

## Meet Your 2020-2021 Aurora Tigers

Ontario Junior Hockey League players rarely find a home.

Players are constantly on the move. They're traded, released or simply opt to sign elsewhere. Wherever there is chance to play and wherever it will better their young hockey careers is the perennial decision.

Weaving in and out of teams is a tough gig and it's also tough to know who is really on the ice for your Town's team.

But in this hockey town, the energy and the vibes are different. Even the players agree, old and new alike.

Goaltender Christian Filippetti and defenceman Jonathan Balah are excited to return to the Aurora Tigers this year.

Newcomers such as defenceman Austin Heinrich and Anthony Issaris are also pumped to join Aurora's hometown hockey club.

Now, it's time to get to know the boys!

### **Christian Filippetti**

Filippetti was born two days after Christmas in 2001. The Nobleton native began playing hockey at three-years-old when his parents put him on skates.

Growing up, Filippetti became a Montreal Canadiens fan. He watched as the stalwart for Les Habitants, Carey Price, graced the blue ice in between the posts and he's idolized him ever since.

Filippetti played for the Guelph Jr. Gryphons U16 AAA and then the Don Mills Flyers U18 AAA before joining the Aurora Tigers two years back. There, he remembers his favourite save he's ever made.

?It was against the Newmarket Hurricanes. It was my first game in the OJ and the game was tied 2-2. With 10 seconds left, Newmarket got a breakaway chance on me and I made the save to send it to overtime where we won the game,? Filippetti says.

He returned this year to the Tigers because he believes the Tigers are a great organization and Team Governor Jim Thomson runs a professional team.

?We have a good group of guys returning and we are making some great additions. Overall, I feel it will be a very special team to be a part of.?

Off the ice, Filippetti loves playing video games and working out. If he can get his hands on a cheat meal, it's definitely pizza and ice cream. Don't tell the trainers that.

The netminder will look to improve on his .869 save percentage and 4.54 goals against average this year.

### **Jonathan Balah**

Born in St. Catherine's, Balah began skating when he was three. He began playing hockey when he was four, the same year he moved to Barrie.

He credits his father for getting him into hockey and since Balah became a defenceman, he has idolized the Florida Panthers number one blue-liner.

?The player I idolize is Aaron Ekblad. I have watched him since he was given exceptional status when he was in Barrie to now. I have always liked the way he played the game,? he said.

Balah played for the Barrie Colts U16 and U18 AAA teams. He played for the Brockville Braves in the CCHL and the Thorold Blackhawks in the GOJHL in 2018-2019 before securing a move to the Aurora Tigers last season.

And in his first year, Balah led the team in points. His favourite moment thus far as a Tiger is his goal against the Dukes.

?My favourite goal I've scored would probably be the one I scored against Wellington in the showcase last year.?

He returned to the Tigers this year because he wants to be a part of this group; he wants to be a part of the future.

Off the ice, Balah is addicted to caramel treats from Vachon. He shared his phobia of bees and wasps and he says all of those types of bugs ?scare him.?

### **Austin Heinrich**

Heinrich has had quite the resume.

Born in Springwater, ON, Heinrich also began playing at the age of four thanks to his dad.

He grew up watching Alexander Ovechkin and, because he's a defenceman, he looks up to Morgan Rielly and Jake Muzzin.

Heinrich makes his return to the Aurora Tigers following a six-game spell back in 2016-2017.

Most notably in his young hockey career is the past three years. He has played for the Soo Thunderbirds before spending two years south of the border playing for the Utah Outliers and the Corpus Christi IceRays.

?I joined the Tigers to help them win a championship in my final year of juniors,? he said.

Heinrich is ready to jump on to the blue line to give it his all for a run at the Buckland Cup.

### **Anthony Issaris**

From East Gwillimbury Issaris got himself into hockey. He loved watching the game and he decided to get on the ice.

Being a defenceman, he has looked up to Morgan Rielly on the Leafs. The former Stouffville Spirit man is set to join the Aurora Tigers blue-line, a team he has watched since he was young.

?I joined the Tigers because I grew up watching them since I was little and they're a great organization.?

The six-foot defenceman is a pizza lover like Filippetti. It looks like that might be a go-to dinner choice for the team should they order in!

### **By Robert Belardi**