

Tigers? Ryan Evenhuis selected to Team Canada East All-Star tourney, but winless streak reaches five with weekend losses

The good news out of the ACC this weekend: Tigers' leading scorer Ryan Evenhuis was selected to one of the two OJHL All-Star Squads to compete in the 2023 Eastern Canada Cup Challenge Tournament in Trenton from November 13-15.

The productive Aurora forward has an opportunity to wear the Team Canada East jersey at the World Junior A Challenge in Truro, NS, in mid-December. The Tigers' Assistant Captain has been a Top Ten scorer all season. Evenhuis currently holds down ninth spot in the OJHL scoring race with 16 goals and 16 assists in 25 games.

More good news out of the ACC this weekend: The Tigers were resplendent in red Remembrance Day jerseys on Saturday night to honor Canadian war veterans. The beautiful crimson keepsakes will be auctioned off this week with proceeds going to veterans' associations across the GTA.

The Tigers' connection to community remains a strong one under the direction of owner Jim Thomson.

The ceremonial faceoff, which included Mayor Tom Mrakas and members of the Aurora Legion, was timely and honorable as is the club's goal to raise funds for our war heroes in such a meaningful manner.

The bad news out of the ACC this weekend: The talented Evenhuis was kept off the scoresheet, the red tribute jerseys did not change the struggling team's tough puck luck of late, and the Tigers' winless streak grew to five games with 5-3 and 6-0 losses to Brantford and Pickering on Friday and Saturday, respectively.

With the losses, the Tigers tumbled into tenth place in the twelve-team Eastern Conference with a 9-15-1-1 record after 26 games.

Aurora Head Coach Tom Milne described succinctly the state of Aurora's Junior A squad after its 6-0 decisive defeat to the eleventh-place Panthers.

?That's a fragile team in there.?

Contributing to the precipitous decline of the team is an injury to gritty captain Ethan Lindsay who was hurt in the Tigers' 6-3 loss in Cobourg on Monday night.

Coach Milne noted that the loss of Lindsay, a primary set-up man for Evenhuis and the Tigers' second-leading scorer with 6 goals and 19 assists, is significant.

?It's huge. You can't put a measuring stick on that.?

Compounding the loss of Lindsay is the team's offensive funk and defensive lapses.

The Tigers have been outscored 39-16 in their current 1-6 slide and have been shut out twice during that stretch. Coach Milne?who has never had a five-game losing streak in his very successful OJHL coaching career?gave his struggling team credit, but also noted the team's weaknesses that require remediation.

?They're working hard, but we're not setting the tone early enough and we're not creating enough forechecking and pressure. Our power play was disjointed tonight and we took bad penalties [against Pickering] at bad times.?

The bad times against Pickering started early at the ACC on Saturday night as the visitors jumped out to a 3-0 first period lead and didn't look back. Former Tiger Zennon Edwards haunted his old teammates by firing a puck past Aurora netminder Will Goumas

from the right circle to stake the Panthers to a 1-0 lead at 12.29.

40 seconds later, Owen Dunning banged a backhand past Goumas.

The Panthers skated freely with a two-goal lead and big Pickering defenseman Nolan Connolly was taking runs at anyone in a red jersey. His pugnacious play inspired the Panthers and led to a 2-on-0 breakaway that Goumas repelled to stem the tide temporarily, but the Tigers yielded another 2-on-1 opportunity that Ben Pickell capitalized on, snapping a perfect pass from Nicholas Athanasakos past Goumas to give the visitors a commanding three-goal lead after twenty minutes of play.

Athanasakos's power play goal with just over one minute remaining in the second period was the only shot that eluded Tigers goaltender Yianni Karkoulas-- who replaced Goumas to start the middle frame. Athanasakos completed his hat trick with a pair of special team markers in the third period: a power play goal 45 seconds into the final frame and a short-handed goal with 47 seconds left on the clock.

On Friday night versus the ninth-place 99ers, the Tigers opened the scoring when defenseman Luke Hampel's power play point shot eluded Brantford netminder Aiden Berry at 7.37.

Andrew Tsotsos and Jobey Pearson earned assists on Hampel's sixth goal of the season. The 99ers, named after the number worn by Brantford's most famous son, took advantage of Bode Pearson's tripping penalty at 7.53 and scored their own power play goal seventeen seconds later when Evin Kojokaro fired a puck past Tigers' goaltender Yianni Karkoulas to tie the game 1-1.

The Tigers took the lead seven minutes into the middle frame when Max Cervjakovs set up Connor Russo's first goal of the season. However, Kyle Ferguson and Cameron Hankai's goals two minutes apart gave the visitors from Brantford a 3-2 lead heading into the third period. The Tigers' power play at 16.26 of the middle frame encapsulated the team's recent struggles as Karkoulas was called upon to make outstanding saves to avert short-handed goals by the visitors.

The 99ers converted an ill-advised back pass by a Tiger in the offensive zone during a penalty kill and Spencer Borg banged in a power play goal off the pipe and past Karkoulas to give Brantford a 4-2 lead.

Veteran Tiger Jace Lavalee lithely lifted Tyler Oletic's rebound over Berry with six minutes to go to narrow the 99ers' lead to 4-3.

Lavalee's sixth goal of the season seemed to lift the slumping Tigers as Coach Milne pulled Karkoulas for an extra attacker and Aurora blitzed Brantford to press for the tying goal and avert a four-game losing streak.

The 99ers converted a bad bounce with five seconds to go when Kojokaro scored his second goal of the game into an empty Tigers net to secure a big road win for the improving team from The Telephone City.

By JIM STEWART