



AP Lowenthal

Wayne Merrick can't find an open goal as two Red Wings block path

Blues Fans Glum After Seal 'Steal'

By JOHN PORTER

Wayne Merrick just hopes he makes the right pass the first time he gets on the ice against the St. Louis Blues tonight at the Arena.

The newest California Seal was a steal, according to a lot of St. Louis fans who got hot and bothered over the trade of Merrick from the Blues for Larry Patey.

"It's tough for anyone to be traded," said Merrick, when told fans in St. Louis have been booing Patey, who didn't ask to be traded. The fans have been booing not only Patey, but all the Blues since the trade.

In fact, the Blues had to hold a team meeting to remind the rest of the players that Patey was not there by choice.

Merrick was being tailored as the Blues' next super star, a successor for center Garry Unger. The former had speed, a good shot and passed off to his wings quite often.

One report had it that most of the St. Louis wingers preferred Merrick as their center.

"It's another game except I'll be playing against a lot of friends," said Merrick of tonight's confrontation. "It's going to be hard playing with Floyd Thompson and Pierre Plante on the other team. I played with them for three years."

Merrick and Patey have played

six games for their new teams. Each has scored once. However, Larry has played little for St. Louis because of an ankle injury he claims to have suffered while with the Seals.

"The chant of 'We want Merrick, We want Merrick,' has been shaking St. Louis Arena ever since the deal was made," Merrick related.

Jack Evans has Merrick between Dave Hrechkosy and Jim Pappin. The line is getting plenty of shots—six in the 1-1 tie with Philly last Wednesday—but has yet to break out with a bushel of goals to get the Seals into the playoffs.

"I think we're going to make the playoffs," Merrick enthused. "In fact, I'm sure of it. The guys on this team want to play hockey. There's no fooling around."

Fans in St. Louis wondered who was fooling whom when they were told that the addition of Patey would give the team more aggressiveness. For one thing, the Blues have plenty of rough players, and for another, Merrick goes into corners and will take a check. He even had two fights last season.

"You stay in one place and maybe you get a little stale," was Merrick's analysis of the trade.

He must figure on staying here awhile. He just bought a home in Montclair.