



# The View From Here

By REGINA M. SKINNER

Viewing at a distance a few of the changes that have taken place within the organization of the California Golden Seals since the end of the '73-'74 season, it looks like there's going to be some "hot times in old town" this season.

The Seals are saying, "The Future Is Now." Just maybe; and, perhaps for the first time in their history, they might begin to shake off the image of a non-entity. They're hoping that accomplishments in the acquisition of new player personnel and management will be the key. And, it all happened in the "off season."

Obviously the "off season" must have been for the fans, since too much has been happening around Seals headquarters for anyone there to have been vacationing.

Without getting technical, during the draft and in all the follow-up work that came later in actually landing the talent spoken for, the Seals, for the first time in several years successfully completed a number of major trades and acquired some fine young and veteran talent.

Bay area fans can thus look forward to seeing a more balanced team this year. Not only do the Seals look like they will be able to continue scoring; but, alas, they may now have the tools to keep the other guys from scoring easily.

That means winning games. And winning is going to solve a lot of problems for the team and the fans.

The new look extends all the way to administration. The Seals have acquired the skills of Bill McCreary as Director of Hockey Operations. Most hockey players of long-standing as you may or may not know are surrounded by legend that becomes fact or fact that becomes legend.

Bill is included in this group. He has played hockey for 16 years and has held

positions in all phases of management. He is a "defense" man. Legend has nicknamed him "The Senator," an appendage he acquired while playing with the St. Louis Blues. Where he was known for his aggressive defensive play and outstanding penalty killing. Legends never seem to die in hockey. If that still holds true — look out!

There is more to the Seals' new image. The team colors are now California Gold and Pacific Blue. And the togs cover the limbs of a bunch of guys most of whom have been on ice since they started walking. Many of the names sound as if they come from places like Canada where there's lots of ice — their names lend themselves to legend.

Hockey is a game full of tradition and excitement and funny stories and crazy people who seem to enjoy talking about hockey and eating barbecued spareribs more than anything else. When you listen to a group talking, you can get jealous because they're obviously having so much fun.

At least that was my first experience at a live game. That was at the Coliseum with just three games left to play in the Seals home schedule last season.

Things were happening so quickly that at first I was sure I didn't have enough eyes to take it all in. In that first adjustment period, Oh my God! I almost felt like I was playing the game my neck was moving so fast. But, before really knowing it, there did seem to be patterns developing, and certain guys doing the same thing. By the end of that first game I was keeping my own scores. They were a mess, but they were mine.

The language is neat and somewhat different, but it really doesn't hinder the enjoyment that much if you don't know what

the puck is until somebody makes a goal and you suddenly realize that that's what that thing is they're chasing with the sticks. But, it does help.

Seriously, another part of the Seals' new image is to do something about the language barrier. They have established a full time Speakers Bureau. Seals players and front office personnel are available upon two weeks written notice to speak before clubs and social groups throughout the Bay Area. And, they are also offering two full-color films for public use: "1973 Stanley Cup Highlights" and, "Hockey: Where the Action is!"

The philosophy of this new idea in Bay Area hockey is that the team belongs to the people of the Bay Area. The Seals have opened training camp doors to the public and sponsored Saturday clinics throughout the area to give individuals an opportunity to meet and talk with some of their top players and to see what the game is all about.

They are a totally new philosophic organization, with none of the vestiges of past ownership.

This columnist, armed with three live games under her belt, several private instruction lectures, selected home reading and TV watching, stands at the ready to field your questions.

What would you like to know, Ladies? If I don't know, we'll find out together.

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