

# Fun and Games, Inc.

**THIS IS THE** season of collision in major sport. The baseball season is racing to the wire with the Giants in strong contention and the A's not entirely out. The football season is upon us . . . the Raiders may have the finest assortment of bodies in the game, and the 49ers still rate among the top five in the NFL. On the college scene, Stanford could well win the Pac-8 and Rose Bowl participation, while California has one of its best squads since the mid-50s.

Rick Barry, it seems, never goes away which is a reminder that Warrior basketball is within weeks of its 1969-1970 tipoff.

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**AND THEN** there is hockey. Yes, hockey is still major and still in Oakland and under new operation. Within days the Oakland Seals will be off to Oshawa, which is not in Japan but in Eastern Canada, for pre-season drills leading to the season opening game here October 17.

The new ownership of the Seals has been described as a miniconglomerate. Trans-National Communications Inc. is only two years old yet now owns the Boston Celtics championship basketball team, the Oakland Seals, a radio station, a film and TV commercial distribution company, a film production company, a recording operation, some Florida ranch land, the New York Giants football radio network, the Syracuse University football network, and has its groping fingers everywhere to acquire enterprises that can fuse communications with sports and leisure activities.

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**IT IS A NEW** business concept in this age of diversification. TNC is geared to offer a sports show and then dress it up with words, film, and their distribution. Or, to turn the thing about, films or recordings may be made of a sports show and then presented to networks, newspapers or other media.

On paper TNC has a powerful package. Most sports enterprises are businesses unto themselves, and they must hire mass-promotion experts in the communication fields. Many sports franchise owners do a minimum of promoting and publicizing, counting on news of their quasi-civic business to be demanded by the public. This is often true in a top-line sport where regular writers cover, where TV and radio networks pay fees to the owners for rights to broadcast. And as the dis-



claimer warns, "Any rebroadcast or reproduction of the account of this game is strictly prohibited unless authorized by . . ."

But success is never constant. Expansion has caused some self-searching on the sports biz scene.

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**THE OAKLAND** Seals hockey club is an example. It has never made money. At best, the exploitation advertising and promotion of the product has been mild. They tried. In the first Oakland season the former owners spent a lot of money on 28-sheet posters and lithographed, multicolor mailers. The crowds did not come.

Television has been virtually nil and radio has not been high-watt because sponsors did not want to pay even the bare line charge and talent costs. Additionally, the Seals have been hurt on the National Hockey League's national TV package because the networks don't want to pay the east-west line charges early in the season, and by the end of the season the Seals have been out of contention so were not selected.

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**DOES TNC** have the juice to bring about strong local and national coverage? Here is an outfit geared to create, write, produce and package entertain-

ment features, documentaries, specials and sports events.

William Creasy is the president of TNC Network, one arm of TNC, and he is also president of the Oakland Seals. He was known as the "boy wonder" of CBS for producing big football games and other sports. He was selected to produce the first two Super Bowl games for CBS.

TNC board chairman Ellis Erdman apparently has established long line of credit. TNC hopes to have franchises in every major league and can thereby meld talent and dollars in the same direction — sports and leisure and entertainment. They can have direct lines to stadia, celebrities, national press, etc.

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**SOME OF ITS** hot salesmen and officers are ex-athletes. Whitey Ford of the Yankees, Dick Lynch of the football Giants, Pat Summerall of the St. Louis Cardinals and New York Giants and more recently as color man of CBS pro football, are in the group. The Colts' quarterback, Earl Morrall, joined recently for full time duty after he finishes quarterbacking.

"We did not invest more than \$4.5 million in the Oakland Seals without full conviction that NHL hockey will be successful in the Bay Area," said Erdman.

Spoken like a big, brave miniconglomerate boss.