

Seals' 'Wrecking Crew' a wreck



Seals' goalie Gary Simmons, making like a linebacker, puts stop on skidding Scout Garry Coalter with help from Jim Neilsen (left)

—Lansing photo by Bill Nichols

By Ken Miller

California Golden Seals Coach Bill McCreary flipped through three pages of the game's statistics, temporarily concerned with what he — and the rest of those on hand — already knew.

Once again it was not one of the Seals' better performances, a 2-1 loss to the Kansas City Scouts, the expansion club which had won just two of 25 road games coming in. McCreary, now 2-8 since taking over for Marshall Johnston, could point to the shot totals of The Wrecking Crew.

Less than five weeks ago, when the Seals were at the zenith of the 1974-75 season, the line of Dave (The Wrecker) Hrechkosy-Spike Huston-Butch Williams was carrying the Seals, getting off 10 shots a game and getting all the goals expected of three rookies playing together.

But with the late ineffectiveness of this combination, it all shows in the Seals' record. And most significantly, in losses to clubs like the Scouts.

"They are playing very confused," said McCreary. "The other teams have been keying on them, and they have had trouble adjusting. Williams and Hrechkosy aren't pushing people off the

puck the way they were, making it available to other people."

Yesterday afternoon, The Wrecking Crew had just four shots, two by Williams and one each by its other members. Seals defenseman Jim Neilson had five, which is as strong a statement as any as to where the Seals have had to look with the lesser effectiveness of their slumping scoring threats.

"We're still making the effort," said Hrechkosy, who has been stuck at 20 goals since Jan. 21, blanked in seven straight games. "Maybe we're trying too hard, but we're still getting the opportunities."

"I don't know what it is. I'm still looking for the shots, but maybe I'm passing off too much. I got a good chance today (in the second period, when his blast at Scouts goaltender Peter McDuffe from ten feet was stopped), but it just slipped his pad. That's the kind I've scored on before. I'm pretty sure we can break out Wednesday against Detroit."

At least he and his linemates have to hope they're due. Yesterday the Seals' only goal came from the makeshift line of Charlie Simmer-Larry Patey-Brian Lavender, after Lavender

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'Wrecking Crew' slump greases skid by Seals

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threw a pass into the slot and Simmer knocked it in.

But by then, K. C. had already scored twice on Gary Simmons, making his first appearance in five games. Robin Burns one-handed the puck in during the first period off Seal John Stewart's stick, and Wilf Pajement, the Scouts' top draft choice, converted a rebound in the second period 9½ minutes before Simmer scored.

"The layoff hurt a little," said Simmons. "Now it's going to be a tough road for all of us from here on in."

The Seals remained 13 points back of Toronto with the loss, one which K. C. Coach Bep Guidolin really didn't see as so surprising.

"Teams that play us now know they aren't going to get a sure two points," he said. "This was one of our better games. It's real satisfying to work with a bunch of guys who want to work hard. That's what it was."

"Last year I had the best team in hockey, continued

Guidolin, whose Boston Bruins lost to the Philadelphia Flyers in the Stanley Cup final. "But the best working team won. You need all your players to work, not just four or five individuals."

Confirmed McCreary, "Give Kansas City full credit for an effort. If you're beaten, you're beaten for a reason."

As much as anything, the reason the Seals were beaten could come back to the The Wrecking Crew, which was praised when it was going well and must be singled out when it isn't.

Kansas City, 2-1

FIRST PERIOD

Scoring: 1, Kansas City, Burns 12 (Nolet and Charron), 8:29. Penalties: Seals, Williams (hooking), 17:19. K.C., Pajement (high sticking), 18:38. K.C., Hughes (high sticking), 19:20.

SECOND PERIOD

Scoring: 2, K.C., Pajement 18 (Pois and Charron), 9:11. 3, Seals, Simmer 3 (Lavender and Nelson), 12:44. Penalties: Seals, Pesut (slashing), 8:15. Seals, B. Stewart (hooking), 7:46.

THIRD PERIOD

Scoring: None. Penalties: None.

SUMMARY

Kansas City	1	1	0-2
Seals	0	1	0-1

Shots on goal: Kansas City on Simmons, 12-14-11-32; Seals on McDuffe, 8-14-12-34.

Referee: John McCauley.
Attendance: 4,204.