

Tigers cornered by Dukes in NorthEast final



By Jake Courtepatte

The Tigers' roar seems to have been stifled, at least for the time being.

After winning eight of their first eleven games of the OJHL postseason to reach the NorthEast conference final, the Junior A Tigers have lost two straight to find themselves in a hole in their best-of-seven series against the Wellington Dukes.

Reaching their first conference championship in five years after a thumping of the Cobourg Cougars six days prior, the Tigers took to the ice last Thursday for Game One in a battle of the top two teams in the conference.

Goaltender Bradley Van Schubert was tested early, forced to face a penalty shot after a block at the point led to a Wellington breakaway just over a minute in.

A stacked pad save kept the game scoreless, though heavy pressure from the Dukes gave them a 2 ? 0 lead late in the first, before Austin Eastman cut it in half shortly before the buzzer with a rebound goal off a James Thomson point shot.

It was as close as Aurora came to the tying goal, with both teams going scoreless through the final two periods.

Van Schubert was honoured with the second star of the game, while his Dukes counterpart Jonah Capriotti was named first star.

With Van Schubert out for Saturday's Game Two contest, backup Jack Irvine took to the crease against Capriotti.

After Elijah Gonsalves opened the scoring for Aurora just over one minute in, Wellington followed up with four-straight goals to take a commanding lead, one they never relinquished in a 6 ? 2 win.

Zach Wilkie had the other marker for Aurora.

One of the key components to Wellington's success over the Tigers has been the shutdown of Aurora captain Jake Bricknell who, after firing out of the gate in point production in the first two rounds, has been held off the scoresheet in the conference final.

?The Tigers may not have as deep of an offense as some of the other top teams have,? said OJHL analyst Alex Bloomfield. ?Austin Eastman has played a big game, he's not too far behind him in the point race?but (Bricknell) has made his case as an MVP candidate this season as far as the offense goes.?

Bricknell, an alumni of the OHL, finished second in the regular season scoring race.

The Tigers will be looking to right the ship on Tuesday night following press time for Game Three at home, before returning to Wellington on Friday for Game Four.

If necessary, Game Five returns to the ACC on Sunday, with puck drop set for 7:30 p.m.

On the other side of the bracket, the number-two Georgetown Raiders lead the top-ranked Toronto Lakeshore Patriots two games to one, with game four going Thursday night.

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