

Aurora Tigers earn win over Georgetown, tie with Haliburton

The Aurora Tigers' early season improvement continued on the weekend with an emphatic 4-2 home win Friday night over last year's playoff nemesis, the Georgetown Raiders, to even their OJHL record to 3-3.

The visiting Tigers played five periods of hockey at the SG Nesbit Arena on Saturday night and earned a point in a 3-3 tie versus the Haliburton County Huskies. The win and tie on successive nights improved the Tigers' record to 3-1-1 in their last five games.

Friday evening's victory over divisional rival Georgetown was a pleasing development for Tigers' veteran Ryan Evenhuis, who tallied two goals and one assist against the Raiders.

?It feels great, especially for the guys from last year's team. [Captain] Pete [Lopes] talked to the boys about the importance of tonight's game after what happened in the playoffs last year.?

In addition to exacting a measure of revenge for the Tigers' playoff exit at the hands of the Raiders in March, Evenhuis spoke about the club's improvement after a slow 0-2 start to the season.

?We didn't seem to have our legs under us in Games 1 and 2 against Stouffville. The whole team played better together during our road wins against Mississauga and Pickering. We carried that momentum into our game tonight.?

Aurora's Assistant Captain, whose regular linemates are Captain Ethan Lindsay and Andrew Tsotsos, offered a favourable assessment of his line's productive three-goal night versus Georgetown.

?We're getting the chem going after six games. It feels great that Coach has us on the ice in key situations and we appreciate his trust in our leadership. It felt good tonight to score two goals and help the team win.?

Neither the Raiders nor the Tigers hit the scoresheet in the first period, but Aurora goaltender Yianni Karkoulas made three point-blank saves to keep Georgetown off the scoreboard.

Karkoulas also proved to be the difference in the first five minutes of the middle frame as the Raiders used two consecutive power plays to dominate play, but the Aurora PK was aided by their goalie's stellar play. Karkoulas was particularly brilliant at 12.40 of the second period when a Tiger got his pocket picked at the left dot, but was bailed out by his goaltender's athletic save.

As happens so often in hockey, a big save at one end translates into a goal at the other end and Friday was no exception.

After Karkoulas's heroics, the speedy Evenhuis snapped a puck past Raiders' netminder Finn Marshall to open the scoring at 13.47 of the middle frame with assists earned by linemates Lindsay and Tsotsos.

However, the Tigers' parade to the penalty box continued and Georgetown capitalized when Kristian Lamanna fired home a perfect goalmouth pass from Luca Rea.

The Raiders' power play goal pulled the visitors into a 1-1 tie, but the deadlock was short-lived.

Two minutes later, Evenhuis notched his second goal of the period when he stormed in from the left wing and roofed a wrist shot to restore the Tigers' lead. Lopes assisted on the go-ahead goal that gave the Tigers a 2-1 lead heading into the second intermission.

The third period featured missed power play opportunities by both squads and outstanding saves by both Karkoulas and Marshall.

The Raiders tied the game at 6.42 when Cayden Kowal banged in a rebound, but the Tigers' top line answered the bell as needed one

minute later when Captain Ethan Lindsay buried the biscuit at the end of the crease after exerting his will on the Raiders' defenders in the offensive zone.

Tsotsos and Evenhuis earned assists on what turned out to be the game-winning goal.

Aurora's rookie forward Michael Schiavone, with assists from Frankie Castiglione and Keegan Decaluwe, tallied his first Junior goal at 10.14 when he deftly tipped in a wild ricochet to give the Tigers a two-goal lead they would not relinquish.

A key factor in Aurora's home ice victory versus the Raiders was the play between the pipes by Yianni Karkoulas who turned away 20 of the 22 shots he faced.

The undefeated rookie goaltender was thrilled by his team's big win.

?The best part of tonight's win was getting back to .500. We're starting to play really well.?

Karkoulas also credited the steady play of his defensemen.

?The boys did a great job clearing the way. They played really well in front of me and the forwards blocked some big shots, too.?

The Tigers had little time to rest on their laurels and picked up a key point on the road the next night when they fought the Haliburton County Huskies to a 3-3 Double Overtime tie at the SG Nesbit Memorial Arena.

After a scoreless first period, Aurora fell behind 2-0 seven minutes into the second period, but Carson Brown, on assists from Bode Pearson and Ryan Evenhuis, pulled the Tigers to within one.

Aurora's Keegan Decaluwe's short-handed goal four minutes later tied the game 2-2.

The Huskies took a 3-2 lead into the second intermission when Ian Phillips scored at 18.20 on the power play.

The Tigers tied the game 3-3 at 6.52 of the final frame when Ryan Evenhuis continued his torrid production.

Evenhuis scored his fifth goal of the young season assisted by Kenneth Wu and Connor Brown and his early tally held up over two overtime periods. Both tired squads earned a point in the marathon match in Haliburton and Tigers' goaltender William Goumas repelled 33 of 36 Huskies shots to earn the T.

The Tigers will board a bus to Buffalo for the OJHL Governors' Showcase at the Lecom Harborcenter, the practice facility of the NHL Sabres.

Aurora will play the Markham Royals on Wednesday and North York on Thursday.

The Tigers' next OJHL regular season game will be in Lindsay at 7 p.m. on Friday, September 29. Their next home games at the ACC will be Friday, October 6 when the Toronto Junior Canadiens roll into Town for a 7.30 puck drop followed by a visit from the Collingwood Blues on Saturday, October 7.

Opening faceoff versus the Blues will be 7.30 p.m. at the ACC. Come out and support your Aurora Tigers on Thanksgiving Weekend.

By Jim Stewart