

Buscarini's 2-goal matinee performance paces short-handed Tigers, but Aurora loses 6-2 to JRC

Jamie Buscarini fired both goals for the Aurora Tigers and line-mate Luc Warner added two assists, but the rookie-laden squad lost 6-2 to the Toronto Junior Canadians on Tuesday afternoon at the ACC.

The Tigers were missing two of their top scorers—Simon Howard and Andreas Mikrogianniakis—due to a high school exam and OJHL All-Star Team obligations, respectively.

Over 120 spirited school kids and four staff members from Wellington Public School enlivened the venerable arena for the Tigers' matinee performance. The school group witnessed entertaining Junior hockey as the teams battled to a scoreless tie for 30 minutes largely due to a fine display of puck-stopping by Tigers' goaltender Erik Powers.

Aurora's rookie netminder made 24 saves in the first 31 minutes of play and kept his team in the contest.

Buscarini gave the school kids and their teachers something to cheer about when he opened the scoring at 11:46 of the second period.

In a goalmouth scramble, Buscarini pushed the puck past JRC netminder Amir Valiullin with linemates Cayden Smith and Luc Warner earning assists on Buscarini's second of the season. The rookie forward described his go-ahead goal.

"I went hard to the net after we won the draw and Smith set me up. I was lucky to knock it in."

Despite being outshot 22-10 at the time of Buscarini's goal, the opportunistic Tigers maintained their precarious one-goal lead against the high-flying Canadians until Aiden Al-Joundi tapped in his own rebound past Powers with 8:12 remaining in the middle frame.

Like sharks sensing blood in the water, red-clad JRC pounced on the young Tigers in the waning minutes of the second period. Lucas Teixeira neatly deflected Dylan Bly's cross-ice pass past Powers at 5:58 and Toronto secured its first lead of the game.

After Teixeira's tally, Aurora Head Coach Tom Milne called a timeout to steady his white-clad youngsters, but the rally by 'Le Bleu, Blanc, et Rouge' was relentless.

At 4:56, JRC's Gabriel Ciarallo broke through the Tigers' defense and roofed one over Powers for his seventeenth of the season and Toronto's third goal in four minutes.

Ninety seconds into the final frame, Illia Shybinkskyi blasted a shot from the left point that eluded Powers and squeaked between his pads—prompting a goaltender change at 18:28 by Coach Milne. Christopher Thompson entered the fray with his team trailing 4-1 and was tested immediately.

Milne reinstalled Powers between the pipes after Thompson had shut out JRC for 138 seconds.

With JRC's Jay Feldberg and Aurora's Captain Nicholas Brady in the sin bin for roughing after the whistle, Toronto was assessed a bench minor for too many men on the ice. The infraction gave the Tigers a 4-on-3 advantage.

Aurora's power play seized the opportunity and converted with six minutes remaining in the third period. Liam Longo's laser from the point deflected off Buscarini and past Valiullin for his second of the game. Buscarini described his third of the season.

"We got puck possession off the draw and Liam's shot ticked off my glove into the net."

Longo and Warner earned assists on the power play goal that narrowed Aurora's deficit to 4-2 with six minutes to play.

Despite Buscarini's goal-scoring heroics, Warner's playmaking prowess, and the Tigers' gutsy play in the third period with Powers pulled for an extra attacker at 2:30, JRC took advantage of the home team's strategic gamble in the final minute of play.

With 42.7 seconds left on the clock, Jordan Karafile lifted a soft shot from the neutral zone that bounced slowly into the Tigers' empty net. Feldberg closed the scoring when he slammed the puck into the vacated cage with 25.5 seconds left to provide Toronto's margin of victory.

By Jim Stewart