

# Seals showing a brand new look

By GORDON SAKAMOTO

OAKLAND (UPI) — A recent visitor to the offices of the California Golden Seals couldn't believe the change since the end of the last National Hockey League season.

"Why the difference here is like night and day," the hockey veteran said, recalling how lonely the place used to be under the ownership of Charles O. Finley.

"The way they're working around here you'd think they were getting ready for the playoffs," the visitor continued. "And you know what? They way they've been shoring up, I wouldn't be surprised if they did."

The California Golden Seals in the NHL's prestigious Stanley Cup playoffs? After recording only 13 victories last year?

"That's right," he said. "The new ownership (controlled by an NHL board) has been aggressive and has made some solid trades, not to mention signing some young prospects who are really going to help."

With Garry Young, who recently resigned because of health reasons, making most of the initial moves, the Seals have wound up with a totally revamped roster.

A team spokesman earlier this week said the Seals probably will carry 13 new players, mostly defensive specialists, on the 18-man roster.

In finishing a distant last in 1973-74, the Seals, also hurt two years ago when 11 players defected to the World Hockey League, yielded a league high 342 goals.

"My No. 1 objective this year is to drastically cut down on goals scored against us," said Bill McCreary, who replaced Young as director of player personnel. "Last year, we had to score four goals in order to beat the other team. I'm hoping this year we'll be able to cut the opposition to one goal per game."

In setting the tone of next season—before the 1973-74 campaign was completed—Young made it clear that the Seals would deal for defense.

"We're going for muscle," he kept telling everybody who'd listen. "Muscle all around. When you win only two games on the road, it means you're being pushed around. They're not going to get away with that anymore."

The change in attitude even has affected the handful of players who are returning.

"Before, once I made the team in

September, I knew that there was no one on the team, or for that matter, in the whole organization, who could take my job," said one player. "We just weren't that deep in quality players."

"This is probably the first year that I feel I really have to go out and win my position—to prove that I'm the best. I like that kind of challenge."

A solid effort also is being made to erase the Finley era.

No longer will the Seals wear the green-and-gold colors favored by Finley. No more white skates either.

His spokesman said.

"We're into many different things this year," he added. "We're going to offer group rates, have promotion nights, advertise—we had a budget of zero for that last year—and form a speaker's bureau."

"In addition, we have a radio contract."

"Overall, we want to change the image of the California Golden Seals. Before, no one in the San Francisco Bay Area felt any connection with the team. We want to change that. We want to know how we can make a viable contribution to the community."

"In essence, what we're trying to do is disassociate ourselves from the past."

