

Seals falter, settle for tie with Toronto

By Ken Miller

Since they have seldom been able to benefit from the more insane moments of this insane season, perhaps the California Golden Seals should be grateful for even the smallest consolations.

And, ultimately, that is what last night's 3-3 tie with the Toronto Maple Leafs at the Oakland Coliseum Arena was — a small consolation. Squandering a three-goal lead with alacrity, the Seals remained 11 points behind the Leafs in the Adams Division.

And also, significantly, behind the wild developments at the Arena it was almost possible to forget how important the game was to the Seals.

There was Toronto's Dave (Tiger) Williams living up to his nickname by flailing away at California's Rick Hampton in the first period with his stick, but receiving only a fighting major penalty; there was Seal Butch Williams crashing into opposing goalie Doug Favell in the third period and sending the guy off the ice on a stretcher and to Oakland's

Merritt Hospital with a lower back injury.

And there was someone named Robert Greenslade from Walnut Creek felling referee Dave Newell with a frozen chocolate malt, also in the third period. Which assured that Newell would remain groggy even after the game and that Greenslade would be escorted out of the building on assault and battery charges. (In case you're not familiar with the consistency of a Coliseum malt, David didn't do a much better job on Goliath.)

Amidst all these antisocial developments, the Seals looked back on the loss — well, a tie; it only seemed like a loss — with annoyance.

"The only way you can tell if the team is really let down after a game like this," said California's John Stewart, who scored his club's second goal, "is in practice the next day. We're a little let down right now."

Understandably, Frank Spring, Stewart and Jim Neilson all scored in the first 23:03 to give the Seals what seemed a comfortable edge. But Jim McKenny countered with a shorthanded goal in the second period, and Ron Ellis and Inge Hammarstrom tied it up

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within the first five minutes of the third period.

Seals Coach Bill McCreary felt the game could have ended earlier in the third period, before Toronto's final two goals, on the play which produced Favell's injury.

Seals center Spike Huston blew in on the goalie but missed a good opportunity to score, and Williams, attempting to screen out two Maple Leafs, crashed into Favell.

"If Huston finishes that play," said McCreary, "then the game is pretty well in hand, 4-1. But he didn't."

"That was the difference, the shooting. We had their goalie down a number of times and couldn't do anything about it. We had the same problem again — we couldn't capitalize on our chances."

Added Stewart, "They were inspired after Favell got hurt (he was replaced by Gordie McRae, making his first National Hockey League appearance in two seasons). We got off to a fast start, and it's always nice to score your goals early. But there are 80 third periods during the season, and you have to be ready for those, too."

As much as the Seals should have been ready for the third period, they had no way of knowing that they also had to be ready for the night's other unusual developments. It has almost been that way all year.