

Tigers ride wave of confidence into final stretch before playoffs



By Jeff Doner

Having won 13 of their last 14 games, the Aurora Tigers Junior A hockey club is riding a wave of confidence into the final stretch.

With an incredible 36 ? 10 ? 1 ? 2 record, the Tigers now hold first place in the OJHL standings, three points ahead of Toronto Lakeshore.

Last week, things just kept chugging along as they collected three straight road wins over Stouffville, Lindsay and Hamilton.

Thursday at Stouffville

First up was the Stouffville Spirit on Thursday night. The game remained scoreless after the opening 20 minutes of play, but Robert Angiolella made sure to get his team on the scoreboard to start things off in the second period.

Dylan Sikura added another goal at 14:51, assisted by Kory Kennedy and Eric Williams, to give the Tigers a 2 ? 0 lead heading into the third.

Both teams turned up the intensity in the third period, but Williams scored a power play goal assisted by Calvin Higley and Kennedy at 4:25 to put the Tigers up by three.

Stouffville's Michael Morgan broke Kevin Entmaa's shutout bid four minutes later, but the Tigers got that one back when Michael Laidley buried a power play goal of his own with two seconds left to give Aurora a 4 ? 1 victory.

Williams, who ended up with a goal and an assist, said it was a tougher game than the scoreboard indicated.

?Stouffville always plays us hard and it was a close game for the most part,? he said. ?In the third I think we kind of took it to them and put the nail in the coffin, so to speak.?

Friday at Lindsay

On Friday night against the Muskies, it seemed to take the Tigers a little time to find their legs.

Lindsay captured a 1 ? 0 lead midway through the first period and held on to it until Taylor McCloy scored his third shorthanded goal of the year five minutes into the second. Angiolella provided the only assist.

On the very same power play, the Muskies retook the lead, which proved to again be short-lived when Adam DiBrina notched an unassisted goal at 9:31.

Tied 2 ? 2 heading into the third period, the Tigers found themselves in a bit of trouble as Lindsay pressed for the lead.

However, Kennedy would again provide some heroics by scoring a shorthanded goal of his own. Sikura was credited with the assist.

With just over a minute left, McCloy scored his second of the game to ensure the Tigers a 4 ? 2 win.

?Lindsay wasn't really our best game, it was kind of sloppy, but we managed to get two shorthanded goals, which really helped us out,? Williams said.

Monday at Hamilton

Having beaten Hamilton 4 ? 1 just two weeks prior, the Tigers had an idea of what to expect from the Red Wings on Monday night.

Despite again starting the game down 1 ? 0, the Tigers eventually found their feet and the back of the Hamilton net.

Higley ended up with a hat trick on the night to give him 22 goals in 48 games thus far in his first season for the Tigers.

McCloy and Curtis Warren each chipped in with two goals and an assist, while Dylan Sikura walked away from the game with four helpers in the 8 ? 3 win.

The Tigers now have just four games remaining in the regular season. All of them will be at home, which is something Williams said will be good for the club heading into the playoffs.

?It's going to be great,? he said. ?We've had a couple road games in a row lately, but we play well at home and the fans are good and it feels like we're starting to get more and more people out to the games, so hopefully the playoffs will be good too. We're looking forward to having home ice advantage.?

This week the Tigers will host Cobourg on Friday night and Pickering on Saturday, both at the ACC with puck drop at 7:30 p.m.

?Our goal right now is to win the league and win out the rest of our games, but it's about playing in the playoffs ? we want to be on a roll and playing well so that we have no problems,? Williams said.