

Max Cervjakovs scores two goals in Aurora's 4-2 win over Toronto Junior Canadiens

In a significant early season victory featuring some 'Latvian Lightning', the Aurora Tigers fired four unanswered goals to defeat the Toronto Junior Canadiens 4-2 at the Aurora Community Centre on Friday night.

Latvian forward Max Cervjakovs scored two goals and linemate Tyler Oletic turned in a three-point night to pace Aurora's offence. Cervjakovs, who is a first-year Tiger, celebrated his own performance and the team's overall play versus their divisional rivals.

'It was a big game for me. It was big for the team, too. It was a team effort and we had a great forecheck tonight. Everyone was buying into the system.'

When asked about his spectacular goal in the third period, Cervjakovs was matter of fact in his appraisal.

'I had to get to the net, I was able to beat their defenseman, and it turned out to be a goal scorer's goal.'

Tigers' Captain Ethan Lindsay, who tallied the game-winner to cap Aurora's three-goal first period rally, observed that his team's growing unity was a key to avenge an early-season loss to the Canadiens in Toronto.

'We have the chemistry and the brotherhood in the room. We're unselfish.'

Lindsay offered a similar assessment of the meshing of talents taking place with his new linemates Ryan Evenhuis and Frank Castiglione: 'With Castiglione and Evenhuis, we've just clicked. We're part of a culture that is so uplifting and enthusiastic about team success.'

Lindsay's squad fell behind the Junior Canadiens 2-0 halfway through the first period on Friday by surrendering a pair of power play goals in a fast-skating, hard-hitting period of hockey at the ACC.

Luc Makjassian notched his ninth goal of the season, assisted by former Tigers' Captain Connor Van Weelie, at 3:22 of the opening frame and Jordan Karafile's marker six minutes later - assisted by Will Goargovelis and Makjassian - gave the visitors a quick start on the road.

However, Lindsay's Tigers were undaunted by the early deficit. Aurora rallied for three goals in four minutes to take the lead heading into the first intermission. Tyler Oletic banged in a rebound past Canadiens' netminder Joshua Branton at 7:37 with assists from Christian Holden and Luke Hampel to narrow the margin to 2-1.

Tigers' netminder Will Goumas bailed out his defenceman with a point blank save on a goalmouth giveaway and, in the ensuing rush, Max Cervjakovs fired a wrist shot past Branton - with helpers from Oletic and Kyle Baston - to tie the game 2-2. Fifteen seconds later, the prowling Tigers took the lead on Lindsay's snapshot with linemates Evenhuis and Castiglione drawing assists on the game-winning goal.

The scoreless second period featured spectacular saves by Tigers' goaltender Will Goumas who preserved Aurora's precarious lead. Goumas's side-to-side athleticism was on full display in the middle frame, especially on a trio of doorstep saves that thwarted the JRC power play.

Goumas also flashed the leather at 16:30 of the third period to maintain his team's lead and Lindsay prevented a goal at 11:25 with tenacious backchecking that was part of a very effective Tigers' transition game.

In the most spectacular goal of the evening, Cervjakovs took a pass from Luke Hampel, swept in from the right wing, deked a JRC

defenceman out of his protective equipment, and buried the biscuit behind a sprawling Branton to give the Tigers a timely insurance goal at 7.30 of the final period.

JRC pulled Branton with 2.24 left in the game and applied intense pressure, but key blocked shots by Connor Russo and Kenneth Wu preserved the margin of victory.

On Saturday night at the ACC, the Tigers faced one of the top teams in the nation and dropped a 3-0 decision to the Collingwood Blues. Aurora's constant parade to the penalty box turned out to be its undoing against the defending OJHL champions who are ranked fifth in Canada.

After a scoreless first period, Blues forward Marcus Lougheed fired his eighth goal of the season ninety seconds into the middle frame to give Collingwood a 1-0 lead. The Tigers surrendered two power play goals to Jack Silverman at 11.45 of the second period and 8.41 of the third period. Blues goaltender Noah Pak turned aside all 23 shots he faced to earn the shutout and secure the road win.

With its 3-0 victory, Collingwood won its sixth straight game and improved its record to 12-1-0-0.

As a result of their penalty-plagued loss, the Tigers fell back under .500 with a 5-6-0-1 record.

When asked about his team's trips to the penalty box on Saturday night as the difference between the win versus JRC and the loss versus Collingwood, Head Coach Greg Johnston concurred: "It was definitely a factor. The guys have to stop taking stupid penalties. We spent at least 24 minutes playing short-handed and you can't do that against Collingwood."

Coach Johnston offered a balanced appraisal of the mini home-stand against two of the stronger teams in the OJHL: "There were definitely more positives than negatives in our games against two top teams. We received great goaltending from Will Goumas in back-to-back games. Tonight was definitely a goalies' duel and both goalies [Goumas and Pak] played really well. Our win on Friday night was one of the best efforts of the season so far. The guys played really well and on Friday they played a more-disciplined game and stuck to the systems. It's still early in the season and it was good to see how we fought back against JRC on Friday night."

The Tigers will take Coach Johnston's positives on a four-game, mid-October road trip with visits to Burlington versus the Cougars on Tuesday, October 10; to Trenton versus the Golden Hawks on Friday, October 13; to Toronto versus the Patriots on Saturday, October 14; and to Pickering versus the Panthers on Tuesday, October 17. Aurora's next home game is Friday, October 20 when they host the Haliburton County Huskies at 7.30 p.m. at the ACC.

By Jim Stewart