Tigers clinch division title with road win



By Jake Courtepatte

With two games left in the 2016-17 OJHL season, the Aurora Tigers were marred in a four-game losing streak, over twenty points out of a playoff spot, and simply going through the motions to end a tired and wasted season.

Flash forward to 2017-18, where the Tigers are able to rest easy heading into the final weekend of the regular season, having clinched the North division title.

In what can only be thought of as well-planned scheduling, the Tigers took on their Yonge Street rivals the Newmarket Hurricanes for the third time this month on Friday, Aurora's main competition for the division title.

The heated affair got going early with a handful of powerplays and penalty kills, allowing Brock Welsh to capitalize on the man advantage just over eight minutes in.

Newmarket quickly tied the game, though Aurora took a 2 ? 1 lead into the first intermission thanks to another powerplay marker from Anthony Romano.

Jack Irvine would shut the door for the Tigers the rest of the way, while Welsh added another and Jake Bricknell as well in a 4 ? 1 win.

Needing just two points to secure the division, they tackled the Whitby Fury on the road on Sunday, a team headed the other way and lightyears away from a playoff position.

Welsh once again got the Tigers on the board early taking advantage of the first powerplay of the game with a one-timer from the top of the slot.

The Fury rebounded to tie the game just over two minutes later, though it was captain Bricknell that netted the game winner in the first two minutes of the second period.

Jack Irvine picked up the win for the Tigers, stopping 24 of the 25 shots he faced, having provided solid backup duties to regular starter Bradley Van Schubert all season. Considered an up-and-comer in the Tigers system in his first year of junior play, Irvine's .910 save percentage in 22 games this season has played a key role in providing relief for Van Schubert, whose save percentage has consistently ranked in the top five of goaltenders all season.

A Wellington loss on Monday night also made sure the Tigers boast the title of Conference champions as well, having chased the Dukes in the category for most of the season. Aurora's record of 35-12-1-4 sits four points up on the Dukes, each with two games left on the schedule.

Interestingly enough, the Tigers are poised to take on the eighth-place Trenton Golden Hawks in the first playoff round barring any last-minute changes, who have reached the OJHL finals the past two seasons including a championship in 2016.

The Golden Hawks won the season series two games to one, along with a 0 ? 0 tie, one of three games between the teams to reach overtime.

Fans can preview the playoff-bound NorthEast division champions in a final pair of home regular season games this weekend, a rare back-to-back beginning with hosting the Pickering Panthers on Friday followed by the Lindsay Muskies on Saturday.

Game times are both set for 7:30 p.m.
For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.