

Aurora's 4-3 comeback win over the Brantford 99ers ends Tigers' 7-game losing streak

The Tigers roared back to life at the ACC 'Jungle' on Friday night.

Aurora rallied from a 3-1 third period deficit with three goals in just under four minutes to edge the last-place Brantford 99ers 4-3. The stirring victory moved the Tigers (18-25-2-5) back into seventh place in their playoff race with Stouffville.

Coach Greg Johnston's struggling team lugged a seven-game losing streak into their game versus the 99ers. He complimented his players for 'battling really hard for the win.'

'It's a big win for us because it pushes us back in front of Stouffville in the standings.'

The veteran bench boss also praised Stefan Forgione's two-goal performance.

'Stef's first goal was huge to get us going, but his second goal really helped us. Godwin won a race for the puck and Forgione finished the play. It changed the momentum of the game in the third period.'

Coach Johnston reserved even more superlatives for Tigers goaltender Glen Crandell as a difference-maker, especially in the frantic final five minutes of the game.

'He got the win for us. If Glen doesn't make those big saves, we don't win the game. The guys battled in front of him and Glen turned back a very opportunistic team in the third period.'

Joseph Martino's game-winning-goal, on a deflection of Thanasi Marentette's slapshot from the point-- was also highlighted by Coach Johnston.

'Martino's a skilled kid who showed good hands on the goal. The fact that he went to the front of the net at a critical point of the period and deflected Nasi's shot from the point was the play of the game for us.'

Martino described his big goal to put the Tigers ahead to stay as something that 'really picked us up and filled us with confidence so we could take the momentum back.'

The hard-working Tigers forward also expressed relief that the seven-game losing streak was over.

'We were down in the dumps and going down 3-1 at the start of the third was tough. To come back and score three straight goals says a lot about our group. We treat each other as family and we need to keep battling, be ready to play, and get points in all our remaining games as we head to the playoffs.'

Martino, who was a relentless forechecker throughout the pivotal third period, credited his big goalkeeper for his saves with the game on the line.

'There are nights when Glen is so good, it's like he's from another planet. He's been huge for us all season, but his paddle save on Brantford's 6-on-5 opportunity might have been his best save of the season.'

To preserve the win, Crandall made two sensational saves with the Tigers pinned in their own zone after the 99ers had pulled their goalie and took a territorial advantage with their extra attacker for the final two minutes of play.

The Tigers-99ers tilt was tight from the outset as the teams skated to a 0-0 tie after twenty minutes of play. The 99ers, resplendent in

red jerseys, have languished through a tough season but put forth a lively effort against the home team at the ACC. Although Aurora jumped out to a 1-0 lead on Forgione's first goal of the game less than three minutes into the second period, the opportunistic 99ers struck back when Anthony Drekopoulos got behind three Tigers for a clear-cut breakaway and beat Crandall to tie the game 1-1.

Further defensive lapses by Aurora allowed the 99ers to take the lead when Andrew Vermeulen scored a short-handed goal on a clean 2-on 1 breakout that victimized the Tigers midway through the period.

Brantford further quieted 'The Jungle' 26 seconds into the final frame. 99er forward Drekopoulos notched his second goal of the game by redirecting a rebound off the end boards and burying it behind Crandall to go up 3-1. The shocking early goal by the 99ers seemed to snap the Tigers into full attack mode. 28 seconds later, Forgione scored his second goal of the game on a nice assist from Matthew Godwin to narrow the deficit to 3-2.

The Tigers tied the game 3-3 on a sharp three-way passing play that Ryan Evenhuis'assisted by Lucas Stanojevic and Carter Real'finished by tucking the puck neatly inside the post at 17:25 of the final frame.

The Tigers' stirring comeback was completed on Martino's go-ahead goal less than two minutes later on a deft tip-in of Marentette's blast from the point. Martino's goal at 15:17 prompted Brantford to call a timeout with the 99ers reeling.

The Tigers' feverish comeback'which featured three goals in less than four minutes'featured some of the best hockey the team has played for weeks and cued the heroics by Crandall to preserve the victory.

By Jim Stewart