

Panthers? special team sinks Tigers



By Jake Courtepatte

A handful of failed penalty kills led to the Aurora Tigers demise Sunday night in a 5 ? 1 loss to the Pickering Panthers.

A week of rest was nothing but detrimental to the Junior A club's special teams, who gave up three powerplay goals to the OJHL's North East Conference's last place team.

Pickering scored the only goal of the first period, banging in a rebound past Jake Sabourin midway through the frame just seconds after a powerplay came to an end.

They doubled the lead early in the second, sending home another rebound to make it 2 ? 1.

It was 3 ? 0 for Pickering before the Tigers broke the shutout thirteen minutes into the second period, with Eric Holland finishing a nifty setup from team-leading scorer Mel Melconian.

Melconian intercepted a Pickering blue line pass, going in on a two-on-one before sending a floating pass across the crease to the waiting Holland.

But with Kyle Berry in the box for head contact late in the period, Pickering took a 4 ? 1 lead into intermission.

They added one more midway through the third, in the midst of a string of penalties for the Tigers, when a heavy shot from the point found its way through traffic and by Sabourin.

?A tough loss for the Tigers, in their first game of December,? said Aurora announcer Asher Roth, who called the game. ?Against a team like the Panthers, it's one they would like to have.?

The lone bright spot was the consistent play of Melconian and Holland, who have been paired together on the Tigers' top line all season. Both lead the team in scoring by a considerable margin, combining for 55 points through 57 games played this season.

With just over twenty games left on the schedule, the Tigers are left with plenty of work to do if there is any hope of playoffs. The loss to the Panthers has the two teams battling it out for last place in the North East Conference, currently tied at fourteen points apiece and five back of the Lindsay Muskies.

They are eleven back of the eighth-place Newmarket Hurricanes, who hold on to the last playoff spot.

Following another long rest of five days, Aurora plays three games in a row this weekend starting with a home tilt against the Muskies (8-18-0-3) on Saturday.

Puck drop is at 7:30 p.m. at the Aurora Community Centre.

The Markham Royals (20-9-0-1) are in town on Sunday, before the Tigers hit the road on Monday to take on the Cobourg Cougars (23-7-0-1).

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