

Carter Real scores a hat trick for the Tigers in 5-4 OT Loss in Oakville

The Aurora Tigers picked up a key point on the road in a 5-4 overtime loss to the Oakville Blades at the Sixteen Mile Sports Centre on Saturday night.

It was a game of momentum swings with both teams scoring goals in bunches.

Carter Real continued his torrid pace over the weekend by scoring three goals for the Tigers, but Blades' forward Matthew Wang scored the game-winner for Oakville on a penalty shot at 4:12 of the extra period.

Coach Greg Johnston felt his Tigers got off to a good start by jumping out to a 3-0 lead in the first period.

?It wasn't our best start of the season, but we capitalized on our opportunities on the road to start the game.?

Zennon Edwards scored two minutes into the game on assists from Jonah Ziskinder and Alex Case.

Carter Real added two goals?including a power play marker ? in the opening frame to stake the Tigers to a commanding 3-0 lead.

Real's play in Oakville and at home versus Stouffville on Friday impressed his Head Coach.

?Carter has found his stride. He's an excellent skater and had a great weekend. We need him to maintain his momentum and help carry us into a big weekend versus Burlington and Georgetown.?

Despite the Real-led onslaught in the first period, the Blades responded in the second with their own flurry of goals. Aidan Russell, Marco Costante, and Lachlan Wells scored for the Blades to knot the game at 3-3 heading into the third.

Real scored short-handed at 7:37 of the third to complete his hat trick and put the Tigers ahead 4-3. The lead was short-lived as the Blades' Jack Churchill tallied two minutes later to tie the game and set up the overtime period. Despite the loss, Coach Johnston was pleased with his team's ?three-point weekend? and their 2-0-1 record in their last three games.

The Tigers withstood a closing two-minute blitz on Friday by the Stouffville Spirit to preserve a 4-3 victory at the ACC.

Johnston's praise of goalie Glen Crandell's heroic efforts was succinct.

?Glen got us those two points. He made all the saves he needed tonight and a few extras.?

The towering Tiger netminder turned aside 28 shots?many of them point blank over the course of the game?but saved his best work with his team clinging to a one-goal lead. The Tigers were besieged by a relentless 6-on-5 Stouffville attack after the Spirit pulled goaltender Matteo Gennero with 2:25 left in the third period.

Aurora defenders blocked three scoring chances and Crandell stood tall to stall the Stouffville comeback. The gutsy final stand by the Tigers impressed their Head Coach.

?The guys sacrificed defensively with the game on the line. They were winning key puck battles and they made a number of huge blocks. All 20 players needed to be rolling tonight and they were from start to finish.?

An exhausted Crandall described the final two minutes of the game as ?nerve-wracking, but it also raised the team's spirit.?

?Wins like this keep our spirits high, we've been consistent in our last two wins, and we are gaining momentum as a team.?

The 6'4" goaltender praised Carter Real and Ryan Evenhuis for their big offensive nights and applauded all his teammates for not getting too high and not getting too low during the nail-biting third period.

With three Tigers in the penalty box including an inciting misconduct, The Spirit took advantage of the 5-on-3 advantage with a power play goal by Nathan Twohey at 10:32 and they added an even-strength goal one minute later by Jeremy Hirsh to whittle the Tigers' lead to 4-3.

The Tigers' final defensive stand saved a key divisional win in which they never trailed. Six minutes into the game, Joseph Martino's converted a clear-cut breakaway to stake his team to a 1-0 lead. Ryan Evenhuis and Carter Real drew assists on the opening goal—a prelude to their combined seven-point night.

Aurora jumped into a 2-0 lead when Carter Real finished a perfect passing sequence from Lucas Stanojevic and Alex Case.

Stouffville's Michael DiSanto scored from a bad angle with 52.6 seconds remaining in the second period to cut the Tigers' lead to 2-1, but Peter Lopes's blast from between the circles and through Gennaro restored his team's two-goal margin one minute into the third period.

Ryan Evenhuis and Carter Real earned assists on the key power play goal.

Real scored the game-winning goal on a finely-executed 2-on-1 with Ryan Evenhuis and Adamo Zingaro drawing assists to put the Tigers up 4-1 at the 14:25 mark of the third period.

It was a lead the Tigers would not relinquish that night in "The Jungle."

Notes:

Carter Real had a prolific 7-point weekend for the Tigers: 2 goals and 2 assists versus Stouffville on Friday night and 3 more goals in Oakville on Saturday night.

Ryan Evenhuis assisted on 5 of the Tigers' 8 goals this weekend versus the Spirit and the Blades.

The Tigers' two road games next weekend, according to Aurora Coach Greg Johnston, will be a "preview to the playoffs" with "high octane, high-flying Burlington" and "one of the best teams in the best OJHL teams in Georgetown. It'll be a challenging weekend."

By Jim Stewart