

Winless streak hits double digits for Aurora Tigers



By Jake Courtepatte

Having run out of player cards long before the Ontario Junior Hockey League trade deadline, the Aurora Tigers are now just running out the clock.

While last Tuesday's deadline came and went with other York Region teams bolstering their rosters for the postseason, Aurora has resigned to miss the playoffs for the first time in six seasons by acquiring cash and some potential for the future.

The resulting team of call-ups and younger players fell to both the North York Rangers and Oakville Blades over the weekend, with the Tigers still searching for their first win of the New Year.

With both the Rangers and Blades destined for the playoffs with seeding implications on the line, the Rangers first shutout the Tigers at the Aurora Community Centre by a score of 4 ? 0.

Forcing goaltender Brayden Lachance to face 54 shots in the game, North York's Ture Linden continued his torrid scoring pace by beating Lachance three times, finishing a natural hat trick just under a minute into the third period. Noah Robinson rounded out the scoring just two minutes later, while Aurora managed just sixteen shots in total on the North York net.

The Blades, tops in the OJHL's South division and the second highest scoring team in the conference, disposed of the Tigers the following day 5 ? 2 at the ACC.

Oakville scored twice on the powerplay, with the Tigers combining for 31 penalty minutes in the game. William Constantinou and Mel Melconian scored the only Aurora goals in the contest, Melconian picking up the 41st point in 38 games this season.

Lachance stopped 22 of the 27 shots he faced.

The last Tigers win came on Nov. 25 against the last place Milton IceHawks.

With a Pickering Panthers win last week, the Tigers remain in the basement of the OJHL's North division with a record of 5-30-1-4. They are slated for their worst regular season record since the team's 1983-84 season, when they went 4-34-4 and were swept by the Dixie Beehives in the OPJHL quarterfinals.

The Newmarket Hurricanes are clinging to the North East conference's eighth and final playoff spot, two points ahead of the Lindsay Muskies. They are slated to contend with the Trenton Golden Hawks in the first round of the postseason, ranked in the top twenty in Canada with a record of 34-6-1-0.

The Tigers, meanwhile, will ride out the fourteen games remaining in the regular season with the focus on the future. Just over one month is left on the schedule, with five home games slated to be played at the Aurora Community Centre.

They take on the 25-13-1-1 Markham Royals on the road Friday, before returning to the ACC Saturday to host the 18-16-1-3 Toronto Jr. Canadiens.

Puck drop is set for 7:30 p.m.

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