

Dukes down Tigers in first two games of Conference quarterfinals



By Jake Courtepatte

Two games into the OJHL postseason, the Aurora Tigers are still trying to solve the Wellington Dukes: a task that has taken them all year.

A 0-4 record in the regular season has turned to 0-6 after a pair of low-scoring games put the Tigers in a deep hole during the OJHL Conference quarterfinals.

The fifth-seeded Tigers visited the fourth-seeded Dukes at the Wellington Community Centre for Game one on Friday, with the Dukes striking first beating goaltender Josh Boyko four minutes in.

Boyko settled in for the rest of the period, as well as the entire middle frame, while Noah Delmas had the Tigers' first goal of the 2016 postseason on the powerplay to tie it at one.

The heartbreaker came with only 38 seconds left in regulation, when Wellington's Matt Adams found the back of the net despite Aurora providing most of the offensive pressure.

Boyko was good, but his Wellington counterpart Olivier Lafreniere was better, making a whopping 42 saves in the contest to Boyko's 23.

Liam Ham and Daniel Mantenuto added assists in the 2 ? 1 loss.

Over 350 fans packed the Den at the Aurora Community Centre Sunday night to see the Tigers at home for the first time this postseason, and were treated to some early theatrics. Just over a minute into play, Drake Board centered the puck to Alex Formenton from behind the Wellington goal line to open the scoring before some fans had even found their seats.

But penalty trouble followed the Tigers for the rest of the period, forced to kill off two 5-on-3s, the second of which saw Jacob Panetta sending a one-timer past Boyko to tie it after the first.

Wellington took the lead in the second period, when Boyko was fooled by a tipped shot that fluttered over his shoulder. They added to the lead a few minutes into the final frame, when Boyko was forced to contend with a handful of players crowding his crease.

Austin Gerhart made it close with ten minutes to go, picking up his own rebound and burying it to make it 3 ? 2. It's as close as the Tigers would come, once again outshooting the Dukes, this time 39 - 32.

Finding the back of the net only three times over the first two games, the Tigers must not win four games in the best-of-seven series before the Dukes can grab two.

?What it comes down to is you need to score goals,? said owner Jim Thomson. ?End of the day, you have to put the puck in the net. (Boyko) can stand on his head every night, but if you only score one, two goals a game, you're not gonna win.?

Boyko took the reigns as the Tigers' starting goaltender when ex-OHLer Alex Fotinos went down with injury, and went on to own a 2.27 goals-against-average with a save percentage of .919 through 27 games.

?He's been a beautiful surprise,? said Thomson. ?When Fotinos went down, we always knew Josh, we kept him because we knew he was a great athlete. He was quick in the net and he's taken full advantage of his opportunity.?

Game three is on deck for this Wednesday at 7p.m. following press-time, with Game Four set to return to the Den on Friday. Puck drop is at 7:30 p.m.

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