

## Tigers? Peter Lopes registers hat trick, but Markham Royals rout Aurora 12-4

The bright lights of CHCH-TV's coverage of the OJHL Game of the Week brought out the best of Tiger defenceman Peter Lopes on Saturday afternoon.

The team's steady blueliner scored a hat trick and was interviewed by the broadcast crew between periods, but his offensive outburst was in a losing cause as the Markham Royals hammered the home team 12-4 at the ACC.

The Tigers' Assistant Captain offered a somber yet hopeful assessment of his team's six-game losing streak and its performance on home ice versus the Royals.

"We have a lot of heart in the room," he said. "The guys care for one another and we're fighting our way through this. To get out of our losing streak, it takes everyone to step up. The good results will come when they come."

On a brighter note, Lopes enjoyed his interview with CHCH hosts Rod Black and Alan Corkham between the second and third periods.

"It was cool to be interviewed. They asked me some standard questions. I responded to how the game was going and they were great to talk to."

The engaging team leader also acknowledged his team's struggles of late.

A 7-4 home ice loss to Georgetown on Tuesday afternoon and a narrow 4-3 loss in Markham on Friday night put the Tigers on their heels on Saturday afternoon's rematch with the Royals.

After Markham's narrow 4-3 victory at Centennial Arena on Friday night versus the Tigers, the Royals came out flying during the first period of the rematch. A flurry of goals by Sebastian Bulovs, Cole Cooksey, Cole Bowditch, and Sawyer Prokopetz gave Markham a 4-0 lead after seventeen minutes of play.

Tigers' Coach Greg Johnston called a timeout to stem the tide after Bowditch's goal and his team responded by putting pressure on the Royals and creating offensive opportunities.

Peter Lopes's slap shot from the point, assisted by power play partners Matthew Godwin and Lucas Stanojevic, narrowed the margin to three goals at the end of the first period.

Despite an offensive flurry by the Tigers to open the second period, the Royals' offensive onslaught continued when Bowditch scored his second goal of the game at 14:07 of the second period. Nicolas Tan and Owen Halloran scored two minutes apart to make it 7-1. Lopes's second power play goal on another slap shot from the point, also assisted by Godwin and Stanojevic, put Aurora back on the scoreboard with 59 seconds left in the middle frame.

Cooksey added his second of the game 90 seconds into the third period to put Markham ahead 8-2, but Tigers' Captain Lucas Stanojevic scored his 31st goal of the season to give the Tigers some life. However, two power play goals by McKay Hayes and Jonah DeSimone stretched the Royals' lead to 10-3 while the Tigers were serving an assortment of penalties including a five-minute major penalty for a head shot.

Haines and Cooksey, with his third of the game, provided Markham with its final two goals. Lopes matched Cooksey's hat trick when he banged home his third goal on his own rebound for the Tigers' final tally of the tilt. The Tigers' defenceman felt his hat trick was the result of making a concerted effort to shoot more.

?The coaching staff has been telling me to shoot more from the point so it was great to score two goals on slapshots from the blue line today. On the third goal, I was fortunate to have the rebound bounce back to me so I was able to fire it in.?

The Tigers look to end their six-game losing streak when they travel to Burlington for a 7.30 p.m. start on Tuesday, February 14 at Central Arena.

The Tigers' host two home games on Friday, February 17 at 7.30 p.m. versus the Brantford 99ers and on Saturday, February 18 at 7.30 p.m. versus the Pickering Panthers.

**By Jim Stewart**