

Aurora Tigers roll over competition, take first place in North Division



By Jake Courtepatte

A seven-game winning streak has put the Aurora Junior A Tigers atop the OJHL North Division standings.

They kicked off the week with a rare Wednesday home game, hosting the Pickering Panthers.

Neither goaltender faced many early tests, as the first ten minutes was basically neutral zone hockey.

The deadlock was broken halfway through the first when the Tigers' Cameron Morrison picked up a bounce off the boards, and made a nice backhand pass to captain Michael Laidley, who put it home for the 1 ? 0 lead.

Nearing the end of the period, the Panthers had similar luck when the puck bounced off the backboards right in front of the net to an open Pickering player for the easy tap-in on goaltender Andy Munroe.

But rookie John Curran, on an incredible point streak, was not willing to go to the dressing room tied. Just seventeen seconds later, he knotted his first of the year to give the Tigers a 2 ? 1 lead after one period.

The Tigers came out pressing in the second, and in the first minute Daniel Mantenuto made a beautiful cross-ice feed to Drake Board that was stopped by the Pickering goaltender. However, the two would combine again just fifteen seconds later to make it a two-goal lead.

The first powerplay of the game came shortly after, when Tiger Michael Longato went off for hooking.

Munroe was the star of the penalty kill, making three stops including a wide-open chance from the slot.

But as the powerplay expired, Panther Chris Sekelyk had the puck shoveled to him out front from behind the net and beat Munroe blocker-side.

Before the end of the period, Laidley and Curran each picked up their second goal of the game to put the home team up 5 ? 2 after two.

Both sides would exchange a couple of goals in the third, but the match was over after the second period. The Tigers took the game 7 ? 3.

The line of Laidley, Morrison, and Curran were an offensive force, combining for seven points in the game. "We just connected tonight," said Laidley. "Everything went right."

After a home win against the Wellington Dukes on Saturday, goaltender Marcus Semiao continued his undefeated junior career Sunday with his third win of the season. The Tigers steamrolled the Toronto Jr. Canadiens 7 ? 1, and Semiao improved his GAA to 0.67 and save percentage to .973.

Laidley is now on an almost point-per-game level, notching eleven points over twelve games this season. The captain has played a large role in the Tigers' early success.

"I've just been focused on the defensive zone first, trying to get the puck out of our own end first and foremost. Worry about the offence after. Good offence follows good defence, so we've been trying to focus on that."

The Tigers have now claimed their position atop the OJHL North Division, with a 9-3-0 record for eighteen points.

A triple-header weekend is on its way, starting with the "Battle of Yonge Street" in Newmarket to face the Hurricanes Thursday night. The Tigers then have back-to-back home games Friday and Saturday, facing the Mississauga Chargers and Lindsay Muskies, respectively.

"We've just got to keep our work ethic up each and every game," said Laidley "Our team's been pretty good the last couple of years, other teams are going to want to come in and play their best against us here. We've got to be prepared every game to keep up our intensity, and make sure to match theirs."

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