

Third period collapse keeps Tigers' losing streak alive



By Jake Courtepatte

All is not well in the Jungle.

For just the second time in franchise history, the Junior A Aurora Tigers have opened their season on an eight-game losing streak, a historic low for the club of over half a century.

Sunday's road match with the newly-minted Collingwood Colts was nothing short of a microcosm for the Tigers' season thus far, where a hefty third period lead was squandered to some familiar faces behind the bench.

The Colts were fresh out of some early morning news that saw head coach Greg Johnston relieved of his duties after three straight losses for the first year franchise, only to be replaced by Thomas Milne, a former Tigers head coach, as well as Darcy Roy, a former Tigers assistant.

It was Aurora who took advantage of that lack of player/coach familiarity in the first period, with Steven Li, Caleb Minns, and Bryce Young all finding the back of the net before the buzzer.

Andrew Langlois made it a four-goal cushion in the early goings of the second, before Collingwood found its legs in beating Aurora tender Andrew Barwinski twice by the midway point.

Langlois added another before the end of the second to take a 5 ? 2 lead.

Yet it was the Colts who stampeded into the third frame, spreading out three goals to send the game to overtime.

To add more fire to the flame, it was

Aurora native Adrian Nabuurs who tallied the overtime winning goal for the Colts just 25 seconds into the extra period, extending Aurora's winless streak.

Defensive struggles have proven to be the culprit for the Tigers lack of success early on: just one day earlier Aurora allowed a whopping 47 shots on Barwinski's net in a 4 ? 1 loss to the Trenton Golden Hawks, where Trevor Grasby's goal in the third period was the only mark for the Tigers on the scoresheet.

The Tigers first and only other time to open the season with eight straight losses was in the 1983-84 OJHL season, when the club went 4-34-4 to occupy the basement in league standings.

It's a tough start for a franchise looking to expand its fan base at the Aurora Community Centre, in a league where in most markets only on-ice success breeds fan loyalty.

Owner Jim Thomson and his staff have had early hopes of drawing the small yet loyal crowds from the former Newmarket Hurricanes from up Yonge Street, now the Collingwood team.

And while the Colts have ridden the wave of freshness to success in their first OJHL season, hosting around 600 fans for Sunday's match, the most recent Tigers game brought about just over 140 spectators.

Aurora will have one more opportunity to right the ship on the road to prove their worth before heading home to the ACC for a three-game home stand. They visit with the Pickering Panthers on Friday evening, who sits just a pair of points up on the Tigers with a record of 2-6-0-0.

They then host the St. Michael's Majors (3-4-0-3) on Saturday evening, with puck drop set for 7:30 p.m.

As it stands, the Tigers remain the only team in the OJHL yet to find themselves in the win column yet this season, with the Buffalo Jr. Sabres earning their first last weekend.

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