This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Thu Mar 28 11:57:19 2024 / +0000 GMT

Tigers bow out to Hurricanes in OJHL playoffs

By Jake Courtepatte

A rollercoaster season met with a fizzle for the Junior A Aurora Tigers on Thursday, who bowed out to the Newmarket Hurricanes in Game Five of their first round Ontario Junior Hockey League series.

Down three games to one in the best-of-seven and needing a win in Thursday's Game Five in Newmarket, the Tigers were first on the board thanks to a sweet pass from Tyler Davis to linemate Jack Varga, though Newmarket's Derek Sweeney beat Aurora goalie Lucas Durante before the first buzzer to tie it up.

A goalie battle ensued for most of the next thirty minutes, before the only other marker of the game came off the stick of Newmarket's Jalen Balbosa early in the third, hanging on with his teammates the rest of the way for the 2 ? 1 win and series victory.

For the Hurricanes, the series finale marks the next step in a continuous rise to the top since the new year. For the Tigers, it marks a fitting end to what has been a tailspin for the team since mid-December.

A free fall of just four wins in their final twenty regular season games met the Tigers, who in the early stages of the OJHL season seemed an obvious answer to clinch the North division. The loss of league-leading scorer Joseph Mizzi to the ECHL pro rankings in February did nothing to help the cause.

Penalty trouble seemed to plague the Tigers throughout the playoffs, as it did during the regular season as one of the league's most penalized teams. The 4 ? 1 loss in game four last Wednesday, in what appeared to be the final nail in the coffin, featured thirty minutes in the sin bin for the Aurora squad: one which included the 3 ? 1 powerplay goal late in the second period.

For those still looking to follow along with the OJHL postseason, it will be another all-York Region matchup in the conference semifinals, where the Hurricanes will be pitted against the Markham Royals. The first-place Royals knocked out the Georgetown Raiders in their opening round series.

The Oakville Blades also bested the Brampton Admirals in five games to reach their semifinal, while the Buffalo Jr. Sabres and Burlington Cougars are still looking to determine their winner all tied up at three games apiece.

On the other side of the board, the
North York Rangers will face the winner of either the St. Michael's Majors or Toronto Lakeshore Patriots, while the Wellington Dukes will take on the Whitby Fury in their respective semifinal series.