

## Junior Tigers roll to 3-0-1 record heading into OJHL regular season opener on Saturday in Newmarket

The Aurora Junior Tigers are on a roll heading into their OJHL season opener on Saturday in Newmarket versus the Hurricanes.

Including their hotly-contested 2-1 home win versus the King Rebellion on August 21, the rebuilding Tigers have cobbled together an impressive 3-0-1 record with a 4-3 win over the Rangers in North York on August 26, an emphatic 7-2 win over the Pickering Panthers on home ice on Saturday night, and a narrow 5-4 OT loss to the Panthers in Pickering on Sunday afternoon.

Picking up points in each of their last four games is giving the team momentum heading into the 2025-26 season and it started with a close win over their regional rivals from King Township.

The Thursday night win at the ACC was due to opportunistic scoring as well as the stellar goaltending of Rafael Defina and William Whited who turned aside 33 of 34 shots.

Tigers General Manager and Assistant Coach James Thomson complimented the tenders' talents: "Both played well and kept us in the game in crucial times. They both managed the ebbs and flows and battled through several penalty kill situations."

Thomson also attributed the win versus King to a total team effort.

"Key to our success was a solid work ethic from everyone in the lineup. It certainly wasn't a perfect outing, but lots of positive signs to build off."

The Tigers validated their GM's assessment by putting forth a string of strong performances against North York and Pickering.

In Saturday's home ice victory, the Tigers built a 5-0 lead after two periods on markers by Luke Howard, Cayden Smith, Simon Howard, Marcus Carter, and Jamie Buscarini. After Cayden O'Hearn's power play goal 6:51 into the third period got Pickering on the board, the Tigers put the game away 19 seconds later when Carter notched his second of the evening. Cole Crawford's goal with five minutes to play finished the Junior Tigers' scoring.

Pickering turned the tables on Sunday afternoon when Brandon Scott fired the game winner at 11:44 of the first overtime period to avenge their lop-sided loss to the Tigers on Saturday night.

At 16:54 of the third period, red-hot Marcus Carter fired his second goal of the game and fifth of the preseason to tie the game, secure a point for the Tigers, and send both clubs into OT.

Carter opened the scoring with a shortie at 4:51 of the opening frame and Matthew Scozzese gave the Tigers a 2-0 lead seven minutes later. The Panthers responded with goals by Tyler Bruce and Ty Robar to pull the home side even 2-2 at the end of the first period.

Robar's second tally of the contest provided Pickering with its first lead of the game at 3:50 of the middle frame, but Tiger centre Cayden Smith tied it 3-3 forty-nine seconds later.

Kyle Costello's goal at 11:40 of the second period reestablished the home side's lead which they held until surrendering Carter's marker with 3:06 left in regulation.

In the Tigers' narrow victory over the Rangers in North York on Monday, Aurora trailed 2-0 after the first period. However, Matthew Scozzese and Thomas Leone tied the game with a pair of second period goals to rally the Tigers.

Neil Steinberg's goal at 17:49 restored North York's lead before the middle frame ended, but the Junior Tigers fired two unanswered goals in the third period to claim the road victory. Leone's second of the game tied it 3-3 and Luke Bovoletis fired home the game winner with 15:35 on the clock to keep the Rangers winless in the preseason.

The Junior Tigers finished the preseason with an impressive 4-2-0-1 record heading into their regular season lid lifter on Saturday with the Newmarket Hurricanes at Ray Twinney Recreation Centre. Puck drop will be 4.30 p.m. as the former rivals resuscitate the Battle of Yonge Street.

Round Two of The Battle of Yonge Street will take place during the Junior Tigers' home opener on Saturday, September 13. Puck drop at the ACC will be 7 p.m. ?marking the first time the former Toronto Junior Canadiens will skate into Aurora as the newly-rebranded Newmarket Hurricanes.

**By Jim Stewart**