

Tigers hold 2 ? 1 series lead over scrappy Cougars



By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Tigers knew they were up against a formidable opponent in the Cobourg Cougars for the OJHL north east semi-final round, but after three games the Tigers have shown their stripes by earning a 2 ? 1 series lead.

After blowing out the Cougars 7 ? 2 in Game One on Friday night, things have evened out, with Cobourg biting back with a 3-1 win in game two, and then the Tigers edging out a 3 ? 2 win on the road on Monday night.

Things stayed relatively close during the first 20 minutes in Game One, with Dylan Sikura scoring the only goal of the period to give the Tigers a 1 ? 0 lead.

But the Tigers really opened things up in the second, and it started with Junior B call-up Johnny Curran scoring his first OJHL goal to put the Tigers up by two.

The play started with a shot that circled around the back of the net with Curran picking it up on the other side and then putting it in the back of the net.

?It felt good,? he said after the game about his big goal. ?It's not pressure, but something good to get off my back. It was good to get that out of the way instead of having it come further down the road.?

The Tigers then took advantage of numerous power play opportunities to really stick it to the Cougars.

While on a five-on-three advantage, Sikura received a cross-ice pass at the point and blasted the puck past the Cobourg netminder to make it 3 ? 0.

Three minutes later, Calvin Higley scored a power play marker of his own.

After a further three minutes, the Tigers found themselves up 5 ? 0 after Sikura scored a nice breakaway goal, sniping a shot over Nathan Perry's glove.

The goal capped an impressive hat trick for Sikura on the evening.

Cobourg broke Aurora's shutout with two straight goals to start the third, but Curtis Warren and Robert Angiolella would get them back to end the game with a 7 ? 2 final.

Sikura said his trick was definitely a good way to break in the series.

"I think [Cobourg] came in here pretty confident," he said. "They swept us in the regular season, so it was good that we got a good start and got the lead," he said.

Sikura added it probably lit a fire under Cobourg, and that is just what happened in Game Two.

Curtis Warren, who has had a strong playoffs thus far, scored in the first for an early Tigers' lead, but three unanswered Cobourg goals tied up the series.

"I think we actually played well," said head coach James Richmond. "I think it was a game where either team could have won. We had the majority of the play, we outchanced them and Perry played really well in net for them and Entmaa played really well in net for us."

The series then took to the road for game three in Cobourg.

Things were close in the first period until the Cougars scored the go-ahead goal in the dying seconds of the period and it stayed that way until the Tigers pulled off a gutsy third.

Three straight goals by Higley, DiBrina and Liam Neuman suddenly had the Tigers up 3 ? 1 with 11 minutes left to play.

Cobourg added a power play goal shortly after Neuman's marker, but then failed to tie, giving the Tigers a 3 ? 2 come-from-behind win.

Curran added another playoff assist on DiBrina's goal and Richmond said he likes what the youngster has brought to the table thus far.

"He played well and has fit in nicely," he said. "He has been a go-to guy when he came from in Junior B [Niagara Falls] and when you can get a player like that, you want to see how he is. He looked good when we watched him and that's why we've put him in and I think he has really helped us. He'll stay in. He's a good right shot forward with good hands."

Curran added the team has made it easy for him to step in and be a part of the team.

"I walked in pretty quiet and looking to learn. These guys know how to win and obviously I want to learn how to win, so I'm just going to take everything in like a sponge and then hopefully I can help out."

After a stint in Cobourg, the series comes back to the ACC on Thursday night at 7.30 p.m.

James Richmond named OJHL Coach of the Year

Also making news for the Tigers this week is Head Coach James Richmond, who has been named the OJHL coach of the year.

In four seasons with the club, Richmond has led the Tigers to two consecutive first place finishes in the North division.

Richmond also won the award while coaching Georgetown back when the award was given out to a coach in each division.

On top of his roles with the Tigers this season, Richmond has also worked as a skating development coach with the Los Angeles Kings.

"It's quite an honour and obviously I'm excited about it, but it's more of a staff award," he said. "These other guys don't get their names on the award, but they've done a great job ? Tom Milne, Mike Doyle and John Ceci with the goalies. It's a tremendous honour

and I'm thankful for it.?