

Tigers light up RBC champs in home opener



By Jake Courtepatte

Jake Bricknell is no stranger to the Cobourg Cougars lineup, although this season he finds himself on the other bench. The former Cougar, who helped Cobourg to the national title in the RBC Cup championship last season, now wears the 'C' for the Aurora Tigers in his fifth year of junior hockey.

It was Bricknell, familiar with the Cobourg style of play, who opened the scoring against his former team on Friday in the Tigers' home opener, potting a clapper from the top of the slot in front of an attendance of over 500 fans.

From there, Aurora took off, scoring three more times in the period, en route to an eventual 7 - 1 win.

It was a fitting decision for the club celebrating its fiftieth year, kicking off the evening's festivities with a ceremonial puck drop featuring some Tigers legends as well as those in the pro hockey spotlight.

Former Maple Leaf Mike Johnson, as well as Jason Maslakow, known affectionately by Leafs fans as 'Dart Guy' from April's playoff run, were on hand to help out.

Bricknell's two goals and three assists helped him maintain the league scoring lead after the first week of play, adding to his four-point night against the Cougars in the first half of their doubleheader last Monday.

The veteran player seems to have found immediate chemistry with a rookie forward in Anthony Romano, a 16-year-old who is committed to Clarkson University next season. Romano and Bricknell have connected for a number of goals in the first two games of the season while playing on a line, with Romano earned two goals and two assists in Friday's contest.

'What a line,' said Tigers announcer Kevin Dean. '(Elijah) Gonsalves, Romano, and Bricknell will be exciting.'

Bradley Van Schubert, a former OHLer with the Owen Sound Attack and Guelph Storm, was cool between the pipes in making 20 saves on 21 Cobourg shots.

The convincing win was the second in a row for the Tigers, who are in unfamiliar territory after allowing just two goals over their first two games against the defending league champions.

A motto of 'This Year is Going to Be Different' is the inspiration for the Junior A club this year after a disastrous 2016-17 season that saw the Tigers fall to last in the entire OJHL.

Team owner Jim Thomson and his staff have taken a veteran approach with choosing this year's squad, opting for seasoned vets including a number of ex-OHLers over young up-and-comers.

As is the case in junior hockey circles, a heavy turnover rate has left just four members of last year's team on the roster, in forwards Jacob Kostopolous, Tyler Davis, and Steve Maclean, and defenseman James Thomson, on the roster.

Aurora and the Newmarket Hurricanes remain the only unbeaten teams in the OJHL's Northeast Division.

The Tigers are in Buffalo on Thursday for the annual OJHL Showcase, and return to the Aurora Community Centre on Friday to host the Trenton Golden Hawks.

Puck drop is set for 7:30 p.m.

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