

Aurora Tigers back in win column in tilt with Royals



By Jake Courtepatte

A losing streak reaching double digits was finally put to rest Sunday by the Aurora Tigers, against a formidable opponent no less. After losses to both the St. Michael's Buzzers and Wellington Dukes late in the week brought the streak to eleven games with nary a point, the black and gold earned their third home win of the 2016-17 campaign Sunday night against the Markham Royals.

The win is the first for Aurora in just under a month, last defeating the Lindsay Muskies at home on October 9.

First year Tiger Brayden Lachance bested his goaltending counterpart Marcus Semiao in between the pipes, who had an impressive backup season with the Tigers in 2014-15 before a trade to Markham earned him a starting position.

It was Aurora's Kyle Berry, with his fourth point in five games, who opened the scoring by burying a Giacomo Messina rebound in the ninth minute of play.

Markham tied the game before the first intermission, finishing a fluky play that saw the puck bounce off the back boards and right between Lachance's skates.

Lachance bounced back with a stellar second period for the Tigers, stopping all eighteen shots he faced in the frame, while the Tigers took a two-goal lead. Carmine Alberga, a veteran in the OJHL in his first year with Aurora, banged in his own rebound on the doorstep before Mel Melconian scored his team-leading eleventh of the season on a wrister through traffic just seconds later.

Markham continued to apply the pressure in the third period, but the only goal was scored by Aurora's newly-minted captain Eric Holland, who tipped a James Thomson shot from the point home in the dying minutes of the game. Final score was 4 ? 1 for the Tigers.

Lachance stopped 46 of the 47 shots he faced, earning first star of the game honours.

?The guys did a great job of keeping shots to the outside,? said Lachance. ??Getting the win against a team like Markham is huge.?

Prior to the game the Royals were tied with the Stouffville Spirit for top spot in the OJHL's North division, polar opposite of the Tigers' standing.

Although a big two points for Aurora, a long journey awaits if the junior A club is to stand any chance of making the postseason in March. Just under the halfway point of the season, Aurora's record of 3-20-0-2 gives them a total of eight points, twenty behind the Spirit and ahead of only the West division's Milton Icehawks in the OJHL basement.

This weekend has the Tigers visiting the Pickering Panthers (4-16-0-1) on Friday, in search of their first win on the road. A crucial battle, the Panthers sit just one point up on the Tigers in division standings.

They return to the ACC on Sunday in an interdivisional matchup with the Toronto Patriots (10-8-0-1).

Puck drop is set for 7 p.m.

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