

Junior Tigers trade leading scorer Cayden Smith to Cobourg for Aurora's Nic Ferrante

It's a cooling thought to contemplate the Tigers' upcoming OJHL season on a stifling 44C Humidex day in Aurora.

The Junior A Club jumped back into the Town's consciousness amid a heat wave and World Cup fever by engineering a significant early-summer trade.

The Tigers dealt last season's leading scorer Cayden Smith to the Cobourg Cougars (formerly the Haliburton County Huskies) for Aurora resident Nic Ferrante.

Smith, the team's on-ice and off-ice leader, tallied 20 goals and 32 assists in 49 games for the Tigers, including 8 PPG, 8 PPA, and 3 GWG.

His gritty, consistent play was a constant for the OJHL club that missed the playoffs in 2025-26.

Ferrante, who split 44 games between the Markham Royals (5) and the Huskies (39), notched 6 goals and 17 assists.

On paper, it would appear that the Huskies-turned-Cougars got the better of the deal, but Tigers' owner Jim Thomson offered a rationale for the trade: "First and foremost, Cayden's agent said if he didn't stick in the OHL with the Erie Otters, Cayden was heading to the BCHL so I had to get something of value."

"Cayden's going to be a depth forward with Erie, but, if he returns to the OJHL, his preferred destination was with a contender like Haliburton, now Cobourg. It's similar to the Howard brothers not coming back last year and that's why we traded them to the Patriots for three really good young players. That's the backdrop for this trade."

The former NHLer extolled the qualities that Ferrante brings to the Junior Tigers.

"He's a cultured veteran, an experienced 20-year-old and an asset to the organization. I think he'll have a really good offensive season in his last year of Junior hockey and he's a local boy, an Auroran, who's coming home."

Ferrante played his rep hockey with the AMHA Tigers for twelve seasons and also skated for the SAC Saints for two years at the AAA and PHL levels.

A key factor for Ferrante, according to Thomson, was the desire to complete his Junior hockey career in his hometown where "I get to finish where it all started" after playing in Markham and Haliburton last season.

The Huskies' transfer to Cobourg from Haliburton earlier this Spring filled a void in "Ontario's Feel Good Town" after the struggling last place Cougars pulled up stakes, rebranded as the Toronto Warriors, and re-established the franchise at the Scotiabank Pond in Downsview for the 2026-27 OJHL season.

Ferrante will miss all the franchise transfer complications and growing pains in Cobourg and Toronto. Instead, he'll be back in Aurora leading a young Junior team in his hometown. There's nice circularity for Nic in this transaction and he'll be on the ice on July 12 when the Tigers re-open summer camp at the ACC.

By Jim Stewart