

Tigers pull out of slump, into second place



By Jeff Doner

Mired in a slump and stuck in the middle of the standings, the Aurora Tigers knew they needed something big to get back on track and this week they did just that by winning three games in a row.

Playing all three games in roughly 48 hours, the Tigers blew away their opponents by a combined score of 21 ? 5.

?Well, we've got everybody back,? said head coach James Richmond, referencing the Tigers' injury woes. ?Having Angiolella, Sikura and Boston back in the lineup helps us with the speed through the neutral zone, which allows us to get a lot more scoring opportunities.?

The start of the offensive outburst coincidentally coincided with captain Robert Angiolella's return to the lineup, who has scored two goals and three assists since returning on Friday.

?It feels really good to be back, we had a big weekend and got three big wins, so it's good to come back and help out the team,? Angiolella said after a 6 ? 3 win over Whitby on Sunday.

Angiolella attributed the improvement, however, to the Tigers playing a complete team game and looking ahead instead of behind.

?The coach had a talk with us and said this weekend was like a whole new start to the season. We're just working on little things like getting the puck to the net and going to the net,? he said.

The winning streak started out on Friday night against the North York Rangers.

Aurora's high flying top-six forwards paced the offence for eight goals, with Michael Laidley netting a hat trick in the process.

Kory Kennedy, who has been a workhorse for the Tigers all season, finished the game with two goals and an assist, and linemate Dylan Sikura came up with a shorthanded goal and an assist.

Tiger's rookie goalie Andy Munroe made 28 saves to seal the 8 ? 1 win.

The next night, the Tigers played host to the Oakville Blades and came up with a similar result, scoring seven goals, while Munroe only allowed one against out of 26 shots.

This game featured some goal scoring by committee, with Taylor McCloy, Sikura, Kennedy, Laidley, Curtis Warren, Eric Williams and Calvin Higley each netting a goal in the 7 ? 1 win.

Less than 24 hours later, the Tigers boarded the bus to Whitby to face the Fury.

Riding a wave of new-found confidence, the Tigers came out to a 3 ? 0 lead to start the game.

Whitby's Taylor Best would make it 3 ? 1 at 7:35 of the second. Both teams traded goals in the second and third, but the Tigers would skate out of this one with a 6 ? 3 win, with Munroe again collecting the win by making 36 saves.

But the main story of the game was the four-goal performance for Tigers assistant captain, Taylor McCloy, including three at even strength.

It was McCloy's first multi-goal game of the season and gave him six goals and 14 points in 14 games so far this season.

?It feels awesome,? he said after the game. ?I can't really describe it, but everything was just hitting my stick and it felt like I was always in the right spot at the right time and I was just putting them home.?

Angiolella was sure to give his teammate kudos after the game as well.

?It was a good game for him,? he said. ?To come in and get four goals in an away game, it's a big accomplishment and we're all happy for him.?

As one of the leaders on the team, both in scoring and as an assistant captain, McCloy said the team is riding high and feeling good looking ahead to the rest of the schedule.

?I think everyone is just starting to buy in and we're playing our systems well. Coming out from our end, our goalie, defence and forwards are playing just great,? he said.

Aside from the offence, Richmond also gave credit to Munroe for providing stability between the pipes.

?We had great goaltending this weekend with Munroe playing all three games,? he said. ?We've been having difficulties in the first period and he has been great in them, so we're not coming out below. He's done well.?

The Tigers recent winning ways has them three points behind Newmarket for first place in their division. They will be looking to gain more ground this week when they visit Milton on Friday and face Pickering at the ACC on Saturday night at 7.30 p.m.