

Junior A Tigers clinch third in OJHL North



By Jake Courtepatte

A podium finish for the Aurora Tigers: though standing lower than they would have hoped.

The Junior A organization wrapped up a third place finish in the Ontario Junior Hockey League's North division over the weekend, posting a 1-1-1 record in the second-to-last weekend on the regular season schedule.

With league-leading scorer Joseph Mizzi heading to the pro rankings via the ECHL's Utah Grizzlies, the rest of the squad was forced to step up Friday against the powerhouse Markham Royals, who have all but clinched the North's title.

St. Andrew's College affiliate Brendan Bowie scored his first two goals in the Aurora black and gold in just his second OJHL game, a back-and-forth effort that saw the Tigers fall 5 - 4 in overtime. Captain Steve MacLean and Markus Paterson also found the back of the net for the Tigers.

Picking up a pair of points clinched the third place standing for the Tigers in Saturday's 3 ? 1 win over Pickering, avenging a 7 ? 2 thumping at the hands of the Panthers earlier this month.

Despite a string of bad luck in the first period, including a stopped penalty shot by Jacob Ball and a goal by Tyler Davis just milliseconds after the buzzer, Aurora notched three straight goals before the Panthers finally beat Lucas Durante halfway through the third period.

The Tigers top netminder was stellar to close out the final ten minutes, all in all stopping 26 of the 27 shots he faced.

Davis, now the team's top scorer with the departure of Mizzi, picked up the slack in posting a pair of assists. Ball eventually found the back of the net, as did Jack Varga and Nolan Turi.

With the five-game home stand over at a record of 1-3-1, the Tigers were hoping for better luck on the road to begin their final trip of the season in Buffalo on Monday.

Facing a Jr. Sabres squad with just five home losses all season, Buffalo threw 40 shots on Durante in his third game in four nights, beating him four times in a 4 ? 3 win.

Ball, Rhys Forhan, and Evan Pringle scored for the Tigers.

With just two games left in the season, Aurora's record stands at 24-23-2-3, one of six teams in the NorthWest conference to clinch their spot in the big dance.

The North division rivalries continue into the final weekend of the regular season schedule, with the Tigers visiting the second-place Newmarket Hurricanes at the Ray Twinney Complex on Thursday evening.

The schedule closes out on Friday with a visit to the Markham Centennial Centre to face the Royals.

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