

Tigers clawing at first place in OJHL North division



By Jake Courtepatte

The holidays were especially cheerful for an Aurora Tigers squad that now sits just one point back of the Ontario Junior Hockey League's north division leaders.

The cats managed to pick up three of a possible four points over a two-game window between Christmas and New Years, one of only a handful of teams to not shut down their schedule.

Friday's action in Aurora had about 200 fans take in the Tigers' matchup against the Cobourg Cougars at the Aurora Community Centre.

Starting goaltender Bradley Van Schubert, out of game action for two weeks prior to Friday, never missed a beat in picking up his fourth shutout of the season.

Aurora captain Jake Bricknell opened the scoring on the powerplay in the first period, the only one of Aurora's eleven shots to find the back of the net in the frame. They pressed on, however, to notch three more before the final whistle, to earn a 4 ? 0 win.

Christopher Giroday, Austin Eastman, and Zach Wilkie were Aurora's other goal scorers.

Van Schubert, a veteran OHLer in his first year with the Tigers, has established himself among the elite backstoppers in the OJHL with his fourteen wins on the season. His 29 saves in the game brought him to an incredible save percentage of .933 for the year, good for a tie for second in the entire 22-team league.

He was back between the pipes the next day for a battle with the rival Trenton Golden Hawks, whose strong play in December had earned them points in their last six games.

The streak continued against the Tigers, when a late regulation goal forced overtime and an eventual Trenton win.

Aurora's number-one penalty kill was tested and broken early, when Mac Lewis split the Aurora defensemen in the first period and found Van Schubert's five hole.

The Tigers returned in the second with an opening minute notch, where Joseph Mizzi used the defenseman as a screen to send a wrist shot home. Austin Eastman gave the Tigers the lead shortly after, finishing off a nice tic-tac-toe with Bricknell and Wilkie for a 2 ? 1 score after two periods.

Van Schubert was a brick wall through most of the final twenty minutes, though Max Ewart used a boost of speed with under four minutes to go to tie the game and send it to extra time.

It took less than a minute into overtime for Trenton's Caleb Goman to finish it on the four-on-three powerplay.

Looking at the division standings, losing the extra point hurts Aurora, though they made great strides in catching up on their slow schedule. Just one point now separates the Tigers from the Newmarket Hurricanes, with a game in hand for the Tigers, while they sit three up on the Markham Royals with three games in hand.

With the homestand over, Aurora begins a five-game road schedule on Saturday when they visit the Stouffville Spirit.

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