players as they move from JV to Varsity.

Position	Name	Home	Cell	E-mail
JV Head Coach	Brian Duguay	905-687-9396	905-327-2465	duguay@niagaraspears.com
JV Governor/GM	Mark Fortier	905-356-6391	905-380-3011	fortier@niagaraspears.com
Varsity Head Coach	Dave Howe	905-682-3754	905-321-0973	howe@niagaraspears.com
Varsity Governor/GM	Grant Phillips	905-346-3085	289-241-1863	phillips@niagaraspears.com

Equipment With the exception of cleats, all football equipment is provided (Players electing to wear any of their own equipment require advance inspection/approval of coaching staff). With each set of equipment valued at over \$800, we expect that appropriate respect will be shown regarding its care and maintenance. Players/parents are responsible for keeping equipment tight, and for bringing problems or deficiencies to the attention of coaching staff. A detailed inventory will be signed by each player. All Spears equipment will be handed in following the last game of the season - **no exceptions**. Equipment not returned will be invoiced on September 1, 2007 at full replacement value. Players/parents will be responsible for equipment that is lost and/or damaged through negligence.

Please note that OVFL rules prohibit the use of visors. While players with a documented medical condition may apply to the League for permission to wear a clear or yellow (UV) visor, this practice is not recommended by the Niagara Spears. Questions should be directed the Spears athletic therapy team or general manager.

The extraordinary contributions of **Riddell Canada** are worthy of special mention. 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 is available and copies of the complete Riddell catalogue are available for loan. Dave Whiteley (905-871-1453) would be pleased to answer your questions and provide information and guidance.

Team Fees 2007 player fees are \$475 - an increase of \$25 from last year, attributable to rising league fees and the provision of a team golf shirt (new for 2007). A non-refundable tryout fee of \$100, payable at registration, covers League insurance and indoor facility costs. The \$375 balance is payable upon notification that the player has made the team's final roster, or **May 18th** (whichever comes later). **Players will not participate in games until full team fees have been paid.** A limited number of bursaries are available to players/families with limited financial means. However, it is the responsibility of the player/family to bring financial challenges to the attention of the team's Governor/General Manager by **May 18th**. **No consideration will be given for any form of financial relief after this date.**

NOTE: Beginning in 2007, the Government of Canada will provide a non-refundable tax credit on eligible amounts of up to \$500 paid by parents to register a child (16 or under at any time during the taxable year) in an eligible program of physical activity. There is little question that Niagara Spears will be deemed an eligible program. More information may be found at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/whatsnew/fitness-e.html>.

Player Evaluations Both teams are expected to field final rosters of approximately 55 players. More than 100 prospects are likely to participate in each team's evaluations. A player's athleticism, football skills and experience will naturally factor into the team selection process. However, the 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, commitment to attendance at practices will also be an important factor.

All of the time and energy of our coaching staffs, particularly during the six-week evaluation period, will be devoted to player development and assessment. The cooperation of parents and families is sought in providing coaches with a necessary level of "insulation" from issues not related to these priorities. In the event a concern is identified, players are encouraged **as a first option** to discuss and resolve issues directly with their coaches. Parents with issues that cannot be appropriately addressed at the player/coach level may request an appointment through the Governor/G.M. We would also ask that parents/families/fans please respect our **UU"24 hour cool-off" policy**. Please wait a minimum 24 hours after a game before approaching coaches with "constructive criticisms" or concerns.

In terms of assigning positions, players and families alike must respect that in all cases, decisions will be made with the best interests of the team in mind. Roster depth should ensure that there is little need for players to play both ways. However, in light of 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.

It must be stressed that both Niagara Spears teams are elite teams representing the best the Niagara Region has to offer. **Expectations of "equal playing time" or the presumption 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 every reasonable effort to ensure that all players see the field during game situations.

First Aid/Medical Nothing is more important than the safety and well being of our players. The Niagara Spears have extended the OVFL rule which ensures qualified medical personnel at each home and away game to include practices, as well. It is the responsibility of parents and players to ensure that a player's health card (or copy) is available at all practices and games. We want nothing to compromise a player's ability to receive immediate care. Completion in full of a Spears medical history form is mandatory. **Please advise the Head Coach or a member of our athletic therapy staff 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 services to Spears players on a priority or reduced fee basis is available. OVFL insurance (included in you registration fee through the Ontario Football Alliance) may cover some or all of the cost of some treatments and/or prosthetics/braces. An information sheet summarizing coverages and claim procedures will be available at or before first practice.

Players should also be aware that the OVFL has committed to the implementation of a drug testing program for both performance-enhancing and recreational drugs. While the League has yet to inform teams as to the start date for random testing, an educational program will be mandatory for all teams in 2007. More information will be provided as it is received from the League.

Practices First indoor practices are scheduled for the week immediately following March Break (March 21st) at the Niagara SportsPlex in Niagara Falls. Our practice schedule is still being finalized, but will be posted along with directions on the Spears website. Players are reminded to bring sufficient water to practice to avoid dehydration (water at games is supplied). It is hoped that practices will move to West Park Secondary School in St. Catharines by mid-May. It is the player's responsibility to notify in advance the head coach (or his designee) if they 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.

