

Tigers score first win of the season



By Jake Courtepatte

That sound emanating from the Tiger's den is not yet a roar, but more a sigh of relief.

Fittingly, it was captain Jonas Leas that dug the Junior A Aurora club out of the 11-game losing streak they found themselves in to open the Ontario Junior Hockey league season, capping off a 2 ? 1 win in overtime on Saturday over the division rival Collingwood Colts.

Taking advantage of a Collingwood penalty just over a minute into the extra frame, Leas wound up from the top of the left circle to finish off a one-timer from Bryce Young, sending the Aurora bench into a frenzy.

?The monkey is off their back,? said OJHL analyst Kevin Dean following the winning goal. ?What a hard-working team. They have been the most snake-bitten team I've seen in junior hockey, having so many opportunities.?

It was Leas' first goal in a Tigers uniform, ending a streak of his own to start his time in the gold and black, while Christian Filippetti found his groove between the pipes in picking up his first win of the season, a stellar outing in stopping 31 of the 32 shots he faced.

Kaleb Nelson also found the back of the net for the Tigers, his team-leading fifth goal of the season.

The relief on the ice was palpable: just one night earlier on the same ice, Aurora blew a quality chance against the powerhouse Toronto Jr. Patriots in allowing three unanswered goals in the third period, on route to a 5 ? 2 loss.

The Tigers are hoping that Saturday's win, one which saw the club's point total in the standings double with just one goal, proved to be the start of a rebound in a season that is already close to being lost early on.

Yet a return to the ice on Monday for a matinee with the Stouffville Spirit had the Tigers back in familiar territory, allowing an onslaught of chances on both of their goaltenders in a 5 ? 3 loss.

Andrew Barwinski was peppered with shot after shot in his time on the ice, lasting just over 33 minutes before getting the yank in favour of Filippetti. The change occurred with the game already out of reach, with Aurora down 5 ? 0 after Barwinski was forced to contend with 33 shots.

Balah and Jalen Balbosa closed out the scoring in the final period of play, both capitalizing on the powerplay.

Ultimately, while Saturday's win marked a step in the right direction, it remains a long ladder to climb: with a record of 1-10-0-2, the Tigers remain well back of the division-leading Markham Royals, and are still one point back of the newly-minted Milton Menace for the league's worst record, with the two sides making a swap late on Sunday.

While the return to the Tigers is yet to be announced, Aurora sent defenseman Noah Romeo to the Menace, who had skated in ten games for Aurora this season while managing a trio of points.

The Tigers will look to get back on track in visiting the Royals on Friday, before heading to Milton for a matinee on Sunday to face the Menace.

For stats, schedules, and more information, visit www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.