

Aurora Tigers? losing skid hits eight games



By Jake Courtepatte

The playoff picture continues to fade for the young, rebuilding Aurora Junior A Tigers.

Three more losses over the weekend brings the OJHL's last-place team to a losing streak of eight regulation games, a first for the team since the reformatting of Ontario Junior Hockey in 2009.

A late third period goal was the decider in the Tigers' 5 - 4 road loss to the Lindsay Muskies Friday night, with Rory DiNiro, Evan Spencer, Kyle Berry and Tyler Davis getting on the board for Aurora.

Louis Vlahakis scored his first as a Tiger in the second period of Saturday's game against the Stouffville Spirit, but the party was ruined by three third period markers from the visiting team in a 3 ? 1 losing effort.

Sunday's matchup featured the Tigers hosting the Kingston Voyageurs, a rivalry usually chock-full of animosity. Both teams seemed to put it aside, however, in a high-scoring game focused more on pucks to the net than physical play.

Spencer opened the scoring for the Tigers, his sixth of the season, nine minutes in on a feed down low by Brandon MacKinnon.

However it was Kingston that took the lead into the first intermission, with Danny Bosio beating goaltender Jake Sabourin twice late, both on rebounds on the powerplay.

The rival squads exchanged second period goals, including Mel Melconian's team-leading 21st point as a Tiger, keeping the puck on a 4-on-2 and beating the Veas goalie low.

Both teams matched the other goal for goal in the third, with Kingston securing the victory with a minute and a half remaining. The final score was 6 ? 4.

Another busy week with the same results leads the Tigers further into the depths of the OJHL basement, having played at least three more games than any other team. Their record of 2-18-0-2 gives them six points on the season, two back of the Lindsay Muskies in the North division, albeit with five games in hand for the Muskies.

It is a far cry from the OJHL's most dominant team of the past four seasons, having led the North division in three and reaching the league final against the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots in 2013-14.

The Veas were the opponent who knocked the Tigers out of the conference semifinal round in 2014-15, Aurora's most successful regular season to date in finishing first in league standings.

?This organization has iced some really good hockey teams in the past,? said Veas defenseman Reid Russell, the only remaining member of either team from the 2014-15 season. ?We've seen what they're capable of, I think they just have a young team this season and we were able to take advantage of that.?

Things don't get any easier this week, with matchups against three teams far and beyond the .500 level. The Tigers visit the St. Mike's Buzzers on Thursday, then the Wellington Dukes on Friday, before returning home Sunday to host the Markham Royals. Puck drop Sunday is set for 7 p.m. at the Aurora Community Centre.

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