

Seals Sold to New Yorkers

By SPENCE CONLEY
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The Oakland Seals have been sold — this time with the whole-hearted approval of the National Hockey League — to a New York-based communications industry corporation firm which includes ex-Yankee pitching ace Whitey Ford and ex-Giant football stars Pat Summerall and Dick Lynch, plus the wealthy Knox brothers of Buffalo.

The sale was to be announced at noon today at a press conference at the Elegant Farmer Restaurant on Jack London Square.

The purchase price was "more than \$4.5 million," in-

cluding the immediate settlement of a \$680,000 debt to Labatt's Breweries of British Columbia which had tried to force the NHL to move the Seals to Vancouver.

Majority stockholder in the new deal will be Trans-National Communications, a relatively new company which seeks to enter the sports television field currently dominated by Howard Hughes' Sports Network, Inc.

TNC, headed by Bill Creasy, a former CBS television producer who helped set up the HHL's current game of the week programming, and Ellis (Woody) Erdman, a wealthy dabbler in sports who has

been associated with the grid Giants and the New York Mets, will control more than 75 per cent of the club.

The Knox family, Seymour III and his brother, Northrup, heirs to the F. W. Woolworth chain store fortune, will serve as absentee owners with less than 25 per cent interest in the team.

Creasy will serve as the Seals' representative on the NHL Board of Governors, and become the club's chief operating officer. Erdman will become chairman of the Seals' new Board of Directors.

Ford, Summerall and Lynch, the latter two former defensive stars with the

Giants a few years ago, will "definitely have substantial stock interests in the Seals. They aren't just window dressing," as one source put it.

Ford, Creasy and Erdman were to be present at the press conference.

Although TNC is moving more and more into the sports field, it is primarily a corporation which is broadly diversified, with five subsidiary interests in broadcasting, film production, radio, recording, and leisure time industry.

One source described the TNC people as "solid, blue-chip investors who plan to do everything possible to help the

Seals become a success."

The TNC - Knox coalition will operate the club in Oakland. The NHL has affirmed quite clearly its position that the Seals WILL stay put. A franchise transfer is out of the question.

The Knox brothers Seymour and Northrup, have been trying to get into the National Hockey League for three years. TNC is a late, and surprise, entry into the field.

The deal, which the NHL hopes will stabilize the Seal's catastrophic ownership situation, eliminates controversial Florida millionaire sportsman Barry Van Gerbig and nearly 50 others who had been floun-

dering in the league because of poor capitalization.

On Jan. 3, through the efforts of San Francisco attorney Frank Tatum, the Seals sold out to the Knoxes and a group known as Niagara Frontier Hockey, Inc. but the sale was conditional on transfer of the club to Buffalo.

The Knoxes gave the Seals a \$50,000 non-recoverable binder, which later turned out to be the lever which enabled them to bring about this latest sale.

Seal executives Bill Torrey, executive vice president, and Frank Selke, general manager, learned of the sale late last night.

Don Ruck, NHL vice president was in Oakland today to direct the sale announcement press conference.

Robert O. Swads, long-time legal counsel for the Knox family, said last night from Buffalo that Northrup Knox will be in Oakland on Monday.

The TNC-Knox group apparently did not plan any sweeping changes in the Seal management personnel or current operation, pending the conclusion of the season. Only 13 games remain on the Seal schedule before the Stanley Cup playoffs in April.

However, TNC does wish to insert its own people into the organization.



WHITEY FORD
In group that bought Seals