

Junior A Tigers clinch playoff berth



By Jake Courtepatte

The Tigers are heading back to the big dance.

It took just over sixty minutes of play on Saturday for the Junior A Aurora Tigers to clinch a spot in the Ontario Junior Hockey League postseason, when league-leading scorer Joseph Mizzi potted his 32nd goal of the year.

A goaltending battle between Aurora's Lucas Durante and the Georgetown Raiders' Nathan Torchia had the game remain scoreless into the overtime period, where Mizzi extended his scoring streak to five games just over a minute in.

Stopping all 22 shots he faced, the win was a big sigh of relief for the rookie Durante, who picked up his second win in a Tigers uniform since coming over from the Mississauga Chargers in late December in a goalie swap.

Since earning a win in his first game as a Tiger against the Stouffville Spirit one day after the trade, five straight losses plagued the Aurora tender before recording his first shutout of the season.

Saturday's victory is also a welcomed return to the winner's circle for the Tigers squad as a whole, finally brushing the monkey off their backs in picking up the team's first win of 2019, and snapping a seven-game losing streak dating back to mid-December.

The string of losses culminated in a 6 ? 4 loss to the divisional rival Pickering Panthers in a road game Friday night, where four straight third period goals found their way past goalie Christian Filippetti after a back-and-forth opening two periods.

Forward Markus Paterson led the way for the Tigers, picking up his second three-point game of the season in earning a goal and two assists.

Yet it was Saturday's two points that played a crucial role in entering the Tigers' final month of the regular season, one that saw a handful of teams clinch their spot in the OJHL postseason.

The Markham Royals (22-15-2-4) took down the Panthers on Sunday to earn an ?X' beside their name, sitting just three points up on the Tigers (22-18-2-1) for the premier position in the North division.

The Newmarket Hurricanes (20-17-2-5) strung together a pair of shutout wins over Markham and Stouffville to finally pull dead even with the Tigers, a chase that has seen them slowly creep up the standings since November.

The league-leading Oakville Blades (36-4-1-3) round out the NorthWest conference clinchers, while both North York and Toronto are in in the SouthEast.

The Tigers will hope to go on a run for the final dozen games on the schedule, continuing their road swing with a pair of away games this week.

Thursday's action sees the Tigers visiting the Spirit for their final matchup of the season, before heading to Toronto on Sunday to face the Jr. Canadiens in an inter-conference battle.

Next home game goes Tuesday at 11:30a.m. against the Pickering Panthers at the Aurora Community Centre, part of a series of games this season targeted towards a student audience.

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