

Tigers snap losing streak but face elimination

By Jake Courtepatte

Though not yet officially eliminated, the Aurora Tigers' 2016-17 season is all but over.

With the roster stripped to the barest of bones, the Junior A club gave up close to 200 shots in a weekend that saw the Tigers go 2 ? 1.

Facing a Markham team on Friday that is looking to clinch their spot in the Ontario Junior Hockey League postseason, the Royals came out pressing while cruising to a 5 ? 1 win at the Markham Centennial Centre.

For the Tigers' part, Brayden LaChance saw a whopping 61 shots, while Luca Esposito was the only Aurora player to find the back of the net.

To those longtime Tigers fans, a familiar foe was between the pipes at the other end of the ice, in goaltender Marcus Semiao. Semiao spent a season with the Tigers in 2014-15 when they won the OJHL regular season title, eventually traded to Markham and spending some time with the OHL's Ottawa 67's. He stopped 33 of the 34 pucks he faced, and brings his team to within one game of clinching a playoff spot.

Backup goalie Jake Sabourin got the call between the pipes for Saturday's home game with the Toronto Jr. Canadiens, the first meeting of the year between the two clubs.

Mel Melconian earned his first junior hockey hat trick in a back-and-forth contest, with the Tigers eventually earning the win 5 ? 4 in double overtime.

Scoring both of the Tigers goals while down 3 ? 2 heading into the third period, Melconian tied the game midway through the third period on a giveaway by Toronto goalie Andrew Cippolone behind the net.

Both teams exchanged a goal apiece to close out the regulation period, taking a 4 ? 4 tie to extra time.

It was Eric Holland who earned the extra point for the Tigers, stealing the puck off a Canadiens defenceman in the Aurora end to go in on the Toronto net uncontested.

A deke to the backhand by the Tigers' captain allowed him to slide it between the legs of Cippolone, giving the Tigers their first win since November 25.

Sabourin was outstanding while filling in for LaChance, stopping 40 of the 44 shots he faced.

Unfortunately, the celebrations didn't last, as LaChance was shellacked with sixty shots by the Cobourg Cougars in a rare Monday game two days later.

Part of the Trenton Golden Hawks' annual OJHL Showcase, it was the Cougars that put on the show with three multi-goal performances, taking the lead just three minutes into the game and never looking back.

With ten games remaining on their regular season schedule, the Tigers are within two games of being officially eliminated from postseason contention. They bring a record of 6-32-1-4 into February, with the season running out on February 24.

Aurora has not missed the postseason in six seasons, dating back to 2010-11.

The Newmarket Hurricanes are clinging on the eighth spot by four points, chased by the Lindsay Muskies. In the Northeast conference, the Golden Hawks, Cougars, and Whitby Fury have already clinched.

This week is a slow one on the Tigers' schedule, set to host the Cougars (33-11-0-1) at the Aurora Community Centre on Sunday.

Puck drop is at 7 p.m.

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