

Tigers eliminated from playoff contention



By Jake Courtepatte

The shades have been pulled on the Aurora Tigers' season.

With just over three weeks left on the Ontario Junior Hockey League regular season schedule, Aurora's Junior A club has been officially eliminated from the postseason.

A pair of losses last week, combined with two big wins from the eighth-place Newmarket Hurricanes, leaves the Tigers 20 points out of a playoff spot with nine games to play.

The season all but over last Thursday, the Tigers faced a Wellington Dukes squad eager to clinch the postseason.

Wellington came out flying, going up 3 - 0 on the Tigers before they finally solved Wellington goaltender Victor-Olivier Courchesne. It was a highlight moment for the Tigers, however, as defenseman Daniel Tomassetti notched his first goal with the team.

Jake Sabourin stopped 37 of the 40 pucks he faced in a 4 - 1 effort, with Wellington adding an empty netter in the final two minutes.

Sabourin was back between the pipes Sunday to face the Cobourg Cougars at home, one of the hottest teams in the OJHL. At the other end was Stefano Durante, whose ?sparkly? 1.88 goals-against this season, as play-by-play announcer Joe Montesano called it, leads the OJHL by a long shot.

Cobourg capitalized just off the opening draw, before doubling their lead just under seven minutes into the first. Eric Holland cut the lead in half with his nineteenth of the year just a few minutes later, sending a backhand through Durante's pads on a breakaway.

Down 3 - 1 in the second, Tyler Davis once again brought the game within a goal, burying in close off a Mel Melconian centering pass.

The Cougars scored the only goal of the third period to win it 4 - 2, Aurora's third loss in a row.

With a record of 6-34-1-4, the Tigers sit two points back of the Pickering Panthers for last in the OJHL's Northeast Conference. Fans will be seeing some fresh faces for the remainder of the season, which culminates on February 24, as call ups from the AAA systems will be trying out for next year's squad.

A pair of games are on the Tigers' schedule this weekend, first visiting the Stouffville Spirit (23-16-2-3) Saturday night. The weekly home game features the Tigers hosting the Dukes at the Aurora Community Centre, with puck drop set for 7 p.m.

While only four teams in the OJHL have clinched a playoff spot, two York Region teams are in good position to reach the postseason.

While the Hurricanes sit seven points into the eighth and final playoff spot, the Spirit are twenty points ahead of ninth place, and could punch their ticket this week.

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