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Spears Close Out Regular Season With Wins

Both the Junior and Varsity squads of the Niagara Spears closed out the regular season with wins over the visiting Guelph Bears Saturday. The Ontario Varsity Football League games were played at West Park in St. Catharines. A blocked extra point late in the game may have been the difference in the Varsity game, as the Spears hung on for a 17-13 win. In Junior action, Spears receiver Max Cameron scored a touchdown and broke the OVFL record for receiving yards in a season en route to a 22-17 victory.

The Varsity tilt was characterized by tough defense from both teams and a battle for field position. A single after a missed 26-yard field goal gave the Spears a short-lived 1-0 lead in the first quarter. The Bears took the lead in the second quarter as quarterback Jake Reinhart hit Cole Learn for a 33-yard TD pass. An 11-yard field goal from Spears kicker Lirim Hijrullahu closed the quarter and narrowed the Guelph lead to 7-4 at halftime. Kyle Mataya's 1-yard plunge to open the third quarter made it 10-7 Spears, and Matt Beardwood extended the lead to 17-7 later in the quarter, connecting with Alex Charette on a 14-yard TD strike. The Bears clawed their way back into the game however, closing the gap to 17-13 on an 18-yard TD pass from Reinhart to receiver James Ingram to open the fourth quarter. But Matt Baxter managed to get a hand on the ensuing point-after attempt, preserving a critical 4-point Spears lead with the clock winding down. After forcing the Spears to punt, the Bears put together an impressive final drive, and almost took the lead when receiver Jake Pearsall dropped a sure TD pass in the end zone. Facing fourth down and long, and unable to settle for a field goal, Guelph's final pass fell incomplete and the Spears took a knee to close the game. With the win, Niagara claims the fifth playoff seed in the Adam Conference and will travel to Sault Ste. Marie for a wildcard game against the Sabrecats next weekend. The Spears lost to the Sault 24-14 in a June 6th regular season game. This marks the fifth consecutive year the senior Spears have made the playoffs, since joining the league in 2005.

Comments from Varsity Head Coach Dave Howe: *"This felt like a playoff game right from the start. Both teams were fighting for the post-season and it showed. We played a very disciplined game – back to basics, nothing fancy, just hard-nosed, very physical football. I'm pretty sure that only three penalties is a team record. I liked our running game today, especially in the second half. I have a lot of respect for Guelph – they always play us tough. (Bears quarterback Jake) Reinhart is very talented, athletic and was difficult to contain. You don't see too many quarterbacks playing linebacker, and doing it well. While we're certainly not excited about the drive, we are looking forward to playing the Sabrecats again. We came out a little flat last time and I know we're capable of giving them a game this time around."*

OFFENSIVE STATS - VARSITY

QB Matt Beardwood: 9/19 passing for 122 yds, 1 TD

RB Stephen Muzamhindo: 9 carries for 45 yds

SB Kyle Mataya: 10 carries for 38 yds, 1 TD

RB Zac Davis: 13 carries for 29 yds

WR Jake Harper: 2 catches for 36 yds

WR Jimmy Farhat: 2 catches for 24 yds

WR Alex Charette: 2 catches for 22 yds, 1 TD

K Lirim Hijrullahu: 1/2 FG (missed from 26 yds, made from 11 yds, 1/2 PAT

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DEFENSIVE STATS - VARSITY

LB Adam Grilj: 6 tackles, 1 sack, 1 BB
LB Jack Rush: 5½ tackles
DB Justin Hipperson: 6 tackles
DL Matt Baxter: 5 tackles, 1 sack, 1 BK
LB Ryan Saunders: 4½ tackles
DL Ian Marouf: 3½ tackles, 1½ sacks
DB Keil Elliott: 1 tackle, 1 INT

In the Junior half of the doubleheader, Jordan Clout’s 2-yard rushing major on the Spears’ opening drive gave Niagara a 7-0 lead. After Mac Myers returned the ensuing kickoff 75 yards for a Bears touchdown, Niagara regained the lead on quarterback Matt Woehl’s 2-yard keeper. Woehl then connected with Max Cameron on a 4-yard TD pass to extend the lead to 21-7. A single off a Niagara punt and a 15-yard Guelph field goal closed out first half scoring, as the Spears took a 22-10 lead into halftime. After a scoreless third quarter, fourth quarter interceptions from Niagara’s Johnny Lapenna and Josh March, and a Guelph turnover-on-downs kept the Bears defense on the field. A 27-yard Guelph TD pass in the dying seconds closed the gap to 22-17, but Niagara recovered the ensuing onside kick and took a knee to seal the victory. In finishing the day with 7 catches for 89 yards, Spears receiver Max Cameron broke a five year-old OVFL record for receiving yards in a season with 868 yards.

Comments from Junior Head Coach Brian Duguay: *“It was so nice to see all three aspects of the game come together today. I’m really happy for the players to have been able to finish the season on such a high note. I know we played better than our record shows this year and it’s nice to finish with a win. I was especially happy to see Max get the record today. He’s a really talented kid, but I’m sure he’d be one of the first to tell you that he had a very strong supporting cast this season. (Quarterback) Matt Woehl has led the league in passing for most of the year and they both benefited from solid blocking support.”*

OFFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

QB Matt Woehl: 8/15 passing for 112 yds, 1 TD
RB Jordan Clout: 18 carries for 88 yds, 1 catch for 23 yds
RB Paul Redman: 5 carries for 30 yds
WR Max Cameron: 7 catches for 89 yds, 1 TD
K Alessandro Arghittu: 3/3 PAT

DEFENSIVE STATS - JUNIOR

DB Matt Furgiule: 5 tackles
DL Alan Flores: 4 tackles
DL Aaron Decker: 3 tackles, 1 sack, 1 BK
DB Josh March: 2 tackles, 1 BB, 1 INT
DB Johnny Lapenna: 1½ tackles, 1 INT

NEXT UP: The Niagara Junior Spears (3-5) have been eliminated from playoff competition. The Varsity Spears (5-3) will travel to Sault Ste. Marie on Saturday July 25th for a first round playoff games against the Sabrecats. An anticipated game time of 7:00 has yet to be confirmed.

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The complete 2009 Niagara Spears schedule, with results to date, is attached

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), (289)213-6791 (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.

The Niagara Varsity Spears will continue to practice at 6:00pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights at West Park. Members of the media are welcome to stop by to speak with coaches and players.

Additional information on the Niagara Spears may be found at www.niagaraspears.com. **Gameday pictures are available upon request.** Additional information on the Ontario Varsity Football League may be found at www.ovflontario.com.

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

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		<h1 style="margin: 0;">2009 Schedule</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Current as of July 19, 2009.</p>			
TEAM	DATE	TIME	VENUE	VISITOR	HOME
Junior	Sat May 23	12:00	West Park	Hamilton Ironmen - 42	Niagara Spears - 7
Varsity	Sat May 23	4:00	West Park	Hamilton Ironmen - 39	Niagara Spears - 7
Junior	Sat May 30	1:00	St. Marcellinus HS	Niagara Spears - 6	Mississauga Warriors - 24
Varsity	Sat May 30	4:00	St. Marcellinus HS	Niagara Spears - 13	Mississauga Warriors - 3
Junior	Sat Jun 6	1:00	Loyalist Collegiate	Niagara Spears - 14	Kingston Grenadiers - 15
Varsity	Sat Jun 6	7:00	Rocky Dipietro Field	Niagara Spears - 14	Sault Ste. Marie Sabrecats - 24
Junior	Sat Jun 13	12:00	West Park	Georgetown Crimson Tide - 7	Niagara Spears - 57
Varsity	Sat Jun 13	4:00	West Park	York Simcoe Storm - 8	Niagara Spears - 43
Junior	Sat Jun 20	12:00	West Park	Halton Cowboys - 0	Niagara Spears - 61
Varsity	Sat Jun 20	4:00	West Park	Halton Cowboys - 7	Niagara Spears - 37
Junior	Sat Jun 27	3:30	Essex High School	Niagara Spears - 29	Essex Ravens - 38
Varsity	Sat Jun 27	7:00	Essex High School	Niagara Spears - 26	Essex Ravens - 42
	Sat Jul 4	B Y E W E E K			
Junior	Sat Jul 11	2:00	Gretzky Centre	Niagara Spears - 12	Brantford Bisons - 20
Varsity	Sat Jul 11	8:00	Gretzky Centre	Niagara Spears - 35	Brantford Bisons - 0
Junior	Sat Jul 18	4:00	West Park	Guelph Bears - 17	Niagara Spears - 22
Varsity	Sat Jul 18	12:00	West Park	Guelph Bears - 13	Niagara Spears - 17
Playoffs	Sat Jul 25	WILD CARD GAMES			
	Sat Aug 1	CONFERENCE SEMI-FINALS			
	Sat Aug 8	CONFERENCE FINALS			
	Sat Aug 15	LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP			