

Pediatric patients at Southlake score hundreds of toys at Tigers-Panthers? Teddy Bear Toss Night



Aurora rookie forward Cayden Smith tallied two goals on Teddy Bear Toss Night co-hosted, by the U22 Panthers and the Junior A Tigers.

However, the Markham Royals ruined the festive vibe by firing four goals in the third period en-route to a 7-4 win at the ACC on Saturday night.

In their last home game before the Holiday Break, the Tigers were bedecked in black Christmas sweaters adorned with holiday symbols, gold shoulder patches, and the Grinch emblazoned on the crest.

Unfortunately, the Tigers served as hospitable hosts in their Holiday apparel and, in the spirit of the Christmas Season, gifted eleventh-place Markham, an underwhelming third period effort during which the visitors scored four goals in rapid succession and sent the home team to its sixteenth loss in 17 games.

Saturday's successful Teddy Bear Toss was coordinated with the Central York Junior Panthers. The U22 Elite squad, ranked 8th with a 14-8-0-0 record in the 25-team OWHA, took to the ice to help the Tigers celebrate their first goal of the game.

Smith obliged the toy-laden audience when he made a nifty move off the right wing and backhanded the puck over Royals' netminder Sebastian Monaco at 13:42 of the opening period. Hundreds of Teddy Bears were tossed by spectators to celebrate Smith's emphatic marker.

Aurora's Junior Hockey teams showed their spirit of community service by collecting the toys and loading them into the Tigers' vehicle parked at center ice. The Panthers and Tigers posed for an OJHL photo and the cuddly teddies were delivered to the Children's Ward of Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Four minutes after the game resumed, Royals' forward Rodion Tatarenko corralled a puck off the end glass and one-timed the puck past Tigers' goaltender Matthew Humphries to even the score.

After Tigers' forward Christian Holden was penalized for slashing with 4:55 left in the opening period, it took the Royals only 33 seconds to capitalize on their man-advantage. Tatarenko's sharp cross-zone pass was redirected by Julian Mandarin past Humphries from the left side of the crease to stake the Royals to their first lead of the game.

The Tigers' power play struck with similar efficacy to start the second period.

With Owen Fergusson in the sin bin for slashing, the Howard brothers produced the tying goal 12 seconds into Aurora's power play. Rookie center Simon Howard took a nice feed from his rookie defenseman brother Luke off the left point, made a nice pivot move

off the end line to create space, and lifted the puck over Monaco to pull the Tigers even at 2-2.

Aurora took a 3-2 lead when Christian Holden using his 6'6" frame to hold his ground in the slot scored his first OJHL goal at 7:16 when he deflected Liam Longo's blast from the right point behind Monaco.

The determined Tigers held their one-goal margin for nine minutes until a slewfooting penalty to Tristen Aben gave Markham a four-minute power play. Nearing the end of the visitors' lengthy man-advantage, Rodion Tatarenko wired one from the left dot under the crossbar beating Humphries on the blocker side with 3:26 left in the second period.

It was mostly Markham in the final frame on Teddy Bear Toss Night. Tigers' backup goaltender Chris Thompson replaced an injured Humphries to start the third period and faced an onslaught of power play opportunities as the Royals took advantage of Tiger penalties and lethargy to ice the game at the ACC.

Josh Caloiero scored 6:54 into the third period and the talented Tatarenko completed his impressive hat trick forty-four seconds later to give the Royals a 5-3 lead.

Smith provided the Tigers with signs of life when he scored his second of the game at 8:01 to pull the home side to within one, but Julian Mandarino's power play marker at 10:04 and Mason Cruzet's goal at 14:26 stifled any attempted comeback by Aurora.

By Jim Stewart