

New Tune for Old Seals

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The Oakland Seals, given the hook after four dreary performances in the Stanley Cup playoffs, may have nearly the same cast of characters next season, but, promises vice president Bill Torrey, "they'll be dancing to different music."

Since this is an expansion year in the National Hockey League and since they don't have a first round pick in the important amateur draft (they gave it up for Carol Vadnais), the Seals will be lucky if they can add two new faces from outside sources for next year.

So that means they've got to depend heavily upon the young players in the Providence farm club, hope for a trade of some merit between now and the June meetings in Montreal and eventually get more mileage out of the men who currently wear the Seal uniform.

And that latter task, the psychological reconstruction of the current Seals, may be

the area which will take the greatest work and ultimately be the key to future success.

Buffalo and Vancouver are going to be drafting players to fill their rosters," explained Torrey. "The whole player availability situation this June is different. Everybody will be doing their best to get as strong as possible for next season.

"That's only natural, but teams with depth will be all right and the teams without depths — like us — will suffer."

Thus, a determination on Torrey's part, along with general manager Frank Selke and coach Fred Glover, to change the attitude of the employees.

"It was a terribly disappointing year," said Selke. "We played for the most part like a no-talent hockey team. But we have more talent than was exposed.

"Our goal-scoring production from players who were paid very well for doing that, was disappointing. Sure it's possible for a 10 or even 20 per cent falloff. But in

some cases it was 50 per cent. We had a right to expect more.

"It may be understandable in the case of Norm Ferguson (34 goals one year, 11 the next) because he certainly isn't the first rookie, nor the last, I'm sure, who had a bad second year. But you don't expect that from players with five or even 10 years of NHL experience.

"Our hockey team showed that it didn't have any pride," Selke said. "You don't win anything, from ping pong or tiddly-winks, if you don't have pride in yourself and the team. It was a case of stubbornness on the part of our players to accept the fact that we aren't going to overpower anybody physically. The only way we can play is to go all out all the time."

Selke had great praise for goalie Gary Smith ("Without him we wouldn't have even come close to the playoffs"), Carol Vadnais ("To be moved around like he was to plug holes here and there, and still to produce the way he did, he has to get a lot of credit. If we

had a dozen guys with his spirit, we'd still be playing now"), and Earl Ingarfield ("He contributed lots more than we had a right to expect considering all his injuries.')

Selke also applauded the play of defenseman Bert Marshall and Gerry Ehman, over the second half of the season, and credited Harry Howell with providing an excellent steadying influence on the defense after he started to play regularly.

As for the future, the youngsters are going to be important: Joe Hardy, Don O'Donoghue, Tony Featherstone, Neil

Nicholson, Ron Stackhouse and Barry Boughner, all figure prominently in the Seals' building plans.

Hardy and Stackhouse are currently in Seattle along with goalie Chris Worthy, helping the Totems in the Western League playoffs.

Tomorrow, Selke, Glover and Torrey plan to move out into the playoffs, checking talent in the Western, Central, American and National League, hoping to find one or more players who could help — if they become available.

The rebuilding work is starting now!