

Tigers take two of three in their homestand versus North York, Markham, and Wellington

Winners of five of their last seven games, the Aurora Junior A Tigers have vaulted from eleventh to eighth in the OJHL East standings.

Aurora opened its three-game homestand on Wednesday morning with a thrilling 3-2 OT win over the North York Rangers.

Trailing 2-0 midway through the game, the Tigers scored three unanswered goals—including Marcus Carter's brilliant decisive marker in overtime—to snatch victory from the jaws of what would have been an underwhelming defeat.

Wednesday's game was a goaltenders' battle and patrons got their money's worth by watching "Magnificent" Matthew Humphries of the Tigers square off against Nicolas "Marvelous" Morvan of the sad-sack Rangers.

Morvan was the Schomberg Cougars' MVP in 2024-25, earning the moniker "Marvelous" by stealing numerous wins for the venerable PJHL club, and he carried his game-stealing antics into Wednesday's game by stopping all 16 shots fired by the Tigers in the first period.

North York took a 1-0 lead at 15:23 of the opening period when Brayden Boyle beat Humphries, who was decked out in his new Generals gear after being traded to Oshawa by the Niagara IceDogs.

Fifty-six seconds into the second period, an unassisted goal by William Divitcos gave the visitors a two-goal lead when the former Caledon Admiral blasted off the right wing and fired a wrist shot that beat Humphries short side.

The Tigers finally solved the valiant Morvan with 8:37 left in the second period when Anrijs Bundsenieks finished a nice feed from Gianfranco Rosella and popped one past the Rangers' netminder stick side to reduce North York's lead to 2-1.

Less than two minutes into the final frame, Morvan's save on Charlie Hotles on the doorstep was so larcenous that Hotles raised his stick to signal a goal. "Sorry, Charlie," as the old tv ad voiceover used to intone.

With 5:16 remaining in regulation, Aurora forward Kyle Butt soared off the left wing and rifled the puck off the crossbar and Morvan's right shoulder into the net to force overtime.

Playing four-on-four hockey and with 1:45 left the extra period, the swift-skating Carter ended the entertaining morning/matinee game when he created space, coasted between the circles, and fired a wrist shot that beat Morvan high stick side and rattled around in the cage.

Carter described his overtime goal and the team's comeback win: "We came back from being down 2-0. I was so happy it went in. I was in shock. I was asking myself 'Did this really happen?'" When I saw my teammates skating at me to celebrate, it felt surreal. It's the first time ever that I scored an overtime goal."

The good feeling generated by Carter's OT winner on Wednesday afternoon carried over to the Tigers' play on Friday night versus Markham. In front of the biggest home crowd of the season, the Tigers gave the fans at the ACC two good reasons to cheer in the opening six minutes of play.

Newly-acquired Paul Mazanic, set up by Cayden Smith and Gianfranco Rosella, opened the scoring at 4:12.

It was Mazanic's second goal in four games since arriving in a trade with the Collingwood Blues. Fifty seconds later, big rookie power forward Anrijs Bundzenieks notched his eighth of the season and staked the Tigers to a 2-goal lead, much to the delight of the

big crowd.

Eight minutes into the second period and on the power play, Nick Frasca's wrist shot from the left point eluded Markham goalie Noah Caballero to give the home side a 3-0 lead.

It was the mobile defender's fourth of the season as a Tiger since arriving in a trade with the Toronto Patriots.

However, 15 seconds later, Maxime Morin managed to get one past the otherwise stellar Matt Humphries short side to narrow Aurora's lead to 3-1.

Caballero kept his team within striking distance by flashing the leather with 27 seconds left in the middle frame?repelling Simon Howard's breakaway effort.

Forty-five seconds into the third period, Philip Govedaris's quick snap off the left wing shot beat Humphries, but not the left goal post?the sound of puck off pipe resonating through the ACC.

Despite a series of Aurora penalties midway through the final frame, Humphries was his team's best penalty killer?surrounding pucks and displaying premium rebound control.

The new Oshawa General flashed the leather and made two blocker saves to keep Markham off the scoreboard. All told, Humphries turned aside 36 of the 37 shots and earned First Star of the Game honors.

Another newly-acquired Tiger and OHLer put the finishing touches on the team's fifth win in six games.

With 4:30 remaining in regulation, Hotles fired the puck from a difficult angle below the left faceoff circle and beat Caballero short side to give the Tigers a 4-1 cushion. The Howard Brothers?Luke and Simon?earned their 16th assists of the season.

Carter?in a post-game scrum on Friday?described why the Tigers are on such a good run: ?We've figured out our systems. We're also playing to our strengths. We have a lot more puck possession, too, and we can grind teams much better than at the beginning of the season. We're playing a physical game, but we're also playing a skilled game, too. We're happy to have moved into eighth place, but we want a lot more than that and we have a lot of hockey left this season.?

Alas, the Tigers ran out of gas on Saturday night in their third game in four days, falling 5-3 to the Wellington Dukes.

Tommy Nitsopoulos's marker at 7:47 and Martin Marynovsky's power play goal at 11:52 provided Aurora with a 2-0 lead midway through the first period.

However, the Dukes fired five consecutive goals to take a 5-2 lead before the second period was eight minutes old.

Luke Howard closed the scoring at 10:29 of the middle frame.

By Jim Stewart