

Tigers are ready for action after holiday break



By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Tigers have returned from the Christmas break refreshed and ready for action.

With 20 wins under their belt, the Tigers have played well enough through the first three quarters of the season to put them ahead by 11 points in the north division standings.

"I think the break did a lot of the players good," said head coach James Richmond. "They got to go home and this was the first day [Sunday] that they had to be back, so guys that lived far out of town, it was a good break for them.

"Originally I thought there should be a few more practices, but they've worked hard in the first part of the season, so I thought a week away was good and a lot of the guys looked re-energized out there today."

With less than 20 games left to play in the season, the Tigers are a confident group that has molded together well as the season has wore on.

In 35 games played, the Tigers have the second-lowest goals against total with 84, behind Cobourg's 80.

Despite missing some key players for stretches in the season, they have also managed to score 140 goals, which also has them near the top in that category.

When asked what aspect of the team has been underrated, captain Rob Angiolella pointed to the back end.

"I think our goalies have both been playing really well," he said. "I think they've been ranked number two and three in the league and we have the least goals against, so obviously our goalies and our defencemen as well."

Before the break, the Tigers squared off with their Yonge Street rivals for a home and home series.

The first game in Newmarket wasn't so great for the Tigers, as they were handed a 5 ? 2 loss. But the next night at home, the Tigers responded by pounding the Hurricanes 7 ? 2.

Dylan Sikura scored his 12th of the season to lead off the scoring, while McCloy scored two to give him back the team lead in goals. Kory Kennedy added a goal and an assist to keep him atop the Tigers point list with 43 in 35 games.

?'Newmarket is going to always be a good opponent for whoever they play against,?' said Richmond. ?'They're well coached and it's whether or not they all show up to play and that's the same for us. We didn't show up to play the first night in their barn and we got a good jump on them the next night because we were embarrassed about the night before and it was a good showing for us.?'

Overall, Richmond said he is pleased with the play of his team thus far. He pointed to the strong play of Sikura, Eric Williams and Kevin Entmaa as a rallying point for the rest of the team.

For the stretch drive to the playoffs, Richmond said his team just needs to stay the course.

?'I think bringing the consistent work ethic every night, because there's never going to be an easy night,?' he said. ?'Everybody wants to take down the guy that's in first and we're in first and everybody wants to cheer for the underdog, but we've got the leadership group, we've got the young guys and goaltending going. We've just got to stay focused.?'

Defenceman Adam Power, who skated last week for the first time since going down with an injury, should be back this week and said the Tigers are primed for the challenge.

?'I think we're feeling pretty good,?' he said. ?'You can't ever feel too cocky about it, but the guys on the team are hungry and they don't like losing, which is good. I have a good feeling about playoffs this year.?'

However, he pointed out that there's always room for improvement.

?'No team is ever perfect and there are always little things you can work on. If you think you're perfect, you're never going to get anywhere, so there are things we need to improve on, but I think we'll be ok.?'

The Tigers will head back on the road for three games against Wellington, Toronto and Pickering before returning home on Jan. 11 for a matchup with Pickering.

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