

Aurora Tigers yet to clinch a playoff spot



By Jake Courtepatte

At this point last season, Aurora's Junior A Tigers had settled comfortably into the first overall playoff seed, having clinched the OJHL regular season title with four games left on the schedule.

This year's squad is having a little trouble.

The stagnant Tigers have been less than a handful of points away from clinching a playoff spot for over a week, yet are still looking for that 'X' in the standings.

A 1-1-1 record over a busy weekend of hockey has all but knocked the Tigers out of contention for the North division title, with the hot Markham Royals now seven points up on Aurora.

Friday's home matchup with the Cobourg Cougars was the third game in a row to be settled in an overtime period, and the second to be lost, when goaltender Josh Boyko allowed the winning goal midway through the extra frame. Defenceman Kyle Locke, arguably the cats' best blue-liner, sat out the contest after an accumulation of misconduct penalties.

Drake Board, who leads the Tigers in both goals and assists, notched his twenty-first of the season in the first period.

Saturday's hosting of the Royals at the Aurora Community Centre was billed as a marquee matchup just a few short weeks ago, assuming it would be a showdown for tops in the North. Instead, it showcased the Tigers simply looking to secure their playoff hopes, against an old face between the pipes.

Marcus Semiao, who played in fifteen games with the Tigers last season while going 14-0-1, has solidified himself as the Markham starting netminder and a key component of the team's success.

Boyko gave up two to the Royals in the first period, peppered with fourteen shots.

Noah Delmas eventually put the Tigers on the board in the final seconds of the second period, and two goals in just over a minute in the third period completed Aurora's comeback to take it 3 ? 2.

Boyko was given first star of the game honours, while Semiao was acknowledged in his old rink as third star.

'They've got a great franchise here,' said Semiao, whose Royals are the only North division team to have clinched a spot. 'There are

a lot of guys missing from last year's roster, but they seem to have done a good job in scouting and finding replacements where they can.?

Semiao also commented on the play of some of his old teammates that still wear the Tigers sweater, like Board's ?ability to find an open lane.?

?Just from last year to this year you can see how guys improve their game on the ice. It's exciting to watch.?

In Wellington the next day, however, nobody's game seemed to be on.

The Dukes rolled over the Tigers 6 ? 1, in what very well could be a preview of the Tigers' first round matchup.

Boyko was pulled shortly into the third period in favour of Vince Michelizzi, the Junior C Schomberg goaltender who had just completed his season, who allowed two goals on six shots.

Five games remain on the regular season schedule, with two against divisional opponents. Next up are the Newmarket Hurricanes at the ACC on Friday.

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