

Aurora Tigers hitting a bump in the road

The Tigers haven't been quite themselves since returning to the ice at the beginning of February.

The month-long hiatus might not have been the kindest to our Jr. A boys. Their 1-3-1 record is unusual, especially after dropping both games this past week.

The Tigers have also had to muster through a few changes and injuries.

Star defenceman Will Smith was promoted to the Sioux City Musketeers in the USHL. A few key players like captain Luc Reeve and Lee Chiang have faced some injuries.

But after the 5-4 loss against the Collingwood Colts and the 4-1 loss against the Oakville Blades, head coach Greg Johnston says he is not concerned at all.

"Every team goes through it. The season has gone very well up until now and when I say up until now, this is just a hiccup," Johnston said.

"I have all the confidence in the world in the guys. They're working hard. We lost to Collingwood 5-4, but we were down 4-0 and came back to 5-4. In my opinion, we dominated the second and third periods. And the boys responded really well. Even the 4-1 game in Oakville, the guys don't quit."

Against the Colts, the Tigers fell behind by four goals inside the first 13 minutes of the game. Sett Ursomarzo capitalized near the end of the period giving the Tigers some life.

In a quiet second period and coughing up a fifth goal from Dylan Hudon, the Tigers rallied in the third.

Blake Frost, Ty Roberts and Jett McCullum's late powerplay goal put the Tigers within arms-reach of tying things up.

Colts goaltender Noah Pak and his group eventually held on for the win.

The Tigers outshot the Colts 33-24.

Against the Blades, Evan Pringle's two goals led the Blades to victory. Ty Roberts was the lone goal scorer for the Tigers with a power play goal in the second period.

Ahead of Tuesday's matchup at home against the Markham Royals, the Aurora Tigers have seemingly loved playing in mid-week games. The boys are 6-2 this year in games taking place between Monday and Thursday.

In speaking with head coach Greg Johnston on Monday, he said he used to love playing in the afternoon as a player.

"I used to love the afternoon games as a player. I think you show up to the rink, you're sharp, you're alert. You kind of get up and go through a routine," Johnston said. "I think it's just a matter of you kind of get up, do your thing and before you know it you're at the rink ready to play the game. There's no kind of messing around and doing anything in between. So, whether that's what it is or anything like that, I think the guys are sharp, not cloudy."

Johnston said there are a few things the boys have to work on since returning to the ice. Attention to detail is the most important and he would like to see some improvements on the penalty kill.

This weekend is a massive weekend for the Aurora Tigers.

The boys take on the Number 1 team in the North Division, the Pickering Panthers, back-to-back Friday and Saturday.

Their home game is this Saturday at the Aurora Community Centre. Puck drop is at 3:00 p.m.

By Robert Belardi