

Aurora Tigers pounce on Toronto for solid season start



By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Tigers Jr. A hockey club is back in action and looking to inflict some damage on the opposition this season.

This year's version of the Tigers has a good mix of new young talent and veteran skill.

The revamped squad took to the ice at the ACC for the season/home opener on Thursday night and did not disappoint, with a 5 ? 2 win over the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots.

?We were a little jittery at the beginning; you could see the young guys were a little nervous,? said head coach, James Richmond postgame. ?I thought it was back and forth and then in the third period everybody settled in and played the way they can play. The last 12 ? 14 minutes of the game was all us.?

The big story of the game was Calvin Higley's hat trick that helped deliver the win for the Tigers. Higley, a five-year veteran of the OJHL, came over to the Tigers in the offseason from the rival Newmarket Hurricanes.

Higley scored the opening goal to give the Tigers an early 1 ? 0 lead on the power play just three minutes in.

The Patriots would come back to tie things up, but Tigers veteran Adam DiBrina would restore the lead by the end of the first.

Play would go back and forth in the second, but it was all Aurora for the third, with Higley scoring his second and third goals and Noah Delmas adding an insurance marker on the power play.

Higley said the hat trick was rare for him, but felt good nonetheless.

?It feels great. It's only my second one in five years, so it always feels good to score three goals.?

He also said he is looking forward to playing for his hometown Tigers after crossing over to the south side of the Yonge St. rivalry.

?It's a little weird, but I grew up playing in York-Simcoe, so Aurora and Newmarket is kind of my home. I live in Aurora, so it's good.?

The schedule continued to roll ahead for the Tigers on Saturday and Sunday, but the team wasn't able to keep the momentum moving ahead.

On Saturday, the Kingston Voyageurs dealt the Tigers a close 3 ? 1 loss.

Rookie goalie Andy Munroe got the start for the Tigers after veteran Kevin Entmaa started the night before. Munroe stopped 29 of 32 shots, but it wasn't enough as he received little offensive support.

In fact, Kingston held a 3 ? 0 lead until another rookie, Jordan Peacock, scored the Tigers lone goal of the game with just 53 seconds remaining in the game.

The next day the Tigers played their third game in three nights, visiting the North York Rangers. Entmaa stepped back in between the pipes, facing 40 shots and turning away 37.

The first period remained scoreless as the two teams attempted to figure one another out, but North York would come on strong in the second, taking a 2 ? 0 lead into the third.

Michael Laidley cut the Rangers' lead in half on the power play two minutes in, but North York responded shorthanded shortly after to make it 3 ? 1.

The Tigers would continue to push, as Eric Williams added another power play goal to make it 3 ? 2, but ended up taking the loss as time ran down.

Although still a small sample size, the team is confident that it has what it needs to take the next step forward.

?We've got some real good veterans back and the new guys coming in are real good players,? Richmond said. ?The Higley kid is, I think, one of the top players in the league. Right now we're missing two key guys out of the lineup in [Dylan] Sikura and [Tyler] Boston, who are key power play guys, so when we get those two guys back in the lineup, we should be a lot better.?

The Tigers believe Sikura and Boston will be out of the lineup for another four to six weeks.

Taking over the role of captain is returning scoring forward Robert Angiolella.

?It feels great, obviously,? he said. ?It's always an honour to wear the ?C' and there could have been a bunch of other guys to wear it, but I was lucky enough to be chosen, so that feels good.?

Angiolella said this year's Tigers have a bit of a different look than last year's veteran laden squad.

?We lost I think seven or eight guys ? some of our older guys ? and brought in some new younger guys, but they have a lot of skill and are hard workers and I think we have the right mix of older guys that we need. It's going to be a good season.?

The Tigers return home for tilts against Orangeville on Friday and Whitby on Saturday, both at 7.30 p.m.