

Hicke Seals' Triggerman

By SPENCE CONLEY
Tribune Sports Writer

Bill Hicke isn't exactly Bobby Hull, but both get paid for doing the same thing in the National Hockey League — scoring goals.

Yet Hicke, who is currently the second best shooter in the West Division, isn't exactly burning up the cords. He only has one goal and nine points in nine games. Hull has seven goals so far.

The hustling 5-9, 170-pound Hicke hopes to get a few goals soon, like maybe tomorrow night when he leads the Oakland Seals against Terry and the Pirates (or Bobby Hull and the Chicago Black Hawks.)

Hicke says he doesn't know how he's picked up so many assists and admits some concern that he isn't scoring more.

Seal GM Frank Selke knows

why: "Billy's a better all-around player this year than he was last, and it's reflected in fewer goals. He's more of a team man. He's passing better and digging the puck out of the corners.

"Normally, he's not a play-maker, but he's helped Hampson a lot. He has only one goal now, but he should get 20 easily. Anybody who plays as hard as Billy has this year is going to get results."

Hicke is happy with his new responsibility. He admits, too, he's had lots of scoring chances, and he admits he's blown them with frustrating frequency. But he knows the goals will come in time.

But he points out a couple of things which may have changed his role slightly with the Seals:

Hicke is a left-handed right wing. He plays with center-

man Ted Hampson and left wing Gary Jarrett. This trio certainly rates as one of the most dangerous in the West Division.

Last year, when Hicke was jumping around among the club's centers, he was always the trigger man and as a result wound up with 21 goals. He was the only Seal to get 20 or more.

But this year, he's only one-third of a well-balanced line and the scoring opportunities have been reduced somewhat because of the fine scoring ability of both Hampson and Jarrett. This line, incidentally, has averaged about a goal per game.

"It's a real pleasure to play with a solid line," says Hicke. "In this case, one guy isn't carrying all the load and the three of us are always trying to help each other. When we

are getting the shots, then we are probably going to score.

"If one guy doesn't get a goal in the first shot, then the others might on the rebound. Hampson and Jarrett are pretty tough in front of the net."

The other thing which seems to have affected Hicke's potential is the curved stick blade. Since he is an off-handed wing, the curve favors his forehand or left-handed shot and precludes the use of his otherwise tough backhand shot.

"I have a slight curve in the toe of the stick and I didn't think it would hurt any of my shots," explains Hicke. "But I'm not as effective off my backhand. So I think I'll change back to a straight blade. I have a bunch of new sticks on order."

The Seals are counting on



BILL HICKE
Like Bobby Hull

the fact that Hicke's knack of scoring will put something like 25 goals in the Seals' "goals for" column hopefully starting tomorrow night!