

Aurora Tigers lose 5-3 to East Conference-leading Toronto Junior Canadiens to complete a 2-2 road trip

One of the toughest segments of the Aurora Tigers' 2023-24 OJHL schedule has been completed and the team rolled back home Sunday with a 2-2 road record after four games in Stouffville, Mississauga, Pickering, and Toronto in eight days.

After dropping a 7-3 decision on Saturday to the Stouffville Spirit in the second game of a home-and-home season-opening series with their York Region rivals, the Tigers gained momentum in the middle of the road trip by earning up their first two wins of the young season: a decisive 6-3 win over the Mississauga Chargers and a tidy 3-0 victory over the Pickering Panthers.

Aurora finished its arduous journey through the GTA with a narrow 5-3 loss on Sunday night to the Eastern Conference-leading Toronto Junior Canadiens at the Scotiabank Pond.

In Mississauga, Luca Hobbs's hat trick spurred the Tigers to their 6-3 victory on Wednesday.

Hobbs completed his three-goal night versus the cellar-dwelling Chargers by scoring a short-handed goal with 35 seconds left in the game to secure the win.

Andrew Tsotsos scored two goals for Aurora, including the opening goal of the game and the final goal of the game: an empty net marker to ensure the Tigers' final margin of victory.

Frank Castigione and Christian Holden chipped in two assists each to help pace the Tigers' attack.

Goaltender Gianni Karkoulas turned aside 29 of 32 Chargers shots to pick up the W.

In Pickering, the Tigers made it two wins in a row to climb back to a .500 record (2-2) with a decisive 3-0 whitewashing of the Pickering Panthers at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Centre on Friday night.

Aurora goaltender William Goumas made 27 saves to record the shutout and the victory.

A three-goal flurry by the Tigers in the third period accounted for all the game's offence—a familiar game-winning recipe they used on Wednesday to seal the deal versus Mississauga when they scored three goals in the final frame to rein in the Chargers.

Aurora outshot Pickering 44-27 and got goals from Jace Lavalee, Andrew Tsotsos, and Ryan Evenhuis in an eleven-minute span to defeat the home side.

Captain Ethan Lindsay, who was selected First Star of the Game by the OJHL, recorded two assists for the Tigers—his third and fourth helpers of the season.

Lindsay leads the team in points with 6, based on 1 goal and 5 assists after 5 games.

In the final game of the road trip in Toronto on Sunday night, the Tigers put forth a spirited effort versus a first-place Junior Canadiens' lineup that featured two former Aurora Tigers captains: Lucas Stanojevic and Connor Van Weelie. Both Stanojevic and Van Weelie hit the scoresheet against their former club with an assist and a goal, respectively.

The Canadiens opened the scoring at the Scotiabank Pond with a short-handed goal by Chris Soares at 7:54 to give the home side a 1-0 lead, but the Tigers rallied to tie the game on Jobey Pearson's second goal of the season with less than three minutes to go in the opening frame.

Aurora took a 2-1 lead only 11 seconds into the second period when Jonah Ziskinder notched his second goal of the OJHL season with helpers from Ryan Evenhuis and Ethan Lindsay. It was the Captain's fifth assist in five games. However, Connor Van Weelie came back to haunt his old team by notching his second goal of the year to tie the game 2-2 and the Junior Canadiens re-took the lead on Brenden Anderson's goal at 15:29 on an assist from the Tigers' leading scorer last season, Lucas Stanojevic.

Toronto took a 3-2 lead into the second intermission and added to that margin when Evan Malhassian tallied at 18:17 of the third period. Only 38 seconds later, the Tigers reduced their deficit to 4-3 when Andrew Tsotsos fired his fourth goal of the season with helpers from Peter Lopes and Ryan Evenhuis.

Lopes tied Lindsay for the Aurora team lead with his fifth assist.

The Tigers pressed the home team in the dying moments of the game on The Pond. Unfortunately, they surrendered an empty net goal by Toronto's Jordan Karafile to succumb to the OJHL Eastern Conference leaders.

Aurora outshot JRC 37-32 in a valiant, hard-fought effort at the end of a long road trip.

The Tigers (2-3-0-0) look to get back on the winning track when they host the third-place team from the West Conference?the Georgetown Raiders (2-1-0-1)?on Friday night at the ACC.

The opening faceoff will be 7.30 p.m.

By Jim Stewart