

Elusive Lady and the Seal

By JOHN PORTER
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The good guy award in the National Hockey League is called the Lady Byng Trophy, awarded "to the player adjudged to have exhibited the best type of sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct combined with a high standard of playing ability."

By his own admission, the Oakland Seals' Dennis Hextall is not going to win the Lady Byng. He won't even be close.

"I probably lost any chance for it on my first shift in the first game of the season," said the roughhouse skater who will be at odds with the Minnesota North Stars tomorrow night at the Arena.

"One thing is certain," he added, "I'll have to wait until next year to get the Lady Byng."

To do that would be asking a lot. Hextall has led the Seals in penalty minutes all season, and his current total of 134 makes him a candidate

for breaking defenseman Carol Vadnais' team record of 212, set last season.

The brash redhead has dropped gloves and resorted to fisticuffs 13 times this season, refusing to be intimidated and protecting some of the lightweights on the team.

Fred Glover isn't going to admit it openly, but being the all-time penalty minute record holder in the American Hockey League, the Seals' Coach has to admire Hextall's style.

Instead, Glover points out other statistics. On a team saturated with injuries, Hex has played every game, is first in goals scored (16), second in assists (16) and the Seals' point leader at 32.

After a practice, Hextall is one of the last players to leave the ice. He devotes extra time to wind sprints, quick starts and stops.

"He does it for stamina," an approving Glover said. "Hex keeps forcing himself so that in a game there's no

problem getting around when he needs that burst of speed."

A burst of punches wouldn't be unlikely from him tomorrow night. If Hextall has been second best in a brawl, it was with Minnesota's Bill Goldsworthy.

"You can't let them push you around," Hextall has said several times this season.

That should be warning enough for the North Stars' big-blond winger and those who vote for the Lady Byng.