

Hockey Obituary

The Seals Expire

By JOHN PORTER

The California Golden Seals are dead.

The end came in Chicago last night at 11 p.m. CDT when owner Mel Swig and the National Hockey League's finance committee reached an agreement for the transfer of the franchise to Cleveland.

"It's all settled," Swig told The Tribune last night, admitting he was quite relieved. Had the NHL said no, Swig would have been liable for more than \$6 million in debts and future obligations.

He still must pay about \$400,000 to the Oakland Alameda County Coliseum Arena for past rental and the two remaining years on the lease and numerous miscellaneous bills from last season.

Swig indicated that he and minority owner George Gund, a native of Ohio, would maintain their stock positions for the present, but "there are indications" that Cleveland interests will buy into the franchise.

"I had to do it," Swig claimed of the transfer. "There was no choice. I'd go broke (in the Bay Area) and

no way was I going to do that."

The Seals had been sickly from birth when they joined the NHL nine years ago. They suffered with unstable management and last-place teams, but the terminal cancer proved to be the advent of the World Hockey Association in 1972.

Player salaries in the league skyrocketed from an average \$25,000 to today's \$75,000. The break-even point for the club at the Arena went from an average of 8,500 fans to Swig's estimated 13,000.

"Some people will think I moved the Seals deliberately," said Swig, who will remain as majority and operating owner of the Cleveland you-name-its. "They don't realize that I couldn't come out even in Oakland."

Swig refused to say exactly how much he's lost in his year of ownership, the sixth in the team's life. However, The Tribune has learned it is close to \$1.4 million and that he has a tax setup for a hefty 150 per cent write-off.

Continued Pg. 38, Col. 4

Seals Die in Chicago

Cont. from 1st Sports Page

Swig said 1,000 pledges for season tickets in Cleveland have been received without "putting a salesman on the road." The Seals never sold more than 1,500 season tickets in the Bay Area.

"We hope to average 13,000 to 14,000 the first season and we can make money with that attendance," claimed Swig.

The Seals managed to finish last in six of their nine seasons and the prediction for next year is last, hardly a come-on for Cleveland fans.

Survivors of the Seals include a stoutly-loyal booster club of some 750 members, a couple of secretaries in the office and one player who doesn't want to shovel snowdrifts in Ohio.

"I don't want to go to Cleveland because of my health," goalie Gary Simmons, an asthmatic, told The Tribune last night. "I'm deeply disappointed about the move. You would've thought with local ownership the club would have stayed. Now I may peddle milk for an Oakland dairy next season.