

Dunn's buzzer-beater earns Tigers two points from rival Royals



By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora's Junior A Tigers dramatically capped off their first three-game win streak since October on Sunday, against their closest rival no less.

Nolan Dunn played the hero with zero seconds showing on the game clock, giving the Tigers a crucial two points over the Markham Royals at Markham's Centennial Arena.

JD Falconer, a late-season pickup following time at St. Andrew's College and a stint out west, opened the scoring for the Tigers just over three minutes in. Markham fought back with two of their own before the end of the period, taking a 2 ? 1 lead into intermission.

After a scoreless second period, three quick markers from Drake Board, Alex Formenton, and Dunn had the Tigers up 4 ? 2 less than two minutes into the final frame.

Down by two in the dying minutes, the Royals opted to pull ex-Tiger goaltender Marcus Semiao with a few minutes left on the clock, a move which almost paid off. Two goals with six attackers, including Marco Azzano, capping off a hat trick, tied the game with eighteen seconds remaining.

Dunn buried the game-winner off assists from Liam Neuman and Daniel Mantenuto.

The win was the third for the Tigers in three days, led off by a 6 ? 3 contest over the Pickering Panthers on the road Friday. Austin Gerhart led the way with a four-point performance, while defenceman Kyle Locke had his first two-goal game of the season.

Gerhart's fine play continued into Saturday, adding four more assists in an 8 ? 1 drubbing of the Lindsay Muskies at the Aurora Community Centre. Defensively, the Tigers' skaters gave goaltender Josh Boyko plenty of help in allowing only 20 shots on net, but Boyko certainly does not go without merit over the weekend.

Serving backup duty for the majority of the season, Boyko was handed the reigns of a struggling Tigers defence on Friday and never looked back. He earned all three wins, improving his record to 7-4-1 on the year.

?'It's nice to get those wins on the board,' said Boyko. 'The boys have been working hard all year, we've just been getting some bad bounces. I think we proved this weekend that we're still a top contender in this league.'

And just like that, the Tigers are back in the hunt for top spot in the OJHL's Northeast division. Sunday's game was Markham's

second loss in a row, bringing the 20-12-0-6 Tigers back to within two points of the lead, though the Royals have a game in hand.

It's worth noting, however, that a gap has once again opened between the Tigers and the third-place Newmarket Hurricanes, with seven points now separating the two teams.

At least for now, the bleeding has stopped in the jungle. The test continues with two road games on the docket this week, first facing the league-leading Trenton Golden Hawks (30-2-1-2) on Friday.

Markham, meanwhile, gets two basement-dwellers in Pickering and Lindsay.