

Tigers shake up roster with end of year moves

By Jake Courtepatte

The kings of the jungle are improving their pride.

The top-ranked Aurora Tigers made a pair of roster moves over the holidays in an attempt to improve upon their five-point lead atop the Ontario Junior Hockey League's North division, including a surprise trade of top goaltender Jack Irvine.

A one-for-one deal with the Mississauga Chargers last Friday saw the marathon man swapped for fellow tender Lucas Durante, a veteran of three seasons with the Chargers and a native of Brampton.

Irvine, between the pipes for close to 1,400 minutes this season for the Tigers, saw his production drop as of late with losses in three of his last four games before being shipped to Mississauga.

Durante saw action in 22 games with the Chargers this season, posting a .901 save percentage, before earning the win in his Tigers debut on December 21 against the Stouffville Spirit.

Looking for redemption from a loss to the Spirit six days prior, the Tigers took to the ice at the Aurora Community Centre and got some surprise early help, with Mauro Biasutto potting his second goal of the year just over three minutes into the game.

Durante was beaten for his first as a Tiger midway through the first period on an unfamiliar penalty kill system, though Joseph Mizzi put the Tigers up 2 ? 1 before the buzzer to bring his league-leading goal total to 25 on the year, one up on the Buffalo Jr. Sabres' Adam Tretowicz.

After a scoreless second period, a flurry of tallies in the third period saw Mizzi add two more for his second hat trick of the season, including a late empty-netter to ice the game at 5 ? 3.

Markus Paterson also found the back of the net for the Tigers, while Durante picked up his first win in the black and gold while stopping 24 of the 27 pucks he faced.

A contest the next night in Brampton to face the Admirals had Durante bombarded with shots early, facing 20 in the first period alone and a total of 50 on the night.

He was able to stop 43, with the Tigers dropping the game 7 ? 3 after falling behind 2 ? 0 less than a minute into the first period.

Mizzi, Paterson, and Jacob Ball recorded goals for the Tigers.

The Tigers also added some depth late last week up the wing in acquiring some OHL experience in right winger Rhys Forhan, claimed from the North Bay Battalion after clearing waivers last week.

Forhan was a second-round pick by North Bay in the 2016 OHL Priority Selection from the York Simcoe Express Minor Midgets.

The Bradford, ON resident scored four goals and added 11 assists for 15 points in 100 games over two-plus seasons with the Battalion.

The eighteen-year-old is yet to reach the scoresheet for his new junior A club.

The Tigers head into the new year with a record of 21-13-2-0, five points clear of the 16-13-2-5 Newmarket Hurricanes. They remain nineteen-points back of the league-leading Oakville Blades, who top the NorthWest conference at 30-3-1-2.

The Tigers are back in action Friday, January 4 to face the St. Michael's Majors on the road in an inter-conference matchup, before visiting the Hurricanes in a pivotal game the following afternoon.

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