

Tigers crowned by Royals to fall in OJHL standings



By Jake Courtepatte

The OJHL North division has a new king.

After months atop the division, the Aurora Tigers have been ousted by the Markham Royals, two sides seemingly going in opposite directions with the Tigers marred in their worst slump of the year.

They met Saturday night in what would be the most important matchup of the year for both the Tigers and Royals, square at 44 points apiece in the standings.

It was Aurora's Joseph Mizzi who struck first, the league's leading scorer finishing off a passing play with Brock Hill and Jacob Ball just over a minute into regulation.

Payton Schaly made it 2-0 for the Tigers with his third of the year before the first buzzer, though Markham notched the only two goals of the season period to send it to the third tied at twos.

With both sides seemingly poised to go to overtime, the third and deciding goal off the stick of Markham's Zac Sirota in the final 21 seconds proved heartbreaking for the Tigers, with just thirteen games left on the schedule and each extra point so crucial.

It marked the fifth regulation loss in a row for the Tigers, who haven't picked up a point since December 21.

The Aurora squad was fresh off of a close 3-2 loss to the league-leading Oakville Blades on Friday night, where they were also sunk with a late goal in the third period, this one beating goaltender Lucas Durante with just over five minutes on the clock.

Mizzi and Markus Paterson had the goals for Aurora, while Durante made 32 stops. Despite a strong showing over his last three games, the keeper acquired from the Mississauga Chargers in December has been stuck in a slump of his own, with just one win to show for his efforts in a Tigers' uniform.

Owner Jim Thomson and his team did make a move this week to beef up the blue line, adding defenseman Dilan Peters to the roster, a big six-foot-six body from Sarnia. He has no points in two games played so far in a Tigers' uniform.

The Royals, meanwhile, are trending in the right direction: wins in five of their last six games has officially completed their long climb up the standings ladder, up by a game over the Tigers with a record of 20-14-2-4.

The Newmarket Hurricanes follow closely behind, just three points back of Aurora, and with a game in hand.

The Tigers played a rare Tuesday afternoon game against the Buffalo Jr. Sabres in a 'student's day' deal, before returning to the ice this Saturday at the Aurora Community Centre to host the Pickering Panthers.

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