

Readers react

Improving Seals should stay put

How would you feel if the California Seals moved out of the Bay Area?

Were the Seals right to fire Marshall Johnston as coach and replace him with Bill McCreary?

Those were our "Readers react" questions this week and we received many interesting responses. Some of them are published below:

SPORTS EDITOR: Yes, the Seals should definitely stay in the Bay Area. A winning team will fill the Coliseum. The team we have now has some great developing talent and we'd love to see the team evolve into a strong contender.

People won't come out to watch the Seals play as long as there are rumors of the team moving, although the Seals do draw almost as well as the division-leading Warriors.

We're sorry to see Marshall Johnston get fired. The team's problems were not his doing. In the January 31 Hockey News, Philadelphia coach Fred Shero is quoted as saying Johnston is one of the best qualified coaches in the NHL.

Joe DeLoach's recent article (in The Daily Review) on Marsh and the team was excellent.

SANDI AND DICK PANTAGES
Hayward

FANS DON'T MEAN A THING

SPORTS EDITOR: As one of the hard rock fans, I hope the Seals stay, but what the "real" fans say, or think, don't mean a thing as hockey today is big business.

And if they move to another city a lot of "thanks" should be given to people like yourself because of lack of publicity in the Bay Area's newspapers, radio and TV. I have to look damn hard in your newspaper every night to find action pictures of any local game, or can find very little said about the game...

I was raised with a stick in my hand in Montreal 64 years ago and love the game; only wish folks like you knew half as much about it, then maybe the readers of your paper would get an idea they'd like to see a game.

About Marshall Johnston being fired, I feel very sorry about him losing his job. I think he was good for the club, a little soft on the players maybe ...but he knew the game and did his best...

What the Seals need is not a new coach, but two or three real good players and a leader and then watch them go.

GEORGE BULLOCK
Hayward

SEALS ALIENATE THE FANS

SPORTS EDITOR: From its very inception, the NHL Seals have to be the most poorly run sports franchise of all time. Every facet of the operation from the various owners, league officials, to and including the commissioner, Mr. Clarence Campbell, have done everything to alienate the fans and little to really promote attendance.

Mr. Campbell surely must have approved the sale of the Seals to Mr. Finley. How could anyone think this would improve the plight of the Seals or increase attendance?

Another slap in the face to local fans is the inability of all concerned to call this team the Oakland Seals. They have been called almost everything apparently to hide the fact the games are played in Oakland...

How about the admission prices? Never before have sports fans been asked to pay so much for so little. If the price were more in line with the product presented, I and probably many more hockey fans would be more regular patrons.

Perhaps the most distressing thing of all is...when I invariably see a star player on another team who was a former Seal. To mention a few, Vadnais, Dornhofer, Boldirev, etc. The people in charge have consistently sold the fans down the river by disposing of the best and most popular players...

As far as moving the Seals to another city — I would be delighted. I feel sure the Coast hockey league would move back into this area. As a hockey fan of many years, I know there

is not that much difference between the two leagues from an entertainment standpoint. In fact, I think some Coast teams of past years could have defeated the present Seals in a series of games.

I would be perfectly willing to buy two tickets to each of the remaining Seals games if the price was in line with the show. Please advise if you know whom to contact.

RALPH L. WILLIAMS
San Leandro

SEALS NEED LOCAL OWNER

SPORTS EDITOR: All the Seals need is a good local owner, and the rumors stopped about them always moving here and there. The rumors aren't good for the fans or the players.

The Seals have a good young team this year and you can't expect them to be number one...with so many rookies on the team. Just give them time and they will be one of the best teams in the NHL.

As for the firing of Marshall Johnston, I think he did a good job with all the rookies, and they had really improved since the start of the season. McCreary picked the time for firing Johnston and took over as coach at the time he can get the credit if the Seals overtake Toronto. I think if they wanted to make a coaching change they should have got someone better than McCreary.

MRS. RUTH DRISCOLL
Fremont

WOULD NIXON MISS WATERGATE?

SPORTS EDITOR: Would I miss the Seals? Would Nixon miss Watergate? Would a chicken miss lips? Would a bear miss the woods?

The Seals are acupuncture to my posterior given by a sadist. Thanks, "but I'd rather be in Philadelphia."

JIM HAUSEL
Castro Valley

I'D BE HEART-BROKEN

SPORTS EDITOR: I'd be heart-broken with a feeling of deep personal loss (if the Seals moved).

I thought the firing of Marshall Johnston was a terrible mistake until I saw them play last Friday night (Jan. 24). They were brilliant — the best I've ever seen. Worked better as a team than ever before — completely dominated Toronto.

More and more new fans are coming to the games fired up by their fabulous radio announcer, Joe Starkey. He's the one that deserves the credit the most.

MRS. ELEANOR HARRIS
Castro Valley

FRANCHISE NO FORT KNOX

SPORTS EDITOR: The NHL grants a specific area a team franchise with the basic idea of making money. The California Seal franchise is not exactly the Fort Knox of hockey. Not even the Imperial Savings.

After playing in Oakland, many teams barely get enough money to pay hotel expenses. It is the right of the NHL to do whatever they see appropriate.

In regard to Marshall Johnston's firing: what did management expect? Many Seals are young and inexperienced. A consistent winner needs time to develop. Johnston did the best job he could have done. If the Seals' management keeps going the way they are now, they're not going to be around much longer. Neither are the California Seals.

STEVE HARDING
Hayward

EVERYBODY LOVES A WINNER

SPORTS EDITOR: It would be a great mistake if the NHL decides to move the Seals out of the Bay Area.

They blame attendance as the reason but actually the Seals are way over last year's total at this time. Also as the saying goes, "Everyone loves a winner." If the Seals become a contender, which they almost are, they will sell out every game.

As far as the firing of Marshall Johnston as coach, I think this was a very poor move. He can't be blamed for the Seals' rather poor season. He took over a team without any

established stars and was told to make it a winner. This can only be done in time and that's what he was doing. Being the youngest coach in the NHL, he could relate to the players, as most coaches cannot.

So the ideal plan would be to rehire Johnston and keep the Seals in Oakland and watch the fans flood the arena.

CRAIG KOSS
Hayward

PLAYERS PRICING FANS OUT

SPORTS EDITOR: This year the Seals management raised the prices of the \$3 seats by \$2. I want to see the Seals remain here, but they are making it difficult for the so-called average person to watch them.

I like ice hockey. It is the most exciting game to watch, but the players, as in other sports, are pricing some of their most ardent fans out of the arenas.

What does Bobby Orr's attorney say? That Orr is worth \$8 million. If it continues that way it won't bother me if the Seals go — we won't be able to afford them.

CHARLES WOODY
Hayward

HAD FAITH IN JOHNSTON

SPORTS EDITOR: I have watched players come and go and suffer because of the management and the lack of publicizing hockey in the Bay Area. This year looked like the beginning of great things to come. I had faith in Marshall Johnston as coach and the young team he had to work with.

Now it seems Johnston didn't have much to say and I'm sure if the team really starts to win, with most of the remaining games at home, he won't get much of the credit.

If the Seals move to another location, it won't be long before a WHA team, which is finding it difficult in another area, moves in. Most of the teams are hurting because of the economy and moving the Seals now can only hurt the team.

Their fans care. Does the NHL?

JUDY STAHL
Fremont