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Niagara Varsity Spears Dominate Essex Ravens

After a rusty first half, the Niagara Spears Varsity squad found another gear in the second half, defeating the Essex Ravens 35-15 Saturday in Lasalle. The Junior Spears fell to the Ravens 27-6 in the first game of the Ontario Varsity Football League doubleheader.

Capitalizing on three Niagara first half turnovers, the Junior Ravens scored a touchdown and two field goals to take a 13-0 lead into halftime. Two more third quarter touchdowns from Alex Brockman and Josh Deehan gave the Ravens a 27-0 lead. A fourth quarter 5-yard rushing major from Spears running back David Handley accounted for the Spears' lone score. The Junior Spears need a win against London next Saturday and help from two other teams to make the playoffs.

POST-GAME COMMENTS FROM SPEARS JUNIOR HEAD COACH BRIAN DUGUAY:

"Once again, our offense came out a little flat and our defense was on the field too long. Our defense played well once they adjusted to Essex's unorthodox offensive formation. It was confusing at first – they literally had 10 players in the box and it was difficult to read what was happening with the ball. We'll have a tough game against London next week. And even with a win we'll need some help to make the post-season."

OFFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

QB Matt Woehl: 8/24 passing for 124 yds, 2 interceptions

RB David Handley: 13 carries for 66 yds, 1 TD; 2 catches for 20 yds

RB Jordan Kewll: 11 carries for 36 yds

WR Curtis Kelly: 4 catches for 81 yds

K Mitchell McMullen: 0/1 FG (missed from 32 yds), 1/1 PAT

DEFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

DL Ian Marouf: 5 tackles, 2 batted balls, 1 fumble recovery

LB Devon Miller: 5 tackles

DL Hunter Bowman: 4½ tackles, 1 batted ball

DB Justin Hipperson: 4½ tackles

DL Aaron Dekker: 4 tackles

LB Brad Souter: 3½ tackles

The Spears' varsity game was a repeat match-up of last year's Conference Final, which saw Niagara lose 36-29 in triple overtime. It was slow going early on, as a 34-yard field goal from Ravens kicker Josh Willis accounted for the only first half points and a 3-0 Essex halftime lead. After a two-week layoff, the Spears looked to be rust-free in the second half however, scoring two touchdowns in the first 32 seconds. Jon Candeloro set the tone on the opening kickoff with a stunning 99-yard touchdown return. On the Ravens' next offensive play, Spears linebacker David Postman intercepted Ravens quarterback Austin Kennedy's pass and scampered 26 yards into the end zone, giving the Spears a 14-3 lead. After an Essex punt, Spears quarterback Nick Coutu then connected with receiver Gary Spero on a 55-yard touchdown strike. After driving deep into the Spears red zone, it was then Ryan Miller's turn to pick off Kennedy and he made the best of it, streaking 96 yards untouched into the Ravens end zone. In the fourth quarter, two more Spears interceptions from Jordan Duncan and David Kirwin helped set up a 27-yard TD pass from Coutu to Michael Fortino, extending the Spears lead to 35-3. Two late Essex touchdowns closed the gap to 35-15, but both two point-after attempts failed.

→ OVER →

POST-GAME COMMENTS FROM SPEARS VARSITY HEAD COACH DAVE HOWE:

“This was our first game in three weeks, and the rust really showed in the first half. Our defense stepped up early, but we knew we had to execute better offensively. Jon’s kick-off return to open the second half was huge – it really gave us the spark we needed. Then Postman’s interception gave us even more momentum. We really had them on their heels after that. Niagara-Essex has evolved into quite a rivalry over the past few years, but there’s a lot of mutual respect and we play very similar styles. I suspect we’ll see them again in the playoffs. We’ve got London at home to finish the season, and they’re always dangerous. They’re one of the most physical teams in the League and they’re in a must-win situation.”

OFFENSIVE STATS - VARSITY

QB Nick Coutu: 6/8 for 120 yds, 2 TDs

RB Andrew Barry: 13 carries for 83 yds

RB Devon Egerter: 11 carries for 21 yds

WR Gary Spero: 3 catches for 67 yards, 1 TD

WR/K Michael Fortino: 3 catches for 53 yds, 1 TD; 0/2 FG (missed from 40 & 29 yds), 5/5 PAT

KR Jon Candeloro: kick returns of 26 & 99 yds, 1 TD

DEFENSIVE STATS - VARSITY

DE Zack Davis: 8 tackles

DB Ryan Miller: 6 tackles, interception returned 99 yds for TD

LB Josh Hipperson: 5½ tackles

LB David Postman: 5 tackles, interception returned 26 yds for TD

LB Mike Millar: 2½ tackles, 1 sack

DB Jordan Duncan: 1 tackle, interception

LB David Kirwin: 1 tackle, interception

NEXT UP: The Spears host the London Falcons in a doubleheader in the final regular season games at West Park on Saturday, July 19th. The Junior Spears (2-4-1) play London (6-1-1) at 12 noon and the Varsity Spears (6-1) host the senior Falcons (3-4) at 4pm.

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.ovflontario.com (**note new website address**).

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

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