

Weird Loss May Jell Seals

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BLOOMINGTON, Minn.—It was the weirdest loss of the season for the California Seals, but it may have brought the team together.

Outshooting the Minnesota North Stars, 38-20, and controlling play virtually throughout, the Seals lost yet another road game, 3-1, before 14,363 at Metropolitan Sports Center last night.

Immediately after the game Seals President Munson Campbell appeared in the dressing room to congratulate the players for their effort. Close behind was Director of Hockey Operations Bill McCreary, who also made a point of giving each of his skaters an encouraging pat.

"They ought to be in jail for stealing the game," said Marshall Johnston of the North Stars. "I just told the players they could keep their heads up after that one and it's beginning to come for us."

There was no move after the game to oust Marshall as coach or trade Joey Johnston.

The Seals' network wrapup show to the Bay Area announced the firing of Marshall with McCreary as his replacement and the trade of Joey to the New York Rangers.

The hoax apparently was perpetrated by someone in the press box who passed the false information to play-by-play man Joe Starkey.

Reports of Marshall's imminent firing and Joey's trade may also disappear, even though the Seals are 6-13-1 on the road and have lost five straight games.

"Deep down we know we can make the effort," said winger Dave Hrechkosy. "You can see our team coming together now. The North Stars weren't in that game, but played five minutes of hockey and won."

Marshall's pre-game talk to the players covered strategy. He avoided a "Win one for the Gipper" speech, even though his job security is shaky for the Boston game Wednesday in Oakland.

Joey was another on thin ice after asking to be traded, but he was still captain of the Seals last night and scored the game's first goal on a spectacular play with defenseman Rick Hampton.

The two brought the puck from deep in their zone and Hampton quarterbacked a perfect pass to Joey on the left side. With a sharp cut to the net, the left winger suckered goalie Cesary Maniago to the rear side and shot the puck high into the far side for 1-0 at 17:43 of the first period.

"I don't know how we lost this one," an exasperated Hampton said. "We had five goals just on missed shots."

Seals goalie Gilles Meloche said he had to make only "five or six tough saves all night."

Bill Goldsworthy got the equalizer in the second period with a tipped shot while he was backing away from the net.

"(Bob) Stewart had him tied up and he got lucky," said Meloche. "They get the garbage goals we can't get. We had at least 15 good chances to score."

Jude Drouin jammed in the game-winner at 15:44 of the third period on a power-play rebound after John Flesch's shot forced Meloche to the ice behind the goal line.

Goldsworthy added an empty-net goal in the last minute.

"The luck has to change," added Hrechkosy. "Everything is going to come together and we're going to bomb somebody."

The Seals, last in Division 4, remarkably remain in contention because Toronto lost again last night.