

Tigers? lead extended atop North division



By Jake Courtepatte

Look out Dukes, the Tigers are on the prowl.

A battle of the behemoths on Friday night saw the junior A Aurora Tigers take down the Wellington Dukes, bringing Aurora within two points of the conference lead.

Despite a 5 ? 1 loss to Cobourg on Monday snapping their sixteen-game point streak, the cats rallied back on the road with a 4 ? 3 victory against the Dukes, the top team in the NorthEast conference.

The rubber match of the season was opened with a Wellington powerplay goal just under the midway point of the first period, a score the teams took into the intermission.

Back-to-back Aurora goals in the second gave the Tigers the lead, thanks to Elijah Gonsalves and Anthony Romano, before Wellington bounced back with a pair of their own early in the third.

Rivzan Mansurov tied it back up with just under ten minutes to go at three apiece, before captain Jake Bricknell earned the game winner on the late powerplay.

Jack Irvine, called up to replace the suspended Bradley Van Schubert between the pipes, made a solid 33 saves in the win.

Van Schubert returned to the net one day later in a battle with the Buffalo Jr. Sabres, the Sabres only visit to Aurora on the season schedule.

Tested early on a two-on-one, he showed no signs of rust in making a diving cross-crease save, though Buffalo opened the scoring in the second after a few whacks at a rebound.

Aurora tied it up on a rebound of their own just a few minutes later, with the goal going to Luca Esposito, though Buffalo took a 2 ? 1 lead to the dressing room after a quick win of the draw fooled Van Schubert.

With time winding down and an empty net, Austin Eastman found twine with just four seconds left on the clock to send the game to overtime.

Three-on-three hockey tested Van Schubert on another two-on-one in extra time, making another diving stop, before Joseph Mizzi buried the game winner for Aurora from the side of the net.

The division rival Newmarket Hurricanes, who spent most of the season atop the North division, dropped both of their weekend games to fall four points back of the streaking Tigers.

The two sides will meet twice more in the regular season schedule, in Newmarket on February 8 and at the Aurora Community Centre on February 16.

In the meantime, Aurora kicks off a three game road trip on Thursday, visiting the Oakville Rangers (30-12-2-1), before ending the week with a trip to Markham to face the Royals (23-17-1-4) on Sunday evening.

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