

Tigers beat up on Conference-leading Dukes



By Jake Courtepatte

A pair of losses to the powerhouse Wellington Dukes early in the season left the Aurora Tigers with something to prove. And they made a resounding point in a clash-of-the-titans type rematch at the Aurora Community Centre on Saturday. After a tough 3 ? 2 overtime loss to the Trenton Golden Hawks on Friday brought the conference rivals to within a point in the OJHL standings, Aurora was looking to close the gap when they hosted the Dukes, a battle of the top two teams in the NorthEast Conference.

Wellington got into penalty trouble early, giving Aurora a long 4-on-3 powerplay just over eight minutes in, when newcomer Brock Welsh tipped in a Jake Bricknell point shot from the top of the circle.

Two more Aurora goals found the back of the net late in the period, first off the stick of Chris Giroday with a wrister through a screen followed by a Luca Esposito shot that went in off the crossbar.

Captain Bricknell blew the game out of reach with back-to-back goals in the second period, the first of which prompted a change in the Wellington net.

At the other end, Bradley Van Schubert was a brick wall between the pipes, making a few highlight reel saves before Wellington broke the goose egg late in the period on a second rebound chance.

The conference's number-one offense, down 5 ? 1 late in the middle frame, showed signs of frustration with a handful of penalties to prevent any more scoring chances.

While Esposito notched the only goal of the third period, for a final score of 6 ? 1 Tigers, the third period devolved into a brawl throughout most of the twenty minutes including a heavyweight tilt between Aurora's Eli Gordon and Wellington's Ben Evans. Gordon, who earned a one-game suspension for the incident, was retaliating for a vicious elbow to the head by Wellington's Geoff Lawson that also saw both Duke players tossed from the game.

The teams combined for 110 penalty minutes, including Aurora's 41, close to one-tenth of their total for the season up to the game. An exhausting weekend closed Sunday with another heavyweight matchup against the Kingston Voyageurs, where only one of Aurora's 46 shots found the back of the net in a 4 ? 1 loss.

Kingston took a 3 ? 0 lead before Evan Bidenti scored early in the third period.

Welsh, who found the back of the net on Saturday in only his second game as a Tiger, has been an effective addition to the team since being acquired from the Whitby Fury in notching four points in three games.

He and his veteran Tiger squad will host his former Fury teammates at the Aurora Community Centre on Friday, with a puck drop of 7:30p.m. Whitby is playing for the future this season in a rebuild that has them sitting last in the East division.

The Tigers then visit the Toronto Patriots (17-5-0-1) on Saturday for an inter-conference matchup.

With a pair of Newmarket Hurricanes wins over the weekend, Aurora maintains their position in second amongst the North division. Both teams trail only Wellington in the conference.

For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.