

realize now they have a chance to prove themselves in the majors."

Whether the optimism that prevailed in the Seals' organization even before the team went to training camp, will still be there at the end of a rugged 74-game schedule is something only the final standings will reflect.

But Bay Area hockey fans can be sure that they'll be seeing a different brand of hockey than they've enjoyed in the past six years when the Seals were a member of the Western Hockey League.

For one thing, there is unity and cohesion in the organization under the driving direction of young Barry Van Gerbig.

Van Gerbig, who is a fan as well as a club owner, wisely left the selection of personnel to an able body of hockey technicians with whom he has surrounded himself. But he did insist that these men gather together players who could knock somebody down and would see to it that if there is any blood on the ice "it's theirs, not ours."

Not the least of Van Gerbig's accomplishments was in the hiring of Olmstead as coach.

There'll be no doubt as to who is boss. The 41-year-old Seals coach was a hard-nosed hockey star and is known to be a tough, driving coach. There won't be too much, if any, democratic speechmaking on the part of the skating people this winter.

Olmstead claims he never asks a man for more than he can produce, although there could be an argument on this. However, he will demand that his players give out with everything he thinks they have.

Bert believes in hard work. He was born on a farm at Sceptre, Sask., and still owns 1,120 acres there. He often left his combine just in time to report to training camp.

He is a firm believer in hockey fundamentals and is a student of the game. There'll be a blackboard in the dressing room and he'll literally draw out the plays for his team. They'll play their positions and to make sure they do, he'll draw lines up and down the ice to make sure each player in practice knows his own territory. Roamers will be prosecuted.

When Olmstead looks over the credentials of a new player he wants to know where he played his junior, senior and minor league hockey. Who were his coaches?

"I'm interested in the kind of hockey schooling he's had," explained Olmstead.

He admitted that in the draft he had gone for former Toronto and Montreal players. He himself had played for both



Viewing the action of a training camp scrimmage from the bench are Jerry Odrowski (left), last year a defenseman with the Seals and now a forward with the NHL club, and Bill Hicke, obtained by the Seals in the summer draft.

these clubs and knows well the kind of organization and training provided Maple Leafs and Canadiens.

Olmstead is a big man. He's quiet, reserved and he doesn't smile too easily, especially when he's concentrating on a hockey game.

He has a confident, mature manner.

"I have a lot to learn," he admits frankly, "and there isn't a game that goes by that I don't learn something."

He coached the Vancouver Canucks for the past two years. He knows that he had the reputation of being a driver, even something of a Simon Legree, and he was supposed not too well versed in getting on with people.

There have been reports that this latter trait kept him from a major league post with New York.

But last year there were indications some of this had rubbed off. He was asked, "Did you learn anything in particular in your first year, Bert?"

"Yes," he replied crisply, "player relations."

There again, there's a question of how much."

"Olmstead has no use for minor league hockey players," a former minion once complained.

To this charge Olmstead replied, "A minor league hockey player is a man that has to make a living like anyone else. But he has to have the ambition to try and better himself, to correct his bad habits that have kept him down, and be willing to work and keep himself in condition so he can be a winner and draw major league pay."

Olmstead can provide few better examples than himself as to what hard work will do. He was never known as the most talented player in the world, but he was known as a guy who went fearlessly into the corners to dig a puck out, who gave his all every minute he was on the ice and who never backed away from anybody.

As a result, he spent 13 years in the NHL and was a member of five Stanley Cup-winning teams.

Olmstead began playing hockey on the outdoor rinks of Sceptre. He went to the Moose Jaw Canucks for his junior hockey apprenticeship and there began to acquire the winning habit. While he was on the team, the Canucks went to the Canadian junior finals one year and the Western Canada finals the next season.

He turned pro in 1946 and helped the Kansas City team win a U.S. Hockey League championship.

In his first full year with the Chicago Black Hawks he scored 20 goals and was runner-up for the Calder rookie of the year award.

In a three-cornered deal with Montreal and Detroit, he ended up on the Canadiens roster in 1951.

In 13 years in the NHL, his team was out of the play-offs in only one year—when he was with Chicago. For 11 of these years his team was in the finals and he drank Stanley Cup champagne four times in Montreal and once in Toronto.

Bert was drafted by New York in 1962 and he decided to quit. "I was 35," he said, "I worked all year on the farm after the hockey season and when training camp came around, I was just plain tired. I decided I had had enough."

He coached a little senior hockey in Calgary for one year and then in 1965 came to Vancouver as a coach.

When he came to the Seals this summer, Olmstead came on his terms. He was to be in charge.

But then there's the new, mellow, older Olmstead, who added, "But don't forget, I have my bosses, too."

For all the bright lights in the NHL cities he has seen, Olmstead travelled all of 40 miles to Shackleton, Sask., to claim a bride. Now with his wife, Nora, son Dennis, 13, and daughter, Bonnie, 12, he lives in a home in the Oakland hills.



General Manager Coach Bert Olmstead