

Tigers' losing streak reaches nine in 6-1 loss to Buffalo Junior Sabres

The Buffalo Junior Sabres made their biennial trek to the ACC on Friday.

The only US-based team in the OJHL demonstrated its balanced scoring attack ? getting goals from six different players en-route to a 6-1 win over the struggling Aurora Tigers.

Aurora's Junior A hockey team remained winless in December. The Tigers' last victory was a 6-2 romp over the Cobourg Cougars on November 17.

Despite the month-long malaise, the ninth-place Tigers got the jump on the visitors on Friday night.

Only 18 seconds into the contest, Cole Crawford took a crisp tape-to-tape pass through the neutral zone from Tigers' defender Tommy Kut. After Kut delivered the perfect feed, Crawford swept over the blue line and unleashed a wrist shot from just inside the circle that beat Sabres' goaltender Anthony Alessi cleanly?tickling the twine and providing hope for the Tigers and their 100 diehard fans. It was Crawford's ninth of the season.

Exactly two minutes later, the Sabres pulled even when Cameron Przewozny rifled a low shot off the right wing that deflected off a defender's stick and over the shoulder of Tigers' ?tender Lucas Carpino.

With 1:25 left in the opening frame, Jacob Brunton shoveled home a goal mouth pass from Carson Joy that was just out of the reach of a sprawling Carpino to stake Buffalo to a 2-1 lead.

The free-flowing, penalty-free, and entertaining game established in the first frame continued until 12:33 of the second period when Tigers' forward Charlie Hoitles was sent to the sin bin for interference.

The opportunistic visitors seized on the first man-advantage of the game. Ninety seconds into the Hoitles's infraction, Sabres' Captain Ryan Shuler slipped in from his QB position on the blue line, and sniped the puck past Carpino from inside the right faceoff circle to give Buffalo a two-goal lead.

Immediately after a very promising and persistent Tigers' power play, Joy found open ice during a line change, stickhandled through the neutral zone, fired the puck from between the circles, and beat Carpino. Joy's unassisted marker made it 4-1 heading into the second intermission.

At 11:29 of the third period, Buffalo built a four-goal margin when Sawyer Schmidt one-timed a nifty centering pass in the slot to put the Sabres up 5-1.

With 11 seconds remaining, Buffalo's leading scorer Jaden Flora beat Carpino short side?just over the keeper's glove?to provide the margin of victory.

Highlight of the Night

Other than Cole Crawford's electrifying goal eighteen seconds into the game, Karla Lees's fine delivery of ?The Star-Spangled Banner? and ?O Canada? was a performance befitting a packed arena filled with exuberant fans.

Tigers and Sabres have a Long OJHL Rivalry

Almost twenty years ago in a packed arena filled with enthusiastic fans, the Tigers defeated the Buffalo Junior Sabres four games to one in the first round of the 2007 Buckland Cup playoffs. During that magical season, the Tigers went on to win the Buckland Cup,

the Dudley Hewitt Cup, and, ultimately, the Royal Bank Cup as Canada's Top Junior A Hockey team. It was the apex of Aurora's Golden Era of Junior Hockey which included two national championships and three league championships in nine years.

By Jim Stewart