

Aurora Tigers advance to OJHL NorthEast semifinal



By Jake Courtepatte

By mid-March of last year, the Aurora Tigers were thinking more golf clubs than hockey sticks.

One year later, the Junior A club is moving on to the second round of the OJHL playoffs, bouncing the 2016-17 league runners-up from the postseason in six games.

The first team to eliminate the perennial powerhouse Trenton Golden Hawks in the opening round since the 2012-13 season, Aurora reached the second round for the first time since their trip to the league final in 2014 by ousting the Hawks in six games.

Up 2 ? 0 in the best-of-seven series and looking to take a stranglehold in Game Three last Wednesday in Aurora, the Tigers let the Golden Hawks draw their first blood with a double overtime win in which the Tigers dominated the play.

Only their second double overtime needed all season, fans at the Aurora Community Centre stuck around until close to midnight to witness what was sure to be an Aurora winner after throwing 48 shots at the Trenton net, though it was Trenton who walked away the winners after beating Bradley Van Schubert on a two-on-one.

They rebounded two days later with some overtime magic of their own, leaving them just one win shy of moving on after Joseph Mizzi potted both the third period tying goal and the overtime winner.

After the Hawks stayed alive to force Game Six in the third overtime contest in a row back in Aurora, it was on the road Monday night where the Tigers put the series to bed.

Trenton looked poised to push the series to a seventh and deciding game by taking an early 2 ? 0 lead, though Aurora clawed back to tie before the second intermission with marks from Austin Eastman and Elijah Gonsalves.

With a Trenton player in the box and under nine minutes to play in regulation, Brock Welsh provided the eventual series winner, while adding an empty net goal in the dying seconds for a final score of 4 ? 2.

With one series yet to be determined in the NorthEast Conference, the Tigers wait in anticipation of their second round opponent.

The third-place Newmarket Hurricanes sent the sixth-place Markham Royals packing, while the fifth-place Cobourg Cougars topped the fourth-place Kingston Voyageurs in five games.

Aurora is tentatively set to take on Cobourg in round two, dependent on a possible upset in the seventh and final game of the series between the second-place Wellington Dukes and seventh-place Pickering Panthers.

As conference champions, Aurora draws the lowest seeded opponent and home ice throughout the postseason.

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