

Seals Lose Again; Face Leafs Tonight

By SPENCE CONLEY

Things couldn't possibly be any gloomier for the Oakland Seals — or maybe they could be, the Stanley Cup champion Toronto Maple Leafs invade the Coliseum Arena tonight.

Faceoff time is at 8 p.m. and the Seals may need a battalion of U.S. Marines to defend against the Leafs — especially after last night.

The Seals blew a three-goal lead in the second period and lost a nail-biter, 5-4, to the hard-working Western Division-leading Los Angeles Kings.

It was the Seals' eighth loss in this dismal 11-game winless streak and it was a case last night of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

Brian Smith, brother of Seal substitute goalie Gary Smith, cracked in a 15 footer with less than five minutes left in the game to snare the King victory.

It was the sixth time this season that the Kings had rallied from at least two goals

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down to get back into the ball game.

The Seals meanwhile, scored more goals than they had in a game since Oct. 14 when they whipped Minnesota, 6-0.

They jumped out to a 3-0 lead through the first period and two minutes, then collapsed before the Kings' three-goal second period. Took back the lead in the third period, but couldn't hold it.

Alain Caron scored once and assisted on two others to top the Seal attack and the "Helmet" line of Charlie Burns, Mike Laughton, and George Swarbrick contributed two scores.

Swarbrick's goal — his fourth in the last six games — came as a result of Burns' centering pass out of the right wing corner.

Laughton, stationed right at the goalmouth, tipped at one puck, but deflected it back to the center of the slot where Swarbrick pounced on it and blasted from 15 feet, at 13:31.

Four minutes later Laughton got his first NHL goal after Burns again feed a pass right in front of the net aimed at Caron who was driving in from the point on a Seal power play.

Caron just tipped the puck — as had Laughton on the first score — and big Mike reached out and swiped an angling 10-foot forehand past Wayne Rutledge who was screened by Caron.

Throughout the first period, the Seals put the pressure on the Kings, but had to have some good goalkeeping from Charlie Hodge to stay out of trouble themselves.

The two-goal lead was the first time in 10 games that the Seals have managed that kind of offense.

Caron made it 3-0 on a scorching 30-foot slap shot delivered with King defenseman Dale Rolfe draped across his shoulders, opening the second period.

But the old "El Foldo", long a problem in the third period for the Seals, suddenly came a period early — and hard!

Terry Gray got the first on a backhand coming away from Kent Douglas, who seemingly had things under control in the left corner: Gordon Labossiere got another, rebounding his own shot; and finally Bill White slipped a 45-foot shot through a crowd in front of Hodge for the third.

Oakland: Goal—Hodge. Defense—Erickson, Boun, R. Lemieux, Cohen, Douglas. Forwards—Burns, Laughton, Swarbrick, Boyer, Harris, Ehman, Hicks, Boehman, Caron, Harris.
Los Angeles: Goal—Rutledge. Defense—J. Lemieux, Rolfe, Wall, Amedio, White. Forwards—Joyal, Flitt, R. Lemieux, Gray, Smith, Hughes, MacDonald, Campbell, Irvine, Labossiere, Inglis.
Referee—Gilmour. Linemen—Ego, Castleman.

First period—1, Oakland, Swarbrick 3 (Burns, Laughton) 13:31. 2, Oakland, Laughton 1 (Burns, Caron) 17:22. Penalties—Amedio 16:47.

Second period—3, Oakland, Caron 1, 2:57. 4, Los Angeles, Gray 1 (Labossiere) 4:09. 5, Los Angeles, Labossiere 3 (Smith, Gray) 8:18. 6, Los Angeles, White 3 (MacDonald, Wall) 10:04. Penalties—Swarbrick 3:49, R. Lemieux 14:59; Rolfe 17:39; Hicks 18:22; Amedio 18:22.

Third period—7, Oakland, Harris 3 (Ehman, Caron) 3:49. 8, Los Angeles, Joyal 3 (Rolfe, Irvine) 11:29. 9, Los Angeles, Smith 2 (Gray, Rolfe) 15:43. Penalties—White 3:12.

Shots on goal by:
Oakland 9 14 9—32
Los Angeles 6 15 7—28
Attendance 5,144.