

Double defeat puts the Lions in trouble

ICE HOCKEY

LEE Valley Lions' poor start to the English National League South Two season continued as they slumped to consecutive defeats.

A hard-fought 8-5 loss at Romford Spitfires on Saturday was followed by a heavy-legged performance and 17-4 reverse at Vectis Tigers on Sunday.

However, Lions have been awarded the points and 5-0 scoreline after Vectis Tigers iced a suspended player during the 9-4 defeat in the reverse fixture on September 13.

Lions started brightly at local rivals Romford with James Hatfull knocking in the first goal at 1:01. Freddie Trimble then had a great chance to double the lead but was blocked by Spitfires' netminder Graeme Bird.

Romford levelled soon after when Matt Turner's shot found the net, and Lions' netminder Andrew Boot faced a bout of sustained pressure until Ashley Curtin restored the visitor's lead, taking the puck up the ice and past Bird to score.

From then on - or at least until the final third - the sides traded blows.

Romford's Billy Phillips' puck shot from the other end of the ice sailed right into Boot's net and Turner then scored through a melee of players for his second of the



Ashley Curtin takes control against Romford (Photo by Tony Boot)

night. Lee Valley's equaliser came at 28:51, courtesy of Chris Wilson, assisted by Ruslanas Jegovorvas, before Romford's James Murnane defeated two Lee Valley defencemen in flipping the puck into the top corner. The

Lions found themselves three on five after George Alley received two-minutes for tripping. But some fine work in front of the net from Nick Alley, Stas Prokofiev and Michael Jacobs secured their fourth goal at 38:56.

Nick Alley then pulled the visitors level on 41:32, assisted by Curtin and Trimble.

However, Romford took the game by the scruff of the neck in the final period, edging back in front through defenceman Simon Kears. Turner scored an unassisted seventh to complete his hat trick on 47:54 before Sam Park rounded off the scoring.

Icing only two lines on Sunday, Lee Valley were always going to be under pressure against a Vectis Tigers team that had 17 skaters and were hungry for points.

Tiredness led to errors as the Lions struggled to contain their fast-flowing opponents and to get the puck out of their zone.

They were 7-1 behind at the end of the first period, the single goal scored by Michael Jacobs from Stas Prokofiev, and the second period was much of the same as the Vectis goal tally increased to 13.

Lions at least made more of an impression in the third period, with Joe Berry scoring one and Ashley Curtin two.

The home team put four more past Andrew Boot to make the final score 17-4.

Lee Valley Lions entertain Romford Spitfires at the Lee Valley Ice Centre on September 27. Face-off is at 5.30pm.