

Tigers drop to second in Northeast as overtime struggles continue



By Jake Courtepatte

It was a grueling weekend for the Aurora Tigers in which everything that could have gone wrong went wrong.

Three straight losses in just as many days were made even more difficult by some missed opportunities, old faces, and a depleted roster.

Coming off a 10 ? 0 annihilation of the Milton IceHawks last Sunday, a five-day break seemed to turn the Tigers' offence ice cold against the last-place Lindsay Muskies.

Lindsay's Nick Isaacson had the game's only goal shortly into the second period, while 29 shots weren't enough for Aurora to solve goaltender Sean Green.

It was the first time this season, now three months old, that the Tigers have been shut out.

Meanwhile, the Markham Royals were busy earning two points of their own to take top spot in the OJHL's Northeast division from the Tigers.

Fans at Saturday's home matchup with the Trenton Golden Hawks would have recognized a couple of old faces, namely ex-captain Jordan DaSilva and forward Keaton Ratcliffe, sent to Trenton in a four-player trade in November.

The two had quite the homecoming.

While Evan Kearns put the Tigers on the board first midway through the opening period, goaltender Alex Fotinos was beat with Liam Ham in the box in the second.

A goalie battle then ensued right into the double overtime period, where Ratcliffe was the hero for the Hawks in finding the top corner from the hashmarks.

DaSilva assisted on both Trenton goals.

It was the third time in a row the Tigers came out on the wrong end of an overtime score, dropping to 2 ? 6 on the year in extra frames.

"I don't know what it is, we just have to find a way to get it done in overtime," said Mantenuto. "The extra point can make a huge difference."

Five of the eight have gone into three-on-three double overtime periods, where Mantenuto says the Tigers need to take better advantage of the open ice.

An exhausted and short-staffed squad made their way to Pickering on Sunday to face the Panthers, missing both leading scorer Drake Board and captain Daniel Mantenuto, who were attending the Team Canada East selection camp for the upcoming World Junior A Challenge.

It proved to put a major dent in the offence: Aurora's only goal came from Ryan Shaw in the first, while Pickering put three past Josh Boyko as well as an empty-netter for a 4 - 1 win.

The Tigers come limping into the holiday break after losing their position at the top of the Northeast division, replaced by a Markham squad headed the other way. Three points separate the division powerhouses, while the Royals also have a game in hand.

And it doesn't get any easier before the three-week vacation: the Tigers head to Trenton to face the league-leading Golden Hawks again on Wednesday, trying to finish the month in what head coach Thomas Milne called "survival mode."

The final home game of December is Saturday against the Whitby Fury. Puck drop is at 7.30 p.m. at the Aurora Community Centre.

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