

Tigers are bound for the playoffs heading into last seven games of season



By Jeff Doner

Having officially clinched the OJHL north division title with two more wins last week, the Tigers are now looking to close out their final seven games with momentum, heading into the playoffs.

Veteran defenseman Kyle Liu was pleased his team was able to clinch the victory, but wants to make sure they keep their sights set on the goals ahead.

‘It’s a good feeling and it shows that hard work pays off, we’ve got to pat ourselves on the back, but that’s just clinching the division,’ he said.

‘We want to win a championship, so we’ve got to keep our head on straight. Like [Coach James Richmond] says, every game is like a playoff game. We want to have that mentality so come playoff time we’re ready to go.’

Starting off with Hamilton at the ACC on Wednesday night, the Tigers struck first to command the lead right away. Michael Laidley scored twice, while Calvin Higley and Kory Kennedy added goals of their own for a 4 ? 1 win.

Liu said it was great to get the win, but that the score sheet painted a much rosier picture than what actually happened on ice.

‘We played well, but we didn’t play up to our expectations,’ he said. ‘The scoreboard indicated that we played well, but as a team we didn’t stick to the game that much and we got away from it a bit. We were fortunate to come out with a win.’

‘Good teams always find a way to win, so even when we’re having an off night it’s good that we’re still able to put numbers on the board. I think when everyone’s buying into the system and doing their role, we’re one of, if not the strongest, team in the league.’

Liu has been a key part of a defence that has allowed a league low 100 goals against so far this season. But that stat is a badge to the team as a whole, he said.

‘It’s not just with the back end; it’s with the forwards too,’ he said. ‘Like with face-offs, all five guys need to work to win and I know we really try hard [to have] a good strong defensive game, because that leads to good opportunities up front. A big part of it comes down to our goaltending as well. Kevin Entmaa has been playing unbelievable the last couple months, so he needs credit too.’

Backup Andy Munroe registered the win for the Tigers against Hamilton, making 23 saves, while Dylan Sikura chipped in with

three assists.

On Friday night the Tigers headed west to face off against the Oakville Blades. The game ended up being a little closer than they would have liked, but the Tigers managed to come home with the win.

Adam DiBrina and Calvin Higley's first period goals ended up being enough for the Tigers to take the win as Oakville only managed a single goal in the third period and Entmaa made nearly 40 saves for the win.

Similar to what Liu said about the previous game against Hamilton, Kennedy felt that the team didn't have its best outing in Oakville.

"I think there are some things we can improve on after watching those games again," he said. "I think we got away from the way we've been playing, which has been working for us. We managed to pull it off, but we still need to make sure not to take teams lightly."

Kennedy, who is currently leading his team in both points and penalty minutes, and has been one of the mainstays for the Tigers all season, said the team needs to focus more on what got them to where they are.

"I hope we just keep playing like we have been playing all year ? keeping it simple and getting pucks in and throwing it to the net," he said. "If we keep playing like we were, I think we're good to go."

This week the Tigers are again without a home game as they head out for a road swing in Stouffville, Lindsay and Hamilton. They will return home on Friday, Feb. 14 for a tilt against Cobourg.