

Tigers thriving under new head coach Milne



By Jake Courtepatte

It seems an old familiar face was what the Junior A Aurora Tigers needed to get back to their style of hockey.

The floodgates have reopened, and the bad penalties have declined since Thomas Milne was hired as the head coach a few weeks ago, replacing the short-tenured Mark Joslin. Milne has been impressing the Tigers brass, most recently with back-to-back wins this past weekend.

Friday marked the latest edition of the 'Battle of Yonge Street,' as the Tigers faced off against their cross-town rivals the Newmarket Hurricanes for the first time this season.

Donning a set of bright pink jerseys on a charity night in support of Southlake Regional Cancer Centre, the Tigers came out of the gate fast. Forward Drake Board used his lightning-fast speed to split the defence just one minute in, hauled down for a penalty shot. Taking the puck wide, he found room under the goaltender's glove on the short side to open the scoring.

Milne has a lot of praise for his leading scorer.

'He's stepped up his game this year to a level we knew he could play at,' said Milne, who would have worked with Board in his last tenure as assistant coach with the Tigers. 'He's quick, he has great hands, and he's not afraid of getting into corners with the bigger guys.'

Aurora would get on the board six more times from six different players, while goaltender Alex Brooks-Potts stopped 24 of the 25 pucks he faced in a 7-1 blowout victory.

Also impressive in the game was newcomer Ryan Shaw, acquired in a trade with the Hurricanes just one day earlier. He earned two assists in his debut against his old team, acquired in exchange for forwards Todd Winder and Mark Rozanov on Thursday.

Brooks-Potts was impressive in net once again on Saturday, stopping 33 of the 36 shots he faced in regulation to send Aurora to their second overtime in four games. James Thomson scored his first of the year just over three minutes into extra time to secure the victory for Aurora.

And just like that the Tigers are looking like the Tigers of old, now 3-0-1 under the new Milne regime. One key factor in the team's recent success is the implementation of discipline, for a team that has been spending far too much time in the box this season.

Over Milne's young term, the Tigers have kept their penalty minutes in single digits each game save for the always-heated Battle of

Yonge Street.

“Discipline was something we knew we had to work on,” said Milne of the team and owner Jim Thomson. “You can’t be spending half the game in the penalty box and expect to win games. You can control the tempo without taking unnecessary penalties.”

Now holding a 9-5-0-1 record and only one point back of the Markham Royals for first in the Northeast Division, the Tigers start a four-game home stand this Friday when they play host to the Stouffville Spirit. The Pickering Panthers visit the Aurora Community Centre Saturday night.

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