

Pavese's brilliant three-point night for Tigers not enough as Aurora falls 5-4 to Oakville in overtime

Aurora forward Justin Pavese scored two goals and added a brilliant assist, but the Tigers blew a two-goal third period lead to fall in overtime 5-4 to the Oakville Blades on Friday night at the ACC.

Pavese opened the scoring 39 seconds into the first period, but the Blades countered with goals by Matthew Indovina and Matteo Gauthier to take a 2-1 lead at 4:03.

Tigers' Head Coach Tom Milne pulled his starting goalie Matt Humphries after the usually-reliable netminder surrendered two goals on two shots. Cam Millar kept the Blades off the scoreboard until late in the third period and the relief goalie's steady play between the pipes in the opening frame allowed the young Tigers to recalibrate and draw even before the first period expired.

Simon Howard's centering pass off the right wing slid through a maze of players and deflected off Antonio Cerqua's skates and behind Chris Ouizi at 2:15. The goal was reviewed, but Cerqua was found not guilty of kicking the puck into the net and the Tigers drew even at 2. Howard's assist was his tenth of the season.

Three minutes into the middle frame, a goalmouth scramble yielded Pavese's second goal of the game when he jammed one past Ouizi to give the Tigers a 3-2 lead. Millar's sequence of sensational saves between 9:35 and 9:05 preserved Aurora's precarious mid-game lead.

Furious forechecking for the rest of the second period and the start of the third period set up numerous scoring opportunities by the Tigers. Their hard work paid off when Pavese made a great pass from the corner onto Tristan Aben's tape and the Aurora resident made no mistake, snapping it high into the twine behind Ouizi to give the home side a 4-2 lead at 6:13.

It was Pavese's team-leading 13th assist of the season.

The hard-working Tigers seemed on the way to another impressive win on home ice, but the Blades pulled to within one at 11:56 when Evan La Conte banged one past Millar from the edge of the crease.

With 1:15 left in the contest and Aurora Captain Nicholas Brady serving an ill-timed boarding penalty, Oakville's leading scorer Jack Dean roofed one over Millar with Blades' goaltender Ouizi pulled for the extra attacker.

Dean's power play goal was his 8th of the season, tied the game 4-4, and forced overtime.

In the extra period, the Tigers had their chances early, but Dean scored his second goal of the game on a breakaway when he beat Millar high stick side to seal the Blades' dramatic overtime road victory.

Dean's overtime heroics earned him First Star of the Game honors as selected by OJHL staff. Pavese and Millar earned Second and Third Star honors, respectively.

By Jim Stewart