

Seal Veterans Face Struggle for Jobs

By JOHN PORTER
Tribune Sports Writer

If you went to all the time and bother to memorize the names of the Oakland Seals last season, forget them.

Sure, a Carol Vadnais and probably a Gary Smith will be back, but the muffled drums for many of the others are about to sound, if they haven't already.

Long gone with the trade winds are Ted Hampson, Wayne Muloin and Dennis Hextall. Harry Howell was sold, Earl Ingarfield retired at the end of the season and Gerry Ehman recently was released outright.

Backup goalies Bob Sneddon and Chris Worthy were gobbled up in the draft meeting last month in Montreal.

"There hasn't been any trade talk lately," responded Garry Young, the Seals' general manager on the phone from Oshawa, Ont. "Right now we want to see how these young kids do in training camp (Sept. 11). You can see the spirit building.

"When we get players weeded out a bit, there may be only two players over 25 left on the roster."

As many as 16 of the veterans who will have to hustle for jobs at camp could be descending on Ottawa lawyer Edward Houston, who is opening up shop today.

The attorney ran a minor pro hockey league two years ago and successfully defended Boston Bruin Ted Green in the aftermath of his stick-swinging episode with Wayne Maki. Now Houston is arbiter of National Hockey League salaries.

Today was the first day disputed contracts could be submitted to binding arbitration, previously handled by Clarence Campbell, NHL President.

The Players Association fought for someone not so firmly entrenched with management and Houston's appointment was the result.

Young said he mailed out 24 contracts two months ago. Eight have come back signed.

"I've talked to all our players," said Young, "but some of them just answered in the last few days.

"It's ridiculous what they're



SEALS GEAR FOR ONTARIO TRAINING CAMP
Trainer Berry Keast checks equipment for trip

asking. I'm not going to budge. After all, consider that record last year."

Those Seals signed include minor leaguers Joey Johnston, Walt McKechnie and Gary Kurt, second-year defensemen Ron Stackhouse and Dick Redmond and the team's top three draft choices.

Young did say two or three are close to signing. But most of the others are holding out, and several, including Vadnais and Smith, are negotiating with agents.

Young declined to comment on President Nixon's wage freeze, but he did reveal only three players were offered raises.

A player refusing to go to arbitration will be caught in a squeeze under a new rule this year if he's on the team's protected list or skated in 50 NHL

games last season.

He can't go to camp unsigned.

"Last year was terrible," recalled Fred Glover. "This time there won't be anyone moping around and bothering the signed players. It got so bad for New York last year that the Rangers booted some of the unsigned players out of camp."

The Oakland coach is looking forward to training camp. More than 81 players are coming and 50 of them are 20, or younger.

This time it's going to be a tough camp," Glover promised. "There are no safe jobs with the kind of competition we'll have."

If that story is true, then only the jersey numbers will be the same. Most of the names will be different.