



ED LEVITT ^E

A Cool Romance

They looked real. They sounded real. By, gosh, they were real.

Sitting up there in the stands at the Oakland Coliseum Arena were honest-to-goodness cash customers.

There were rows and rows of 'em, and they were all cheering, screaming, clapping and demanding more, more, more.

The more they wanted was hockey action. Now, how about that for a change of pace?

Hockey—Canada's No. 1 pastime next to freezing—finally has caught on in dear ol' Oakland.

It has, in fact, become so popular in recent weeks that some of the Eastbay's most staid citizens suddenly have lost their cool.

Two of them especially have been caught up in the excitement. They've also produced a little excitement of their own.

Paul Thompson and Jo Lane Mickelson are in love, crazy in love. They're also crazy in love with hockey and the Oakland Seals.

So one night last week, while holding hands at a game here, the lovers hit on an idea.

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"Let's get married—right here," said Paul. "You're crazy," said Jo. "I mean, well, it's out of the ordinary. Who gets married in the Oakland Arena?"

"Jo Lane Mickelson and Paul Thompson, that's who," said Paul.

"You mean we'd get married down on the ice—in the middle of the arena?" pretty Jo asked.

"Why not?" said Paul. "It'd probably be the first wedding on ice. Maybe we could have the ceremony during one of the Seal games. We'd all be on skates—including the minister. What an unforgettable ceremony THAT would be!"

So the two lovers approached the Seals with their idea.

"If it's all right with you people," said Paul, "we'd like to get married when the Seals return home in March."

Seal publicist Bob Bestor talked it over with Seal president Bill Creasy.

"It'd be different, all right," said Bestor.

"That it would," said Creasy. "But what about our image? What would our fans think? Would they say we're giving them the wedding as a sideshow, sort of a double ring circus?"

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It was a ticklish question, all right, and one that Bill Creasy wanted more time to mull over.

He finally phoned the Board of Governors of the National Hockey League.

"Should we permit a wedding to take place during one of our games?" Creasy inquired.

The governing group seemed somewhat shocked by the question.

"Well," Creasy was told, "it is a strange request. There are both good points and bad points in permitting such a thing. It's never been done. I just don't know. It's up to you . . ."

Creasy said thank you, hung up the receiver, and then made his own decision.

"I decided not to allow the wedding," said the Seal president.

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It's not that Bill Creasy is against romance, love and marriage.

"But our business is hockey, not weddings," he says. "I wish the young couple luck. But they'll have to find someplace else to get married."

"Besides, we're too busy at the moment. We're selling tickets like never before.

"Our average paid attendance now is 6,000. Last year at this time it was 4,300.

"February has been our biggest month. We've been averaging 7,210 paid admissions per game.

"If we can keep going this way maybe by next year we can get up around 9,000 or 10,000 a game, and then we will have turned the corner.

"I'm very encouraged. After all, this is a tight money market.

"Yet after 27 home games we're already 42,712 admissions and \$160,493 in cold cash above what we took in at a similar time last year.

"More people are talking about hockey here than ever before. We're getting more exposure.

"Right now we have two local stations interested in televising our playoff games into Oakland.

"Now all this doesn't mean we're rolling in money. Our payroll, for one thing, has gone up over \$125,000 from last year.

"But we're heading in the right direction. And the National Hockey League is well aware of our improved business. Now if we could keep on winning . . ."

Meanwhile, what about pretty Jo Lane Mickelson and handsome Paul Thompson?

Has their romance chilled above the Oakland Arena ice? Was it a passing thing? Will they really get married—with or without ice skates?

The answer?

"We plan to tie the knot in Reno this weekend," says Paul Thompson.

"But we'll be back next week to see the Seals play," says pretty Jo. "Heck, I wouldn't miss them for anything. Besides, Mr. Creasy gave us two tickets as a wedding present."

Good luck, Jo. Good luck, Paul. And good luck to you, Bill Creasy.