

Seals in Surprise Outburst

By Glenn Schwarz
Examiner Sports Writer

The action was so uncharacteristic, Gary Croteau could not bring himself to reflect upon it too seriously.

"Hey, we were throwing that puck around like we knew what we were doing with it," said the California Golden Seal, breaking into a laugh.

For the second time in a week, however, the Seals did not play like jokers last night. Led by Croteau's two goals, they steamed to an exciting 7-4 victory over the surprised Toronto Maple Leafs in a match where the defensemen shall go nameless.

3-Goal Burst

A three-goal burst within 2:29 of the third period pulled the Seals away to only their 13th victory of a wretched season. But the tone of this game was set many minutes earlier—and in less time than it took to play both the Canadian and American national anthems.

Some two minutes after Dave Keon's breakaway goal for Toronto, 33 seconds following the opening face-off, the Seals began a power play attack. Croteau scored from close range with only nine seconds remaining on the Leafs' penalty, but what happened in the other 1:51 was still under discussion after the game.

Crowd Howls

The Seals kept the puck in the Leafs' zone all that time and their on-the-stick passes and hard shots on goal had the Oakland Arena crowd of 7498 howling. They were watching, for goodness sake, the kind of dominant play they usually only see on the TV game of the week.

And except for the first 10 minutes of the second period, the Seals acted no other way in beating the Leafs for the first time in five attempts.

Hilliard Graves, Seals' rookie of the year candidate, and Walt McKechnie, each had three assists. But the most satisfied Seal had to be Croteau, who in addition to his two goals had an assist.

Leach Absent

"I got in because Reggie Leach had to go to a funeral in Canada," said Croteau, skating on an internally deranged knee that may require surgery following the season.

But Croteau scored that early goal and skated regular shifts for just the second game since early December. To which month the Seals wish this season could be turned back if they were assured of more efforts like last night's.