

Tigers trounce Hurricanes in first round, before moving on to Cobourg



By Jeff Doner

After winning the first three games of their series against the Newmarket Hurricanes, the Aurora Tigers Junior A hockey club dealt the final blow to their Yonge Street rivals with a come-from-behind 6 ? 2 win in game four last Tuesday.

Early on, however, it wasn't all that pretty due to a sluggish start for the Tigers, which had them down 2 ? 0 midway through the second period.

Kory Kennedy scored to make it 2 ? 1 before the period was over, but head coach James Richmond said his team needed to give their heads a shake heading into the final 20 minutes.

'There's not much paint left on the wall in there,' he said after the game. 'The effort and urgency wasn't there, we weren't playing with much desperation and in the third period we had a lucky goal?I think when we got our first one at the end of the second, I told the guys, 'they are on their heels, if you want it, take it' and we did by really taking to them in the third.'

The message was clearly sent and received, as the Tigers came out in the third period looking to regain some momentum.

Tigers' rookie Tyler Boston was the one who would provide some heroics when he buried the tying goal with about 12 minutes left. It was also Boston's first career OJHL playoff goal.

Minutes later, Dylan Sikura put on a great display of patience when he found the puck in front of the net, held on to it, dangled his opponents and then roofed it over Newmarket goalie Bo Bessette to give the Tigers their first lead of the game.

And they didn't let up there as Boston tipped in his second goal of the game just a minute later.

'The first one was a lucky bounce and the second one was a tip, but it felt good, obviously, to get my first two career OJHL playoff goals,' Boston said, who admitted his team needed a wakeup call early on.

'It was about coming out and playing with desperation. They were hanging by a thread and we wanted to cut that thread for them and win all the battles. We knew that if we worked hard and did that the chances would come our way and they did.'

Now with a two-goal lead in hand, the Tigers didn't stop there. At 14:59, crafty defenceman Eric Williams carried the puck in on the Newmarket goal and though his first shot failed, he made no mistake on the rebound, scoring on the power play to make it 5 ? 2.

Michael Laidley added another for the Tigers after tipping a shot from Kennedy over Bessette to make it a 6 ? 2 final.

It feels great and the boys really deserved it, said scrappy forward Adam DiBrina. We played a good, hard four games and we were the better team coming into the series, so it just feels good to finally put that away and focus on the next series now.

As one of the team's veterans, DiBrina has been solid for the Tigers this post-season and was confident his team was going to wake up after a listless first period.

We just talked about that if we wanted to win this game it was all about staying in control and that's been a big thing for us coming into the playoffs, he said of the conversation during intermission. We kept cool heads, stayed confident and we really just outworked them. That's what it really was. We outworked them in the corners, put pucks on net and focused on that and sure enough came out with the wins.

He also said the series may have been a little closer than meets the eye.

The last two games were close and they gave it a great fight for sure. In this league you just can't walk into a series and expect to blow out every team on any night. We knew that coming in and they fought hard.

All in all, the Tigers outscored the Hurricanes 17 to 6 in four games and were supported by consistent outings by two-time OJHL goalie of the month Kevin Entmaa, who boasts a 1.50 goals against average and .944 save percentage thus far in the playoffs.

Richmond said the series sweep was a full team effort, but mentioned a few key performances stood out in game four.

It was nice to see [Boston] score and he made some nice plays that didn't go in the net as well, he said. But the whole team played well and I think Entmaa was the difference in the whole series and that's what he's going to have to be.

The Tigers have since been off for a week to rest, nurse their wounds and work on getting ready for their northeast semifinal series with the Cobourg Cougars.

Whoever we play is going to be tough, Richmond said of the Tigers' next opponent. We'll just keep rolling and attacking with 20 guys.

Game 2 of the series against Cobourg is this Saturday at 7.30 p.m. at ACC.