

Junior A Tigers sweep pair of games with Caledon Admirals and St. Mike's Buzzers

The Aurora Tigers swept a pair of back-to-back games to close out their October schedule.

On Thursday night in Caledon, Assistant Captain Cayden Smith fired the winning goal as the Tigers sunk the Admirals 4-1. Back home at the ACC on Friday night, Captain Simon Howard fired four goals and added two assists to pace the Tigers to an 8-5 besting of the Buzzers in a Halloween thriller.

Smith and Howard have been bright lights this season.

Their sublime performances over the last three games led the Tigers out of a period of mid-Fall darkness during which the team slumped to 11th place in the OJHL East. Smith's three-goal performance last Friday versus the Hurricanes planted a seed for the Tigers' last two games of October. Despite Smith's marksmanship, Newmarket edged Aurora 6-4 to claim Round 3 of the Battle of Yonge Street at the ACC.

It was the gritty Assistant Captain's first OJHL hat trick. The gracious Smith underplayed the importance of his hat trick, but noted that "It felt very good, especially since it was against my old team."

Smith's goal-scoring prowess provided a modicum of solace versus Newmarket, but it also provided momentum for their games versus Caledon and St. Mike's.

Smith carried over his goal-scoring and play-making heroics to the Mayfield Recreation Complex on Thursday night versus the ninth-place, vastly-improved Admirals.

In a free-flowing first period during which no penalties were called, the Tigers struck first.

On a grievous giveaway by the Caledon defense corps, forechecking Tiger forward Kyle Butt intercepted the Admirals' errant pass between the circles and beat left-handed goaltender Calem Yorke cleanly-- snapping the puck top shelf glove side.

Butt's unassisted goal stood up as the difference until 13:35 of the second when the Tigers finished a nice passing play.

Gianfranco Rosella feathered a feed to Smith who continued his hot hand by blasting a shot from the slot high stick side past Yorke to give the Tigers a 2-0 lead. Smith described his game-winning goal: "I got a great saucer pass from Rosella and lifted it top corner. We executed well."

Smith figured prominently in another picturesque goal to extend the visitors' lead.

On the power play, Simon Howard found Smith in open space who slid a perfect pass to Nick Frasca.

The versatile new Tiger one-timed the puck from the left circle past Yorke to stake the Tigers to a 3-0 lead.

The second period also featured a spirited dustup between Aurora defenseman Bode Pearson and Caledon forward Clarence Allain during which Pearson landed more than a few haymakers.

Both spirited combatants were banished from the game for fighting, but Smith felt the Tigers were fired up by the fracas.

"It was great. The boys were really excited and it was a real momentum changer for us."

After the prize fight behind Aurora's net, the Admirals did get on the scoreboard with 40 seconds remaining in the middle frame. On a nice give and go with Owen Meli, Deacon King tallied his tenth of the season and solved Tigers' netminder Matt Humphries who put forth an otherwise spectacular performance in Caledon. Humphries who has suited up for the OHL Niagara IceDogs this season stopped 37 of the 38 shots the Admirals fired at him to earn the W. Smith complimented his goaltender's fine work versus Caledon, especially in the third period when Humphries stopped all 18 shots he faced.

He's a big game goalie. He made some big saves for us tonight, especially in the third period, and he gives us confidence. He's so locked in and gave us an all-star performance.

With 31 seconds on the clock, Simon Howard received a pass from Jamie Buscarini in the neutral zone, took two strides over the Caledon blue line, and blasted the puck into the empty net to close the scoring at The Ice Box.

Smith assessed the keys to victory over the Admirals: We played a structured game tonight and we were aggressive. We shot pucks to the net and finished good chances.

On Halloween night, the Buzzers and Tigers finished their good chances many times as the OJHL clubs treated the patrons at the ACC to an old-fashioned shootout featuring 13 goals.

After St. Mike's forward Caiden Clair opened the scoring at 11:57 of the first period, the Tigers fired three goals in a row in less than five minutes to take a two-goal lead.

Marcus Carter, Cole Crawford, and Simon Howard scored in quick succession to build a 3-1 lead with less than three minutes to go in the opening frame.

However, the Buzzers struck back in this see-saw affair with goals by Aiden O'Toole and Julian Campoli to tie it 3-3 before eight minutes had elapsed in the second period.

Simon Howard's eighth of the season at 13:09 and linemate Anrijs Bundzeniek's goal 24 seconds later restored the Tigers' two-goal lead.

The visitors struck back early in the third period when O'Toole and Campoli both scored their second goals of the game to pull the Buzzers into a 5-5 tie.

It was all Tigers after that and the home side provided the paying customers with both a trick and a treat.

Howard completed his hat trick when he fired the game-winning goal at 9:01.

The Tigers' Captain scored his fourth of the contest at 13:49 to give his club a 7-5 cushion over the pesky Buzzers. Thomas Leone closed the scoring when he fired an empty netter to make it 8-5 with 1:12 on the clock.

With his impressive six-point night versus St. Mike's, Howard moved into 16th place in the OJHL scoring race with 10 goals and 13 assists.

By earning back-to-back wins, the Junior Tigers improved their record to 7-10-0-0 and jumped into 10th place in the OJHL East just one point behind ninth-place Markham with two games in hand.

The Tigers open the November portion of their schedule by hosting the high-flying Stouffville Spirit (13-5-0-0) on Friday, November 7 followed by a Saturday, November 8 tilt with the eleventh-place Cobourg Cougars (6-12-0-1). Puck drop for both games at the ACC is 7 p.m.

By Jim Stewart