

The News Journal  
**Sports**

**Dramatic 11th Hour Deal**

**Barons Stay Alive for Season**

RICHFIELD (AP) — Like a cat with the proverbial nine lives, the apparently dead Cleveland Barons were revived Wednesday with the aid of a \$1.3 million transfusion of operating capital.

The 11th hour deal, which suddenly surfaced Wednesday in New York after hours of meetings by the NHL Board of Governors, Barons principal owner Mel Swig and Alan Eagleson, executive director of the NHL Players Assn., included enough cash to insure the Barons of at least finishing the current season.

The apparent key to the surprising meeting of the minds was a loan of \$800,000 to the Barons by the players association. The league also came up with \$350,000, as did Swig.

"As of last night, I didn't think there was a chance," explained Swig after the announcement late in the afternoon. "If this had not happened today, there would have been some form of total player sale."

William Jennings, president of the

New York Rangers, said the players association money was the key that made the agreement possible.

The deal came as a surprise to the Barons' players, who still had not been paid their Feb. 15 payroll as of Wednesday night. Late last week they gave Swig an ultimatum to guarantee their pay the rest of the season or sell the team before Tuesday.

When that deadline passed, the players, under Eagleson's guidance, said they would refuse to play any more for the Barons, choosing instead to "retire" until the league resolved the situation.

"I don't know what to think about this," said defenseman Rick Hampton before Wednesday night's suddenly rescheduled game with Buffalo here. "I figured we'd be gone by tomorrow. I was just hoping to get out of this mess."

"I don't mind staying, if we have good ownership," he added. "But I've been going through this kind of thing for three years now. If this is just a hold off until

RICHFIELD (AP) — The last thing the Cleveland Barons thought they would be doing Wednesday night was playing hockey against the Buffalo Sabres.

After weeks of emotional ups and down as the Cleveland National Hockey

League suffered through one financial crisis after another, the situation finally culminated Wednesday in New York.

Much to the Barons' players' surprise, they received telephone calls late Wednesday afternoon from player representative Bob Stewart telling them a \$1.3 million deal had been reached between the NHL, the NHL Players Assn. and majority owner Mel Swig, assuring the team of at least finishing the current season.

The Barons, who Tuesday had collectively announced their retirement from hockey in a move calculated to make the situation come to a head, went out on the Coliseum ice and dropped a 5-3 decision to the Sabres.

They led 2-1 after the first period as Dave Gardner and Jim Neilson sandwiched goals around a score by Buffalo's Brian Spencer, his first of two in the game. But the events of the past few days and the swift Sabres caught up to them in the second period as Gilbert Perreault tied the game and Spencer put Buffalo ahead to stay.

Don Luce and Bill Hajt made it 5-2 in the third period before Mike Christie put Cleveland on the board again late in the period.

Harry Howell, the team's acting general manager, admitted several of the players already have approached him about being traded.

Goalie Gilles Meloche, who sat out Wednesday night's contest, was the only Baron who openly admitted after the game he wanted to leave.

"I don't know," Meloche said. "I definitely will talk to Harry, but I'm a little mixed up right now. At least now we know it's a settled thing until the end of the season. And that's good for the whole team because five or six guys were uncertain about their future in hockey if the team folded."

The most outspoken critic of Swig during the recent bitter days was defenseman Len Frig.

Asked if he could still play for the man he has frequently made the villain of the Barons' situation, Frig said, "Sure. You can play for anybody if you get paid. But I think you've got a right to be outspoken when you're not getting paid. If things are settled now, then I'll just concentrate on playing hockey and hope things work out."

Buffalo coach Floyd Smith felt the Barons were surprisingly spirited Wednesday night, noting, "They skated very well at the beginning, but everything just caught up to them. We really didn't expect to play the game, either, but our players haven't been going through what they (the Barons) have."



**STRAIGHT AS A SABRE** — Brian Spencer of the Buffalo Sabres scores against Gary Edwards of the Cleveland Barons Wednesday at the Richfield Coliseum. The Barons, who will play out the National Hockey League season after the team received financial help, lost to Buffalo, 5-3. (AP Photo)

**Sabres Buffalo  
 Cleveland, 5-3**

**Pro Hockey Standings . . .**

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE				
CAMPBELL CONFERENCE				
Patrick Division				
	W	L	Pts	GF GA
Philadelphia	36	17	84	243 165
N.Y. Islanders	26	19	81	207 148
Atlanta	15	25	61	185 261
N.Y. Rangers	23	26	59	217 225
Smythe Division				
	W	L	Pts	GF GA
St. Louis	27	28	60	184 235
Chicago	22	31	54	199 226
Colorado	19	33	48	183 239
Minnesota	15	31	45	182 240
Vancouver	17	38	43	165 235
WALEY CONFERENCE				
Norris Division				
	W	L	Pts	GF GA
Montreal	38	7	103	297 114
Pittsburgh	26	24	63	193 194
Los Angeles	22	27	55	192 187
Washington	17	33	47	187 214
Detroit	15	27	48	185 228
Adams Division				
	W	L	Pts	GF GA
Buffalo	36	18	6	219 165
Boston	34	21	6	227 193
Toronto	29	24	9	243 215
Cleveland	18	32	10	172 215
WEDNESDAYS RESULTS				
N.Y. Rangers 5 Toronto 4				
Ottawa 4 Atlanta 2				
Chicago 5 Detroit 2				
Minnesota 2 Boston 1				
Buffalo 5 Cleveland 3				