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Tigers building lead atop OJHL?s North division



By Jake Courtepatte

Loaded with experience, this year's pack of Aurora Tigers seem to know how to handle late-season pressure.

Matched with the Wellington Dukes at 66 points atop the entire NorthEast conference, the Tigers are now enjoying a six-point spread in the North division, their largest lead of the season, with only eight games left on the OJHL schedule.

Despite picking up at least a point in nineteen of their last twenty games, a rare defensive blip actually cost the Tigers a pair of points on Thursday in Oakville, where Bradley Van Schubert was pulled from the net before the end of the second period against the Blades.

Facing a 3 ? 1 deficit early in the second period, Brock Welsh and Rizvan Mansurov notched a pair of quick goals to tie the game at three, though Oakville took a 4 ? 3 lead into the third period after Van Schubert allowed his fourth goal on just eighteen shots.

Backup Jack Irvine didn't fare much better in the third period against the Oakville snipers, who quickly deposited three more goals to put the game out of reach, with a final score of 8 ? 5.

Welsh, Joseph Mizzi, and captain Jake Bricknell each had a two-point night for the Tigers.

A return to form was all but expected for one of the league's top goaltenders, who was back between the pipes on Sunday to face the division rival Markham Royals.

The tenacious tender made 26 stops on 28 shots to secure his twentieth win of the season, the most among goalies in the conference.

The 5 ? 2 win was marked by three-point performances from both Bricknell, who capped off two goals with an assist, and Austin Eastman, who had three helpers.

The win distances the Tigers even farther from their competition, now leaving Markham in the dust with two games in hand and an eleven point advantage.

The Newmarket Hurricanes, locked in a tight battle with the Tigers all season for division supremacy, dropped games against both the Cobourg Cougars and North York Rangers over the weekend to fall six points back of Aurora.

Another ?Battle of Yonge Street? comes this Thursday in the second-to-last meeting of the season between the rival squads, with the Tigers visiting the Hurricanes at Ray Twinney Arena. They meet again once more in Aurora next Friday.

In the meantime, the next Tigers home game goes this Friday against the Stouffville Spirit at the Aurora Community Centre. Puck drop is set for 7:30 p.m.

The regular season officially ends on February 24.

For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.