

Tigers declawed by Admirals in season opener



By Jake Courtepatte

The roar of the Junior A Aurora Tigers was little more than a whimper on opening weekend.

The club opened up the Ontario Junior Hockey League season with a pair of losses at the hands of the Brampton Admirals and Markham Royals, creating an early gap between the Tigers and their North division rivals.

‘Unfortunately we didn’t get the results we were looking for this weekend,’ said Tigers General Manager and Head Coach Rob De Fulviis. ‘The positives definitely outweigh the negatives though.’

It was actually Aurora who opened up the scoring in last Thursday’s home opener, much to the delight of the close to 400 fans in attendance at the Aurora Community Centre.

Newcomer Kaleb Nelson potted his first career junior league goal at just the age of sixteen, redirected a low shot from in the slot to fool Brampton goalkeeper Sean Wu. Brampton’s Dakota Zarundy responded by beating Aurora veteran Christian Filippetti on a weak wrist shot a few minutes later, before Aurora’s Jonatahn Balah and Brampton’s Christos Rodis added their own tallies to take a 2 – 2 tie into the first intermission, when fans lined up for autographs from Storage Wars Canada star Ursula Stolf.

Noah Minns added a powerplay marker for the Tigers in the second period, but it would be the last time on the board for Aurora in what eventually was a 5 – 3 finish.

It was a familiar foe in Markham on Sunday afternoon to face the Royals, where the Tigers controlled the play through the first two periods by taking a 2 – 0 lead thanks to goals from Nelson and Balah.

Yet it was in the third period where the Royals offense exploded, beating Filippetti six times in the final frame to walk away with a 6 ? 2 victory. Markham's Vincent Bonaiuto, who earned a hat trick in just about a fourteen-minute span, took home the game's first star and left the Tigers without a point yet this season.

Despite the lack of early success, Di Fulviis isn't worried about his young and inexperienced squad.

?I think our biggest concern, is learning how to play a full 60-minute hockey game right now,? said De Fulviis. ?Back-to-back games, we lost the game in the third period.

?With 18 new players in the line-up, and many of them getting their first taste of the OJHL, it is a different league than many of the junior leagues across Canada. We are young, we are fast, we play with grit and lots of heart. I'm just very excited to see where this group of guys will be in the next few months.?

The Royals have jumped out of the gate as the early frontrunners in the OJHL's North division, going 2-0-0 to start with a clean four points in the standings. Newcomers Collingwood Colts, who replaced the relocated Newmarket Hurricanes in the division, are tied at the top in winning two of their first three games.

Aurora, the Stouffville Spirit, and the Pickering Panthers are all at goose eggs after both Stouffville and Pickering lost all three of their games in the opening week.

One team will be breaking their losing streak on Friday, when the Tigers host the Spirit at the Aurora Community Centre for a puck drop at 7:30 p.m. A long, six-game road trip follows on the schedule, before the Tigers return home on Oct. 5 to host the St. Michael's Majors.

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