

Aurora Tigers extend preseason winning streak ahead of Friday's home opener



By Jake Courtepatte

Stouffville Arena was packed last Saturday with fans young and old to kick off the 2014-2015 OJHL season with a matchup between the Aurora Tigers and Stouffville Spirit.

The Tigers came roaring out of the gates looking to impress after having finished first in the OJHL North Division last season.

Cameron Morrison put the Tigers on the board early, picking up a Todd Winder rebound in the slot and tucking it under the Spirit goaltender for the 1 - 0 lead less than two minutes into the season.

Tigers goaltender Andy Munroe was not challenged much in the first period, apart from stoning Stouffville's Matthew Dunlop on a shorthanded breakaway.

However, the Stouffville squad would not back down, killing off an extensive five-on-three powerplay to start the second.

The Spirit got their chance halfway through the period when Aurora's Matthew Bernard earned a double-minor penalty for high-sticking.

Kyler Challis would capitalize on the opportunity for the Spirit, going bar-down on Munroe over a sprawling Eric Williams to tie the game at one.

Liam Neuman would put the Tigers back on top five minutes later off a pretty pass by Keaton Ratcliffe. The Tigers took the lead to the dressing room, up 2 - 1 after two periods.

Early in the third, the Tigers would put up an early contender for goal of the year after Sam Quaranta was tripped up behind the net for a Tigers powerplay.

Breaking into the offensive zone, Daniel Mantenuto would split the defencemen, feeding Ratcliffe on the right side of the net. Ratcliffe picked up his second assist of the night, when he sent a one-time cross-crease pass to Nicholas Erb, camped out in front to double the Tigers' lead.

Michael Laidley would add some insurance a few minutes later when the puck squirted out to him at the Tigers' blue line creating a 2-on-1 with John Curran. Laidley would hold, roofing the puck over the goaltender's glove.

Nick Thomakos gave the Spirit some life only thirty seconds later, picking up his own rebound before going five-hole on Munroe to

cut the deficit to two.

However, the Tigers would ride Munroe's solid backstopping the rest of the game, making a couple of desperation saves to spoil the Spirit's season home opener.

Stouffville outshot Aurora 17 ? 6 in the third period.

The Tigers will be holding their home opener Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Aurora Community Centre. Aurora will host the Hamilton Red Wings, who failed to make the playoffs in the 2013-2014 season.

For player stats, schedules, and more, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreak.com.