

STATS NOT SO GOLDEN FOR SEALS

By Steve Currier

While doing research for a book about the California Golden Seals, I discovered the NHL has published several wildly inaccurate statistics concerning my favourite defunct franchise. I always knew the NHL never officially kept track of shots on goal, but after doing a little research I realized the league had a hard time keeping track of many other stats as well. After perusing fellow SIHR member Sebastien Tremblay's *Goaltenders: the expansion era (1967-1979)*, I was amazed to learn how much his statistics varied from what the NHL had always published concerning shots on goal, wins, losses, ties and games played. You would think it would have been easy for someone at the league offices to keep track of such a simple statistic, but for whatever reason, it wasn't. Complicating matters further, I later realized while looking through Jeff Z. Klein and Karl-Eric Reif's *The Hockey Compendium*, that one of their sources, Edward Yuen, had compiled completely different shots-on-goal records than Tremblay or the NHL. Yet another statistical compilation, *The Hockey Summary Project* (<http://www.flyershistory.com/cgi-bin/hspgames.cgi>), sometimes had different results as well. In other words, for me to compile my own goaltending stats, I would have to figure out which stats were correct, even though I had *four* different sources each contradicting the other, and that's not even counting the various Bay Area newspapers of the era.

So the long search for the truth began, as I sifted through Bay Area newspapers such as the *Oakland Tribune*, *San Mateo Times*, *Fremont Argus*, *Hayward Daily Review*, as well as the *Winnipeg Free Press* for game summaries that would straighten everything out. I discovered there were all kinds of anomalies concerning the old Seals.

1967/68 California / Oakland Seals

The franchise started off as the California Seals, but after 25 games and with attendance sagging the team was renamed the Oakland Seals. It didn't help much; the Seals finished dead last with a 15-42-17 mark and an average attendance of 4,960. According to NHL record books, goaltender Charlie Hodge compiled a 13-29-13 in 58 games, but he actually compiled a 13-31-13 mark. The two extra losses were attributed to Gary Smith, but he really lost only 11 games to go along with two wins and four draws in 21 games. The following game summaries were compiled by referencing and cross-referencing all of the sources mentioned above. Because of space constraints, I have included only the games in which Smith played:

Date	Goalies	Opponent	Result	Score	W-L-T	Goalie Record
11/12/67	Hodge: 20:00 Smith: 40:00	@NY Rangers	L	3-5	2-11-3	Hodge: 2-11-3
11/16/67	Smith	Detroit	T	1-1	3-11-4	Smith: 0-0-1
12/19/67	Smith	@Los Angeles	L	1-3	7-18-5	Smith: 0-1-1
12/25/67	Smith	@Boston	L	3-6	7-21-5	Smith: 0-2-1
12/27/67	Smith	@Pittsburgh	T	0-0	7-21-6	Smith: 0-2-2
12/30/67	Smith	@Montreal	L	0-2	7-22-6	Smith: 0-3-2
12/31/67	Smith	@Chicago	L	0-3	7-23-6	Smith: 0-4-2
01/03/68	Smith	@St. Louis	L	0-4	7-24-6	Smith: 0-5-2
01/04/68	Smith	@Detroit	L	3-9	7-25-6	Smith: 0-6-2
01/06/68	Smith	Minnesota	T	2-2	7-25-7	Smith: 0-6-3
02/03/68	Hodge: 20:00 Smith: 40:00	@St. Louis	L	1-4	10-30-11	Hodge: 10-24-8
02/04/68	Smith	@Minnesota	L	3-4	10-31-11	Smith: 0-7-3
02/11/68	Smith	Toronto	W	4-3	11-33-11	Smith: 1-7-3
02/14/68	Smith: 29:09 Hodge: 30:51	Philadelphia	W	4-0	12-33-11	Smith: 2-7-3
03/03/68	Hodge: 39:05 Smith: 20:55	@Philadelphia	T	1-1	15-34-14	Hodge: 13-27-11
03/06/68	Smith	Montreal	L	0-2	15-35-14	Smith: 2-8-3
03/07/68	Hodge: 20:00 Smith: 40:00	@Los Angeles	L	2-9	15-36-14	Hodge: 13-28-11
03/09/68	Smith	@St. Louis	L	1-3	15-37-14	Smith: 2-9-3
03/15/68	Smith	@St. Louis	T	1-1	15-39-15	Smith: 2-9-4
03/17/68	Smith	@Chicago	L	1-4	15-40-15	Smith: 2-10-4
03/20/68	Smith	Philadelphia	L	1-5	15-41-15	Smith: 2-11-4

1968/69 Oakland Seals

The following season, the Seals discarded several players they had picked up in the expansion draft and replaced them with productive veterans and youngsters looking to prove

themselves. The team vaulted into second place in the West Division. Smith replaced Hodge as the Seals' number one goaltender, and he established all-time club records for wins and shutouts in a season. Unfortunately, Smith was stiffed by the NHL when it comes to his record-breaking season. The league claims Smith compiled a 21-24-7 record in 54 games, when in reality he compiled a far better 22-20-7 record in the same number of games. Smith's record is significant because it is the only time in the Seals' nine-year history that a goaltender compiled a winning record. Let's give "Suitcase" a little love here!

The Seals' back-up goaltender, now Charlie Hodge had a record of 3-8-2 in 14 games, not 4-6-1, as the league claims, while rookie Chris Worthy was slightly better, going 4-8-2 in 14 games in this, his rookie season. The league record books claim he went 4-6-3. Because of space constraints, I have included only the games in which Hodge and Worthy played:

Date	Goalies	Opponent	Result	Score	W-L-T	Goalie Record
10/11/68	Hodge	Minnesota	L	1-5	0-1-0	Hodge: 0-1-0
10/13/68	Hodge	Los Angeles	T	4-4	0-1-1	Hodge: 0-1-1
10/16/68	Hodge	Boston	L	1-2	0-2-1	Hodge: 0-2-1
10/27/68	Hodge	Philadelphia	T	2-2	2-5-2	Hodge: 0-2-2
11/08/68	Hodge	NY Rangers	L	2-3	3-7-2	Hodge: 0-3-2
11/10/68	Hodge	Toronto	L	1-3	3-8-2	Hodge: 0-4-2
11/12/68	Worthy	@Los Angeles	L	1-3	3-9-2	Worthy: 0-1-0
11/13/68	Worthy	Detroit	W	2-1	4-9-2	Worthy: 1-1-0
11/16/68	Worthy	@Montreal	T	3-3	4-9-3	Worthy: 1-1-1
11/17/68	Worthy	@Boston	L	3-6	4-10-3	Worthy: 1-2-1
11/20/68	Worthy	@St. Louis	L	0-7	4-11-3	Worthy: 1-3-1
11/21/68	Worthy	@Pittsburgh	L	1-3	4-12-3	Worthy: 1-4-1
12/15/68	Smith: 27:18 Worthy: 32:42	@Chicago	L	4-7	8-16-5	Worthy: 1-5-1
12/28/68	Hodge	@Pittsburgh	W	4-3	12-19-5	Hodge: 1-5-2
01/01/69	Hodge: 44:54 Smith: 15:06	@Toronto	L	3-7	13-20-5	Hodge: 1-6-2
01/09/69	Smith: 21:03 Hodge: 38:57	@Montreal	L	4-8	13-22-6	Smith: 11-11-3
01/11/69	Hodge	@Pittsburgh	W	4-2	14-22-6	Hodge: 2-6-2
01/12/69	Hodge	@Detroit	L	1-5	14-23-6	Hodge: 2-7-2
01/19/69	Hodge	Pittsburgh	W	6-3	16-24-6	Hodge: 3-7-2
02/01/69	Smith: 23:25 Hodge: 36:35	@Los Angeles	L	5-8	18-27-7	Hodge: 3-8-2
02/08/69	Worthy	@Toronto	W	4-1	20-27-7	Worthy: 2-5-1
02/12/69	Worthy	NY Rangers	W	3-2	21-27-8	Worthy: 3-5-1
02/15/69	Worthy	@Pittsburgh	T	4-4	21-27-9	Worthy: 3-5-2
02/26/69	Smith: 16:51 Worthy: 43:09	Minnesota	W	6-5	24-29-9	Worthy: 4-5-2

02/27/69	Worthy	Boston	L	0-9	24-30-9	Worthy: 4-6-2
03/09/69	Worthy	@Philadelphia	L	3-5	24-33-10	Worthy: 4-7-2
03/26/69	Worthy: 40:00 Smith: 20:00	St. Louis	L	3-5	28-36-11	Worthy: 4-8-2

1970/71 California Golden Seals

In 1970/71, poor Gary Smith defended the Seals' crease 71 times, and partly due to injuries to key players like Carol Vadnais, Norm Ferguson and Bert Marshall, "Suitcase" allowed a whopping 256 goals and compiled a horrendous 19-48-4 mark. His back-up, Bob Sneddon, has always been credited as having played in just five games that season, the only games of his NHL career. According to the newspapers and websites I consulted, Sneddon actually played in seven games:

Date	Goalies	Opponent	Result	Score	W-L-T	Goalie Record
10/11/70	Sneddon	@Chicago	L	1-5	0-2-0	Sneddon: 0-1-0
10/17/70	Smith: 45:40 Sneddon: 14:20	Los Angeles	L	1-6	0-4-0	Smith: 0-3-0
11/14/70	Smith: 35:48 Sneddon: 24:12	@Pittsburgh	L	1-6	4-9-2	Smith: 4-8-2
11/19/70	Smith: 49:26 Sneddon: 10:34	@Philadelphia	L	2-6	5-11-2	Smith: 5-10-2
11/21/70	Sneddon: 25:21 Smith: 34:39	@Toronto	L	3-5	5-12-2	Smith: 5-11-2
11/22/70	Sneddon	@Chicago	L	0-9	5-13-2	Sneddon: 0-2-0
12/26/70	Smith: 30:38 Sneddon: 29:22	@Los Angeles	L	3-9	11-20-2	Smith: 11-18-2

Seals coaching records

The Seals' first-season coaching records are just as inaccurate as the goaltending stats. Bert Olmstead was the team's first coach and general manager, but it was a trying season for the hard-nosed Hall-of-Famer. Players did not put forth the effort he expected from them, the Seals didn't score nearly enough goals to be competitive, and attendance was lousy. There were constant rumours the Seals would be relocated to Vancouver for the 1968-69 season. On February 7, 1968, Olmstead resigned. "Olmstead has decided to let his assistant, Gordon Fashoway, run the club for a few games to see if he can get it back in the running for a Stanley

Cup playoff berth,” said the *Fremont Argus* (1). Those few games turned into the rest of the season as Olmstead never returned behind the bench in Oakland, or elsewhere in the NHL.

At the time of the coaching change Olmstead’s record was a sorry 10-32-11, but the NHL incorrectly states Olmstead’s record behind the bench as 11-37-16, which is absolutely impossible as he was not even available to coach that many games. For instance, the March 11, 1968 *San Mateo Times* says, “Olmstead’s mother died in Saskatchewan. Olmstead has been back in Canada since learning his mother was gravely ill” (2). Unless Olmstead had superpowers that allowed him to be in two places at once, there is no way he could have coached the Seals and attended to his sick mother. The most obvious piece of evidence that proves Fashoway finished the season behind the bench is an April 14, 1968 *Oakland Tribune* article that states, “With 21 games left, [Olmstead] turned over his coaching duties to aide Gordon Fashoway. The latter’s record was five wins, 10 losses, and six ties” (3). NHL record books have always claimed Fashoway’s record is 4-5-1, but this, of course, is false.

How many other coaching and goaltending statistics are inaccurate is unknown, but based on a simple research of one short-lived expansion team, and finding so many mistakes in the official records, who knows what other inaccuracies exist. One thing is sure: it would be a Herculean task to sort everything out.

(1) “Assistant to Pilot Seals,” *Fremont Argus* (February 8, 1968), p.11.

(2) “Ice Chips,” *Oakland Tribune* (March 11, 1968), p. 21.

(3) “Seals Fire Coach Bert Olmstead,” *Oakland Tribune* (April 14, 1968), p. 43.