

## James Thomson named Head Coach and General Manager by the Aurora Junior A Tigers for 2026-27

James Thomson lost his interim Head Coach label on Monday afternoon as the Aurora Tigers announced that their current General Manager will add Head Coach to his job description for the 2026-27 season.

Thomson's inspirational leadership behind the bench ? partnered with the steady presence of longtime Aurora Assistant Coach Dave Goverde ? propelled the young Tigers to play their best hockey of the 2025-26 season.

Under the newly-installed systems of Thomson and Gouverde, the Tigers clawed their way to a respectable 5-3-0-0 record and a .625 winning percentage ? far above the .333 PCT and 15-31-0-2 record the team cobbled together in its first 48 games.

The Tigers opened the Thomson-Goverde Era with a 3-0 win in Cobourg on February 9. Although Aurora was shut out 4-0 by Pickering four days later, the rejuvenated squad skated to back-to-back wins over Niagara Falls (6-3) and Markham (4-3) on February 14 and 15.

Even more impressive was one of the Tigers' losses ? a narrow 2-1 defeat at the hands of powerhouse Stouffville. Thomson's young charges created much suspense in their tilt with the Spirit and almost ruined the celebration of Senior Player Recognition Night at the Stouffville Arena on February 19.

In the final week of the season, the Tigers swept a home-and-home series from the playoff-bound St. Michael's Buzzers ? 3-0 and 4-3 ? due in part to the stellar goaltending of Kian Hodgins, who made 86 saves in the two contests played on February 20 and 28. Although the Tigers were drubbed 8-1 by the first-place Golden Hawks in Trenton on February 27, that kind of one-sided result was the exception for Thomson's team and not the rule over the final three weeks of the season. Contextually, the Golden Hawks eviscerated most of their opponents in February ? notably, the beatdowns of Markham (8-1), Caledon (9-2), and North York (11-0) in three consecutive games from February 10-15.

The tenth-place Tigers finished the season 20-34-0-2 and missed the OJHL East playoffs for the third year in a row. The Lindsay Muskies clinched the eighth and final playoff spot in the OJHL East on the final week of the season with a 22-27-5-2 record and 52 points, nine more than the Tigers.

The installation of James Thomson as Head Coach and General Manager on March 2 would seem to be a step forward for the Tigers franchise, which won the Canadian Junior A championship in 2004 and 2007. The dynamic duo of Thomson and Goverde could return the proud old franchise to its Glory Days. First step: climb at least two spots in the standings in 2026-27 and make the playoffs on the 20th anniversary of Aurora's last national Junior A hockey championship.

**By Jim Stewart**