

Tigers? luck isn?t rosy for Pink in the Rink



By Jeff Doner

With scoring forward Dylan Sikura back in the lineup, the Aurora Tigers were hoping to take a step forward and bag a few wins last week.

Things didn't go as planned, however, as they dropped both of their games to put their record at 4 ? 6 ? 1 on the season and fell seven points behind the first place Newmarket Hurricanes.

On Friday, the Tigers visited the Pickering Panthers and came home with a 5 ? 3 loss.

Even though they outshot the Panthers 32 ? 21, the Tigers dug themselves an early hole by allowing four goals in the first period.

Kory Kennedy and Sikura have meshed well early on and have combined for eight points in their last two games. The high-flying forwards each scored a goal in the first period to cut Pickering's lead in half heading into the second period.

Both teams traded chances to start the second until Adam DiBrina got the Tigers to within one midway through the period. Two short minutes later, the Panthers regained their two-goal lead.

That's the way it would stay as both teams held each other in check throughout the third.

Saturday vs. Newmarket

The Tigers returned home for a game against their rival Newmarket Hurricanes the following night. For this game, the Tigers were decked out in pink gear and jerseys for their annual ?Pink in the Rink? event to raise awareness of breast cancer and money for Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Staying in line with their lackluster performance the night before, the Tigers again got off to a slow start, finding themselves down 4 ? 0 in the first period.

They would eventually start to find their feet, but the Hurricanes used their speed and took advantage of some defensive miscues to gain the early lead.

After the game, head coach James Richmond said it's clear his team needs better starts out of the gate.

‘We lost that game in the first nine minutes,’ he said. ‘It was the same as last night; we just didn’t come out for whatever reason. I just explained to the boys, that if you’re racing a race car and don’t get off the start line, you’re left behind, it’s pretty tough to pass everybody coming back.’

The second period was better for the Tigers, as some of the team’s veteran players tried to rally a comeback.

DiBrina would get the Tigers on the board 56 seconds in to the period with a power play goal and a cold goalie in net for Newmarket.

Roughly 10 minutes later, Kennedy was dragged down on a breakaway, putting the Tigers on the power play once again. Sikura took a nice pass from Kennedy and buried the puck past the Newmarket goalie to make it 4 ? 2.

The Hurricanes quickly stole the wind out of the Tigers’ sails, however, by scoring 15 seconds later.

Before the period concluded, Kennedy would add a goal of his own, from Sikura, to give fans the hope of a third period comeback.

There was a good tempo throughout the third period, but the Tigers weren’t able to find any luck.

With two minutes left, Richmond pulled the goalie for an extra attacker, but the Hurricanes turned it around and added an empty net goal to make it 6 ? 3.

Again with the net empty and an extra man on, Michael Laidley scored his fifth of the season to make it 6 ? 4, but the Tigers simply ran out of time and luck.

Postgame, the common message from the team was that they have to get off to better starts,’ said Kennedy. ‘I think that we just need to give it a full 60 minutes and we can’t keep getting down three or four goals at the start of the game. If we get that start worked out I think we’re good to go.’

‘We’re starting to pick it up a bit. I definitely think that if we come out with a better start we’re going to start winning.’

Sikura agreed with his linemate: ‘We’ve just got to be ready to go right out of the gate. We’ve had two games in a row that we’re down 4 ? 0 in the first 10 minutes and we dig ourselves a hole and can’t get out of it. We outplayed Pickering and Newmarket tonight in the second and third, but we just couldn’t get out of that hole that we dug ourselves in the first period.’

Coming off a foot injury and missing the first nine games of the season, Sikura has picked up right where he left off last season, with two goals and four points in two games.

‘It’s good getting back into the swing of things,’ he said. ‘We’re in a bit of a slump here, we’ve got to get something going right off the start, but it’s good to be back with the team.’

Richmond said having Sikura back is a big help offensively, but reiterated that the team needs to figure out why the slow starts have taken over and if any roster moves will need to be made.

The team should also have captain Robert Angiolella back from injury in the near future.

Next week the Tigers will play three games in three nights, with matches at home against North York and Oakville at the Aurora Community Centre on Friday and Saturday night at 7.30 p.m.