

Burlington Cougars cruise to 8-1 victory over struggling OJHL Tigers

The Burlington Cougars roared into Aurora on Saturday evening, pounced on the young Tigers for four goals in the first period, and loped to a convincing 8-1 win at the ACC.

Eight minutes into the contest, Cougars forward Jack Churchill slid a perfect pass to linemate Mathieu MacMillan on the doorstep.

MacMillan shoveled the puck past Aurora goaltender Christopher Thompson to earn his 18th goal of the season.

Fourteen seconds later, the nimble Cougars pressed the Tigers and Joseph Sinclair jammed home a rebound after Thompson had repelled two consecutive shots in the slot.

Tigers' Head Coach Tom Milne called a timeout to settle the shell-shocked home side.

Coach Milne's strategy worked until the Cougars struck again at 13:15.

Sinclair, with a nifty move at the blue line, split the Aurora defense, fired a wrist shot that Thompson seemed to block, but the puck dribbled past the fallen goaltender to give the visitors a 3-0 lead.

Seventy seconds later, Alexander Stephen's shot from the point was deftly deflected in the slot by Noah Garthe past Thompson to give Burlington a four-goal cushion heading into the first intermission.

The Tigers had ample opportunities to get back into this contest because the Cougars wore out a path to the penalty box in the middle frame. Burlington put Aurora on the power play eight times. The home side's centers won draws cleanly, blueliners snapped pucks at the net and passed patiently, forwards worked the boards effectively, and chances were created with purposeful passing.

Coach Milne's systems yielded optimal shots, but the young Aurora squad just couldn't finish. If the Tigers' power play didn't have bad luck, it wouldn't have any luck at all.

The lack of puck luck manifested itself with six minutes left in the middle frame when the Cougars killed off another power play. On the ensuing rush, Peter Kiousis's power move to the net was stopped by Thompson, but the rebound bounced back to Kiousis who buried the biscuit to give the Burlington a 5-0 lead.

On their sixth power play of the period and with 1:43 left to play before the second intermission, the Tigers finally got on the scoreboard when Simon Howard slapped home a rebound behind Cougars' netminder Roman Batih. Matthew Johnson and Jack Rispin earned assists on Howard's seventh of the season.

When a pair of Cougars, Owen Davies and Ryan Choi, drew penalties on the same play, the Tigers were gifted a 5-on-3 power play with 46 seconds left in the second period. However, the home side could not convert this golden opportunity to close the second period nor open the third period. Consequently, the Cougars poured it on when they killed off the two-man disadvantage. Sinclair completed his hat trick before the third period was three minutes old when he lofted a rebound into the top-left corner to restore Burlington's five-goal lead.

Alexander Stephen's smooth give-and-go with MacMillan earned the Cougars' speedy defenseman his sixth goal of the season at 5:55 of the final frame. Ryan Gagner closed the scoring when he converted a pretty 2-on-1 with Sinclair to provide fourth-place Burlington (15-7-2-2) with its seven-goal margin of victory. The high-flying Sinclair finished the evening with four points and was instrumental in sending tenth-place Aurora (6-17-0-2) to its ninth consecutive defeat.

Reporter's Note:

On an evening bereft of home team highlights, I selected a delectable treat from the concession stand as my First Star of the Game. The \$5.00 bag of popcorn I purchased at the ACC was plentiful, fresh, and delicious. It was an epicurean delight on a Saturday night and provided solace for many fans as the Cougars-Tigers contest was pretty much determined after the opening fifteen minutes of play. As Kurt Vonnegut often intoned in his satirical masterpiece Slaughterhouse-Five, ?So it goes.?

By Jim Stewart