

# SEALS: A VISUAL HISTORY

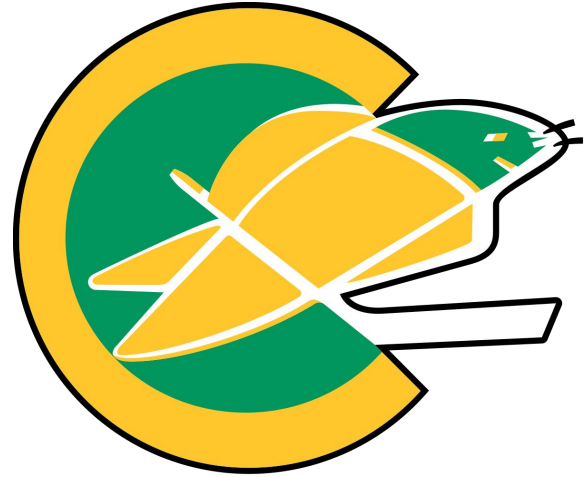
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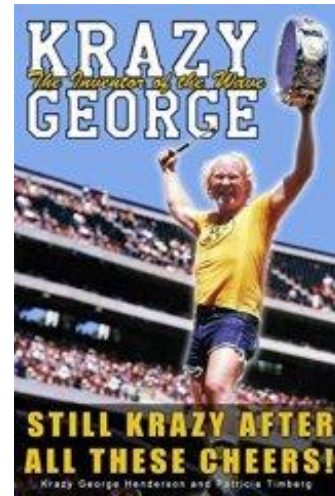
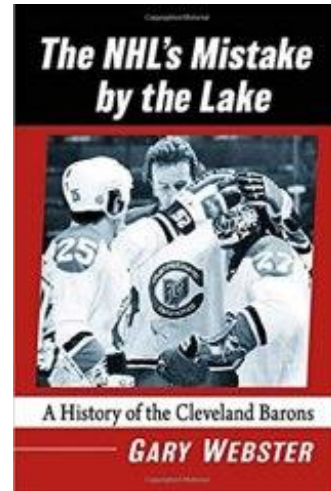
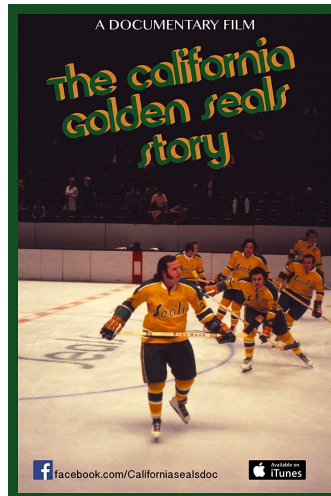
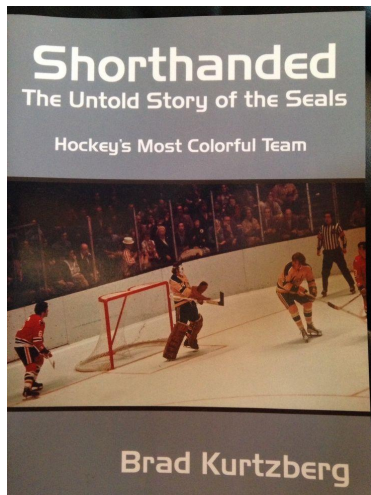
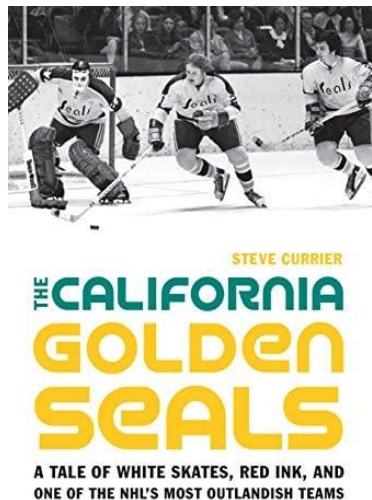
Krista Miller 2023

## California Golden Seals

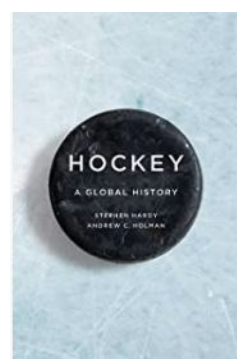
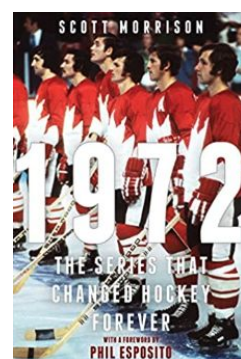
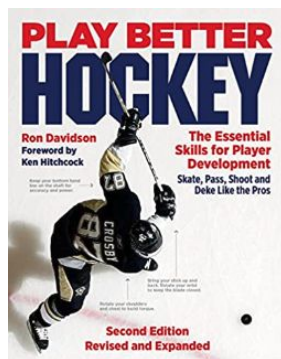
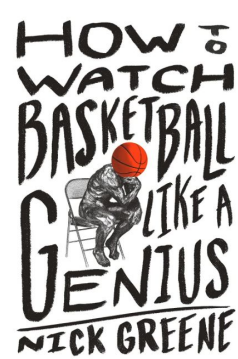
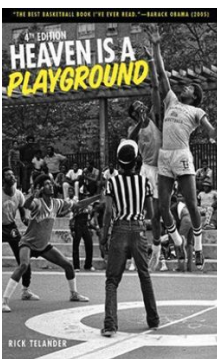
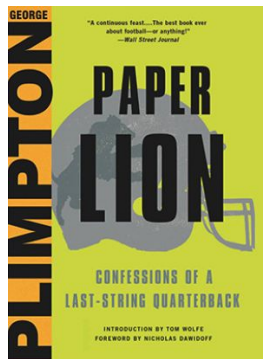
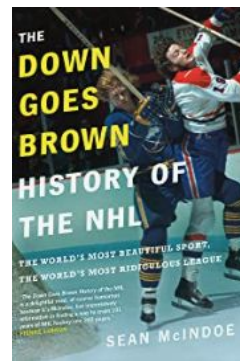
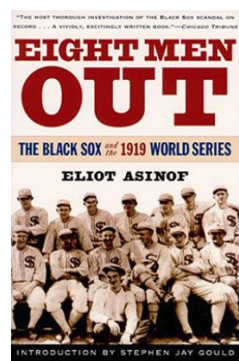
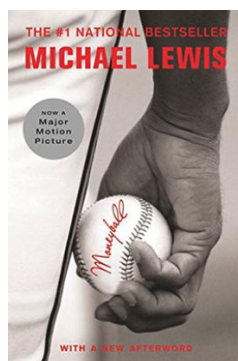
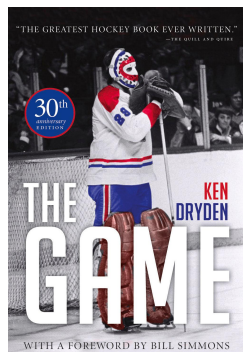
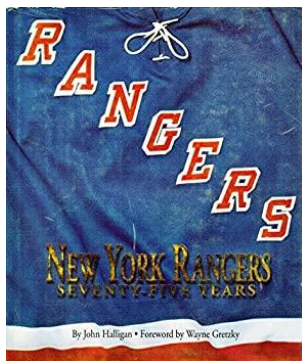
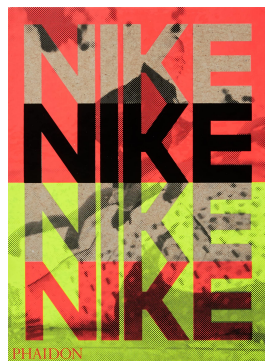
The California Golden Seals were a professional ice hockey club that competed in the National Hockey League (NHL) from 1967 to 1976. Based in Oakland, California, they played their home games at the Oakland–Alameda County Coliseum Arena. The Seals were one of six teams added to the league as part of the 1967 NHL expansion. Initially named the California Seals, the team was renamed the Oakland Seals during the 1967–68 season and then the Bay Area Seals in 1970 before becoming the California Golden Seals the same year.

[Wikipedia](#)

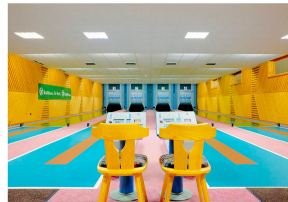












# White skates, orange pucks & nudity:

## The California Golden Seals Story

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Golden Seals were part of the 1967 NHL expansions</li><li>- Played in the Oakland Coliseum</li><li>- Team lasted 9 years</li><li>- Seals almost became canucks<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Financial struggles two months into inaugural season</li><li>- Original Barry Van Gerbig ownership group considered moving team to Vancouver</li><li>- Idea was shot down by the NHL because it wanted two california based hockey clubs</li></ul></li><li>- Gretzky's first NHL game featured the seals<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gretzky's grandma took him to a Toronto game where he saw the Leafs beat the Seals</li><li>- Gary Smith was goaltender at the time</li></ul></li><li>- Players in california<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Saskatchewan defenceman Bobby Baun (only one season with the seals between Toronto and Detroit) hung a winter landscape mural in his room to get in the hockey mood</li><li>- Most spend their time golding</li></ul></li><li>- Charles O. Finley<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Oakland Athletics owner</li><li>- Bought the seals in 1970<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Outbid roller derby owner Jerry Seltzer</li></ul></li><li>- Did not care about hockey</li><li>- Opens the 1970-71 season by bringing out a skating mule</li><li>- Added "Golden" to team name to attract San Franciscans</li><li>- Gave the seals the kelly-green and gold uniforms with matching skates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Did this to match his baseball club</li><li>- Players wore green blazers and carried green suitcases (now worth more than \$1,000)</li><li>- Skates would turn to "polar bear white"<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In Canada, white skates equate to figure skaters, leading to much ridicule</li><li>- On black and white TV, the white skates made it look like they had no feet</li><li>- Finley would have the skate boots remain perfect, having trainers repaint them to cover scuffs between periods<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Let to them getting heavier throughout the season due to the layers of paint dc</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li><li>- First team to put their names on the back of sweaters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seals had to travel with two sets of road jerseys incase owners got to heated over it</li></ul></li><li>- Very low interest and attendance</li><li>- Low budget (\$5,000 for a whole season)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Force unique ways to market</li><li>- Hired a streaker<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Girlfriend of the stick boy</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Came to a game, stripe and skate from behind the bench as the players came onto the ice after one period of play</li><li>- This was done only once as college students were streaking across their campuses</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Krazy George<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Finley's other gimmicks<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Brought a live seal to center ice</li><li>- Hosted barber night where hair stylists got in for free</li></ul></li><li>- George Henderson<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- High school teacher</li><li>- Brought a class of students to game</li><li>- Won a job as the team's official cheerleader</li><li>- Would bang his drum, rattle tambourine to rile up opponents<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Boston's Terry O'Reilly attacked him</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li><li>- During one win in Boston, Finley gave each player \$100 to go to the Gucci store in NYC (no one knew what Gucci was)</li><li>- Players once bought fresh lobsters and let them loose on the plane</li><li>- Splurged on first-class flights</li><li>- Franchise draw as few as 2,500 fans a game</li><li>- Broadcasts would only show 5 games<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Went one year without a local tv deal or a radio deal</li></ul></li><li>- During the helmet free era, Bill Masterton of the Minnesota North Stars dies after smacking his skull on the ice</li><li>- Fred Glover<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Coach hired and fired twice by the seals</li><li>- Practice was only scrimmages he participated in</li><li>- Wouldn't let the players have well oiled drills and video analysis</li></ul></li><li>- Morris Mott<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Player that scored 9 goals in 1 season</li><li>- Became a poster boy for mediocrity</li><li>- During a game at Madison Square Gardens, the Marquee read: "Morris Mott" in bold, with "and the california golden seals" in tiny type</li></ul></li><li>- Famous Seals fans<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Peanuts creator Charles Schultz designed the team mascot</li><li>- Tom Hanks says the seals were his introduction to the sport</li><li>- The Hell's Angels were big supporters<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Head of the angels called one player to demand VIP parking and assured Reggie Leach that if anyone messed with the seals, the gang would take care of it</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>- Gary Simmons<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Cobra</li><li>- His goalie mask had a painted cobra on the front and is now in the Hockey Hall of Fame</li></ul></li><li>- Finley Mistakes<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Fired Bill Torrey from his front office<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Would go on to become GM of the New York Islanders and build their 80s dynasty</li><li>- Traded 1971 first round pic and Francois Lacombe in return for 1970s first round pick and veteran Ernie Hick<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- California finished dead last in 71</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li><li>- Would move to the Cleveland Barons who would dissolve after two seasons</li><li>- Fans still care<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- People showed support on San Jose's tribute night to get signatures and meet the old players</li></ul></li></ul>
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<https://www.sportsnet.ca/hockey/nhl/california-golden-seals-story-documentary-itunes-watch-director-mark-greczmiel-interview-gretzky-meloche-streaker-white-skates/>

HBD INDEPTH: THE SEALS OF CALIFORNIA

- The 1967 expansion was the first time awarded to areas not known for cold weather
  - California was awarded 2 new teams
    - The California Seals
    - Los Angeles Kings
- Original ownership group of the seals purchased an existing minor team called, also, the seals
  - Moved them from the San Francisco Cow Palace to Oakland to turn them into an NHL team
- First logo
  - Seal with a hockey stick framed by a letter C
  - Seal was green, gold, black with the C being navy blue
  - Heavy black outlines
- Second Logo
  - Name changed to Oakland Seals to create a stronger local fan base due to awful ticket sales
  - "C" turned into an "O"
  - Positioned the stick and seal within the O
- Golden Era
  - Seals only won 15 games in inaugural season but made playoffs in the following two seasons
  - Failed to sell the team for a while, before being sold to Oakland A's owner Charlie Finley (who knew nothing about hockey)
  - Adopted the green gold colors from his baseball Athletics team
  - Changed the name first to the Bay Area Seals (including the "the" to the wordmark which only lasted 2 games) then later to California Golden Seals
  - Logo
    - Lost the blue, black seal head and hockey stick
    - Subtle changes to the seal's head, eye, mouth, whiskers
  - Seals hit the ice in 1970-71 in all type jerseys with the name "Seals in clunky letter type"
    - Seal logo never hit the ice again as the third jersey policy was not yet in place by the NHL
  - Forced the players to wear white skates
    - Made to imitate the white cleats his baseball team used
    - To players, white skates were only women's figure skates
    - This lead to a lot of heckling from opponents and fans
    - Equipment managers were tasked with touching up the skates between periods with white paint, which would add weight and make them heavy and cumbersome
  - Brought out a skating donkey (two skaters in a donkey suit)
  - Finley tried to propose to the NHL all teams should use a bright orange puck so following the action was easier
  - Sold the team back to the NHL in 1974
- NHL era
  - Kept the seals type but changed the green to pacific blue

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- Final jerseys would be white jerseys paired with teal pants and white stockings with gold and blue stripes
- Cleveland Barons
  - Moved to this new team after the 1976 season
  - Team was active for two years then merged into the Minnesota North Stars team
- Sparky the Seal
  - Mascot
  - Designed by Charles Schulz who lived in Santa Rosa and was an avid fan of the Seals



<http://hockeybydesign.com/2019/10/hbd-indepth-the-seals-of-california/>



# ADVICE FOR GOLDEN KNIGHTS: DON'T BE LIKE THE GOLDEN SEALS

- 2017 was the 50th anniversary of hockey coming to the Bay Area
- Were first the California Seals
  - Then the Oakland Seals
  - Then the California Golden Seals
- Mark Greczmiel created a documentary on the team from start to end
- Gretzky also hated the white skates
  - “Boy, if I play in the NHL, I hope I don’t have to wear white skates”
- When they brought out the seal to center uce, it went to sleep
- The streaker incident had the woman have the word “Seals” painted on her
- All seals players had green blazers for the road and were stored in matching leather green suit cases
- Former seal Ernie Hicke said the players “felt like a traveling circus”
- The seals were the first team t have player names stitched on the back of their jerseys
- Didn’t pay the players well
- Rarely watched his team
  - Once took the mic and told the audience “I wanna be the first to tell you i know nothing about the game of hockey”
- There was a massive saturation of sports in the local market, so they did little get attention compared to the:
  - MLB A’s and Giants
  - NFL Raiders and 49ers
  - NBA Warriors
  - NCAA Stanford Cardinals
- Seals had four ownership groups in 9 years
  - Each wanted to sell them or move them
  - Bert Olmstead (coach) quit in disgust in the inaugural season
  - Fred Glover’s method to coaching was so bad the players tried to get him fired
- PA announcer at Coliseum once said things would be better next season, adding in “They can’t get any worse”
- The team would produce good, hopeful moments then come crashing down again before the slow, painful two season end in Cleveland
  - Relocated there by Mel Swig and brothers George and Gordon Gund
- Team was thought to stay after their best attended season, but a deal to build a new rink in San Francisco fell through, ending the teams stay there
- Barons own the distinction of being the last franchise in the four major North American pro sports to fold

# Golden Seals Hockey Site

- California hockey can be traced back to a 1917 three-game exhibition series in San Francisco between the Montreal Canadiens and Seattle Metropolitans
- In 1927, the California Hockey League was created but went under in 1933
- Minor leagues appeared here and there but hockey did not catch on until the San Francisco Seals were added to the Western Hockey League (WHL)
- The San Francisco Seals played in the Cow Palace in Daly City, attracting 194,530 (average of 5,558) fans in the first season
- The Seals Booster Club was founded in 1962
- The Seals first season finished up at 29-39-2 and qualified for the playoffs, but lost to Spokane
- Newcomers Orland Kurtenbach, Ed Panagabko, and goaltender Jim McLeod led to the seasons finishing second in the 1962-63 seasons
  - Gained the nickname "Adversity on Ice"
- All time franchise record of the San Francisco Seals was 12,404 fans in Cow Palace for the final game in the Patrick Cup final
  - Game was won on an overtime goal by Kurtenbach, landing them their first Lester Patrick Cup
- During the 1963-64 season, Norman "Bud" Poile coaches the Seals into the playoffs, beating Portland then LA to become the first WHL team to win consecutive championships
- Cow Palace was an intimidating place to play
  - Defenceman Tom Thurlby believes the Cow Palace was an intimidating place to play "just because of the size of it compared to some of the other rinks. And it was a small ice surface there too, and we had a big team; we had a lot of big guys on that team, and I think we just dominated at home. Teams coming in there were kind of shocked, I guess, at the amount of people that was there the first time they played there, and we always played well at home."
- Team received massive support in San Francisco
- The Seals qualified for the playoffs in 5 of the 6 seasons played but never won another Lester Patrick Cup
- During this time was when the NHL decided to include LA and San Francisco in its expansion in 1967
  - Barry Van Gerbig was granted the San Francisco
  - This led him to buying the Seals, moving them to the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, renaming the club to California Seals
  - Seals finished their final WHL season in 4th place (32-30-10), eliminated in the first playoff round

- The disastrous inaugural season for the Seals laid a shaky foundation
- The move from a dedicated fan base was a bad idea; attendance plummeted and the early returns for their first season were hardly encouraging
- San Francisco fans refused to cross the bridge to Oakland and Oakland had very few hockey fans
- Even after changing their name, the Seals ended up dead last in attendance
- The 1967 inaugural season roster had players with seven Stanley Cups and Vezina trophy winner Charlie Hodge
- The Seals ended up with two strong games against Philly (5-1) and Minnesota (6-0) but it was all downhill from there
- Overall, the Seals scored just 153 times, two goals average per game
- Coach and GM Rudy Pilous was fired shortly after the expansion draft
  - This led to Bert Olmstead coming in and clashing with players and the media as the club hit the worst mark in the league (15-42-17)
  - Olmstead's high standards brought down the players with torturous practices
  - He made them skate laps when they lost or were losing, leading to the guys throwing up on the ice
  - Expected all of his players to be like him
    - "The biggest lack that Bert had was communication," said Ryan. "He didn't know how to communicate the Bert Olmstead style of hockey to his players. And not only that, he expected, unrealistically, that they should all be like Bert, and they weren't going to be, and a lot of them didn't want to be."
  - Hated being a coach so much, he promoted the assistant coach Gordie Fashoway to the top spot behind the bench
  - Finished 5-10-6 under Fashoway
- Bill Masterton
  - On Jan 13, 1968, he was checked by Seal's Ron Harris, causing him to fall and hit his head, causing irreversible damage
  - Fell into a coma and passed away on Jan 15
    - First and only time a player died as a result of NHL injuries

[http://goldensealshockey.com/?page\\_id=633](http://goldensealshockey.com/?page_id=633)

# Golden Seals Hockey Site

- New ownership called Puck Inc.
  - Wanted to buy the club from Barry Van Gerbig
  - Due to the Seals monetary losses, they lost interest by Christmas
- Trans-National Communications bought the Seals in Jan 1969 and wanted to move it to Buffalo but was stopped by NHL owners
- Seals managed to finish in second place, despite finishing seven games below .500
- Veterans were traded away
- Scoring
  - Ted Hampson 75 points
  - Bill Hicke 61 points
  - Norm Ferguson 34 goals
  - Carol Vadnais 15 goals and 42 points
  - Backup goaltender Gary Smith took over as lead goali finishing with a 22-20-7 record
- New GM Frank Selke Jr. hired American League legend Fred Glover to coach
  - Was liked mainly but drove the players nuts because he always had them scrimmage
  - Did this because he thought he still had a shot playing in the NHL
  - Players realized if they let him score, practice would immediately end
- Seals went into first round series with LA that went for 7 games, but LA would finally come out on top
- In the 1969-70 season, Seals started out slow and then declined from there (Gary Smith facing a total of 2,200 shots over the season)
  - Boston Bruins fired 63 shots at Smith and Hodge (8-3 final)
  - Managed to qualify for the playoffs but were swept by the Seals in round one of the playoffs
- Captain Ted Hampson set career highs with 26 goals and 49 assists in 1968-69 on his way to winning the NHL's Bill Masterton Trophy, given to the player who shows the most dedication to the sport

[http://goldensealshockey.com/?page\\_id=636](http://goldensealshockey.com/?page_id=636)

- Attendance increased, but an ownership crisi in the summer of 1970 put the Seal's future in jeopardy
- Charles O. Finley bought the team and had insane ideas including
  - Green and yellow skates
  - Garish yellow uniforms
  - Live seals as mascots
  - Possibly giving his team kangaroo-skin skates
- Dressed the seals the same as his baseball team, Oakland A's
- Renamed the seals the Golden Seals
  - "He was a lot of talk, like a used car salesman," recalled Seals captain Ted Hampson. "He was full of ballyhoo, whatever you call it. And we felt like the used cars." Booster Club member Cathy White was not at all a fan of Charlie Finley. "I think for those of us that were real fans, we didn't like his buying the team at all. He made us resent hockey."
- Finley was a micromanager, calling people day or night whenever it suited him and chewing people out if he didn't get what he wanted
  - GM Frank Selke Jr quit soon after he bought the team
  - His replacement, Bill Torrey, quit soon after too
  - The Fred Glover took over, while he coached and acted as the executive vice president
- Finley's antics did little to attract fans
- Blew the chance to draft Guy Lafleur
  - Finished dead last and earned the first overall pick in that year's amateur draft, but the year prior traded their first round pick defenseman Francois Lacombe to Montreal in 1970
  - Montreal GM Sam Pollock knew the seals would do awful, so he set up trades to make the Kings stronger in order to beat the seals, then Pollock would go in and claim Lafleur
- Finished the 1970-71 season with 20-53-5
- Finley hired former Boston Bruins scout Garry Young as the new GM
  - Acquired Joey Johnston, Walt McKechnie, Ivan Boldirev, Craig Patrick
- Fred Glover replaced by former Philly coach Vic Stasiuk for just three games, leading the seals to move to third place in the start of the season
- Goaltender Gilles Meloche stole the show, alongside Bobby Sheehan, Gerry Pinder, Dick Redmond on the offense
- The 1971-1972 were known for the white skates
- After 52 games, the seals were 17-25-10, but went to 4-14-8 tailspin
  - They were still in a play off position during most of it but lost key games, including loss to Boston on Feb 23
- Bobby Orr joined the scene and it was all downhill, the bruins regained a lead and beat them again, causing the seals to go winless for their last 8 games of the seasons
  - Ended up missing the playoffs by 6 points
- World Hockey Association
  - Arrived in 1972 and decimated the seals roster and development
  - Young didn't resign Stasiuk as coach, then he coached, then stepped down after 13 games to let Fred Glover coach
  - Young and Finley fought a lot over money and contracts
- Attendance dropped, causing Finley to drop ticket prices in half
- The seals ended their team with a second to last finish, with a 16-46-16 mark
- Finley sold the club to the NHL for \$6.585 million, leaving the players fates in the leagues hands
- Glover immediately resigned, bringing in Marshall Johnston to coach
- Garry Young then became the GM
  - Title of Director of Hockey Operations, as the seals being NHL property meant he needed leagues approval for any deals

[http://goldensealshockey.com/?page\\_id=633](http://goldensealshockey.com/?page_id=633)



# Golden Seals Hockey Site

- With Charlie Finley gone, the team set out to rebuild its image
  - Green and yellow gone, pacific blue and california gold now
  - Garry Young traded away veterans Ivan Boldirev, Walt McKechnie, Reggie Leach
  - Jim Neilson, Len Frig, and Mike Christie brought in to stabilize the blue line
  - Rookies Al MacAdam, Charlie Simmer, Dave Hrechkosy, Larry Patey, Rick Hampton added in
  - "Wrecking Crew Line" of Hrechkosy, Ron Huston and Warren "Butch" Williams were a sensation in the Bay Area
- Gary "Cobra" Simmons
  - Goal tender
  - Tattooed, cowboy boot wearing
  - Refused to wear neckties on roadtrips
  - Disgusted refs by chewing tobacco on the bench and spitting the juice near the blue line where they had to stand
  - Helped give the seals one of the best 1-2 goaltending punches in all of hockey history
- Garry Young would leave to become the head coach of the St. Louis Blues
- In the 1971-72 seasons, the seals had a strong first half season then fell apart in the second, coating coach Marshall Johnston his job
- GM Bill McCreary took over behind the bench, but the players resented him for firing Johnston
  - Ron Huston and him never got along causing McCreary to trade him to the Phoenix team in the WHA
  - Traded Hrechkosy before next season ended
- 1974-75 seals finished last in the new Adams Division
- At the end of the seasons McCreary promoted Salt Lake Golden Eagles coach Jack Evans, who would remain with the team for 3 seasons
- NHL finally found an owner for the seals in San Francisco hotel owner Mel Swig, hoping to move it to the new arena in SF
- Future looked good as the club was averaging 6,000 fans per game for the first time in three years
- 1974-76 use the seal type logo
- 1975-76 seals regained momentum post the WHA raids of 1972, challenging for a playoff spot
  - The record breaking season
  - Seals set or equaled over thirty club marks and recorded their highest point total in 7 years
  - On a 7-1-1 streak but faltered in the second half, finishing 27-42-11
- Attendance climbed to 6,944 per game, but Mel Swig couldn't convince San Francisco to build a new ice rink
  - The 12,089 Coliseum was too small and needed a bigger rink
  - New mayor George Moscone and council caused the arena deal to end
  - This forced the seals to move (to Cleveland)
- "They went as far as they could," explains Seals play-by-play man Joe Starkey. "They tried very hard. I think at the last minute they really were desperate to try to keep it. Nobody wanted to go. Swig certainly is a three-generation San Franciscan. His family name in the city is magic. He owned the Fairmont Hotel. There's no question they wanted to stay, but they were also hedging their bets because they thought they weren't going to be able to, so I think that even at the last moment, if something had been done for the new arena I think they would have cancelled Cleveland in a heartbeat... It was a stunner. I didn't see it coming. I mean, maybe I was just naive then as a young broadcaster, but I kept thinking all along that they can't be this dumb, that they would not be bright enough to realize what a value it would be to have a major sports arena in downtown San Francisco."
- The last day of the team was July 14, 1976

[http://goldensealshockey.com/?page\\_id=640](http://goldensealshockey.com/?page_id=640)

- Cleveland was not an ideal location for an NHL franchise in 1976
  - Richfield Coliseum was 26 miles out of town and could only be reached through a two way highway
  - The WHA's Cleveland Crusaders folded after 4 seasons due to this
- First season
  - Started off well, going 6-7-6 in the first 19 games
  - Al MacAdam participated in his second consecutive All-Star Game with a 63 point campaign
  - Many key players ran into injuries
- Attendance was worse in Ohio than in Oakland
  - Got to the point in February, attendance was so low they couldn't pay the players
  - Alan Eagleson, president of the National Hockey League Players Association (NHLPA), stepped in with a deal
    - Players hoped to be traded away, but forced to stay
  - Finished last for the 5th seasons straight
- Mel Swig sold the club to minority owners and Ohio natives George and Gordon Gund
- In 1977-78, Barons won four of their first 5 games and contented for a playoff spot
  - Due to new restructuring format, only the top two teams in each division would be guaranteed a chance
  - 8 teams would be joined by 4 other wild card teams
  - Did good still a late season slump killed the playoff hopes (1-13-8)
- The Gunds realized Cleveland was never gonna answer the money problems and bailed
  - Approached the Canucks, Caps, and North Stars about a merger, but only the stars were interested
  - Minnesota and Cleveland combined the rosters but kept the stars naming going forward
  - 1978-79, Barons was dead in name but lived in the spirit of the players
  - Al MacAdam, Gilles Meloche, Greg Smith, JP Parise and Dennis Maruk stayed with Minnesota
  - Rick Hampton, Dave Gardener, Walt McKechnie were sent packing
  - 1978-79 saw improvements in the North Stars by 23 points

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- Naming contest
  - 3028 responses were received in 1961 contest
  - 102 suggested Seals, as it was once the name of San Francisco's old minor-league baseball club
  - Other names included Golden Gaters, PEnguins, Vigilante, Blaes and Yekcoh (hockey backwards)
- San Francisco Seals beat the LA Blades for the Coliseum Cup 3 out of 4 times when competing in the Western Hockey League
- Seals were the first team to win back to back Lester Patrick Cups (1963-64)
- Ken Hicks, selected 3rd overall by California in the 1967 Amateur Draft, was the shortest player ever drafted in the first round and never played a game in the NHL
- Defenseman Kent Douglas scored the Seals first NHL goal against Philly
- 1968-69 was indeed a banner year for the Seals as players finished in the top 20 in several statistical categories. Norm Ferguson finished 9th in goals (34) and 13th in shooting percentage (15.7), Ted Hampson finished in a tie for 6th in assists (49), 14th in points (75), and tied for 10th in power-play goals (9), Carol Vadnais finished 4th in penalty minutes (151) and tied for 13th in shots on goal (274), Gerry Odrowski was tied for 3rd with three shorthanded goals, Mike Laughton finished 2nd in shooting percentage (19.4). On the other hand, Vadnais led the league in goals on-ice against (133), while Doug Roberts finished 5th (122), and Bert Marshall 13th (105). As for goaltenders, Gary Smith finished tied for 4th in wins (22), tied for 5th in shutouts (4).
- The Seals won their first and last games in the NHL (Oct. 11, 1967: Cal. 5-Phi. 1 and Apr. 4, 1976: Cal.5-L.A. 2).
- The Seals won the 100th game in franchise history on January 14, 1972, the same night Charlie Finley's infamous white skates made their debut.
- The Seals sold out the 12,021-seat Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum on just eleven occasions in their NHL history. The Barons never once sold out Richfield Coliseum in their two years.
- The Seals underwent four name changes after originally being christened the San Francisco Seals in 1961: California Seals, Oakland Seals, California Golden Seals, and Cleveland Barons. The longest-lasting name was "California Golden Seals" (472 games). The shortest-tenured moniker was "California Seals," (78 WHL regular-season and playoff games and 25 NHL games).
- The Oakland Seals became the California Golden Seals two games into the 1970-71 season, actually marking the SECOND time the franchise changed names in mid-season. The California Seals had become the Oakland Seals 25 games into the 1967-68 season.
- Academy Award-winning actor, and Bay Area-native, Tom Hanks grew up a Seals fan. Charles M. Schulz of Peanuts fame was also a Seals fan. The Seals' cartoon mascot, Sparky, who appeared on many promotional items in the 1970s, was named after him.
- The Seals longest-ever NHL winning streak was four games, a feat that was achieved five times. The Seals also once won six straight over two seasons (final four games of 1972-73 and first two games of 1973-74).
- The Seals never gave up a penalty shot goal in their 11-year NHL history, proving how solid the Seals' goaltenders were.
- Al MacAdam has the distinction of being the only player in franchise history to score the game-winning goal in three consecutive games (1975-76).
- The Washington Capitals are the only team against whom the Seals have an all-time winning record (13-6-1). The Capitals are also the only team against whom the Seals/Barons swept a season series (5-0 in 1976-77).
- Here's a bit of numbers fun: No member of the Seals or Barons ever wore a uniform number higher than Gary Simmons' #31. The most popular player number was... 17? Wow, who'd a thunk that? Terry Clancy, Larry Popein, Norm Ferguson, Hilliard Graves, Gary Holt, Larry Patey, Hartland Monahan, John Stewart, Tom Price, Charlie Simmer, and Ken Kuzyk all wore #17 at one time or another.
- Bjorn Johansson may have been cursed before ever stepping foot onto NHL ice. His NHL career lasted all of 15 games, and wearing unlucky #13 may have been the cause. He was the only player in franchise history to wear the cursed number.

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1967/68 - 1969/70



1967/68



1970/71 - 1973/74



1970/71



1974/75 - 1975/76



1976/77 - 1977/78



Jersey Logo (1974-1976)



Jersey Logo (1974-1976)



Home Uniform (1974-1976)



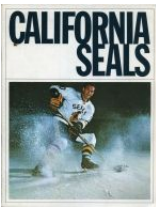
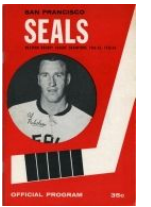
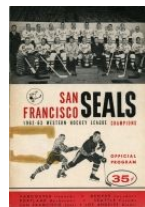
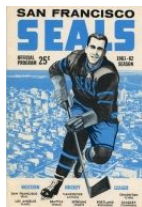
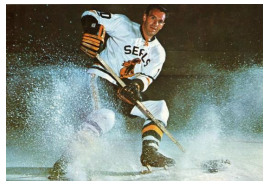
Road Uniform (1974-1976)



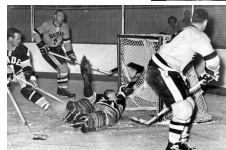
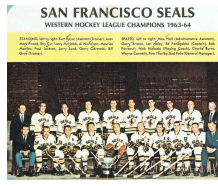
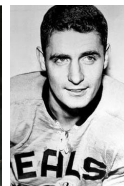
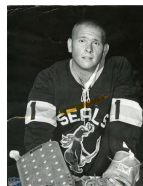
Misc Logo (1974-1976)

[https://www.sportlogos.net/logos/view/lsqbnflx2ssqtdz8on09/California\\_Golden\\_Seals/1975/Primary\\_Logo#logo\\_timeline](https://www.sportlogos.net/logos/view/lsqbnflx2ssqtdz8on09/California_Golden_Seals/1975/Primary_Logo#logo_timeline)





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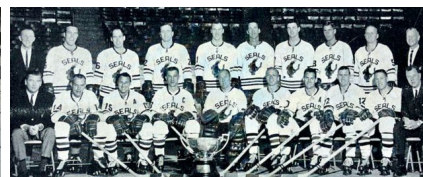


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<https://www.hockeydb.com/htte/san-francisco-seals-7871.html>

<https://www.vintagehockeyjerseys.net/san-francisco-seals2.html>



[https://hockeygods.com/images?tag\\_tokens=San+Francisco+Seals](https://hockeygods.com/images?tag_tokens=San+Francisco+Seals)

<https://www.globalvintage.ca/1961-62-1962-63-whl-san-francisco-seals-2-championship-jersey>

To find the origin point of professional hockey in California, it's roots trace back to small exhibition series of games in 1917. The Golden State was not known for its ice based sports, making a name for itself in the early 20th century through baseball and football. Despite this, a three game exhibition series was planned between the Montreal Canadiens and the Seattle Metropolitans, setting the stage for ice hockey in San Francisco.

Despite this, it was a slow process for the sport to really take off in California. The California Hockey League (CHL) was founded in 1927 as the first organized league in the state, but folded soon in 1933. The CHL teams in the Bay area in the state included the San Francisco Blackhawks, San Francisco Tigers, and the San Francisco Rangers. Following CHL's closure, the San Francisco Shamrocks would be created as a part of the Pacific Coast Hockey League (1944-50). All of the teams playing at this time used the same rink, the Winterland Arena. The founding of the Western Hockey League (WHL) in 1952 would lead to a landmark change in San Francisco: a fully professional ice hockey league team.

Mel Smith, owner of the Spokane Comets in Washington, announced that his team would be moving locations following their elimination for the 1960-61 WHL playoffs. Smith said that the team would either move to San Francisco or Los Angeles, but, at the same time, Bill Nicholas (Los Angeles Sports Arena general manager) told the National Hockey League (NHL) that he would work with the WHL if not awarded an expansion by summer 1961. In order to pick the best location for a new team, the then president of the WHL Al Leader traveled to both cities and visited the prospective arenas. In San Francisco, there was the Cow Palace in Daly City, an indoor arena that hosted the San Francisco Warriors (1962-64, 1966-71).

In the following months post the visits, Leader would decide to award the WHL expansion team to San Francisco. The team was given to Coleman (Coley) Hall, the former owner of the Vancouver Canucks, with the only stipulation being he must install his own ice surface for the Cow Palace Arena. In addition to San Francisco, the WHL simultaneously signed off on the Victoria Cougars team to move from British Columbia to Los Angeles, taking on the new name of the Los Angeles Blades. Later into the franchises of these respective teams, the Seals would beat the Blades for the Coliseum Cup 3 out of 4 times during their time in the WHL.

The Seals, name to honor the legacy of the city's former minor league baseball team, officially were founded as a team in 1961. Their debut game was an away game against the Seattle Totems on October 13, 1961 under the direction of coach Max McNab. This first contest did not end in a victory, with the score being an 8-3 road loss. Upon returning back to San Francisco, the Seals debuted in their home arena of Cow Palace on November 17, 1961 against the Edmonton Flyers; the result was a home loss of 5-3.

Despite the rocky start, the Seals had landed themselves a dedicated fans within San Francisco. In the first season, the Seals had managed to attract 194,530 fans (average of 5,558 per game) to Cow Palace. A record all-time high of attendance was hit during the final game of the Lester Patrick Cup in 1964, with a roaring crowd of 12,404 fans seeing the Seals take home the trophy. Players during this time attributed the arena itself to part of the team's success; defenceman Tom Thurby said the size of the building was enough to intimidate other teams. Thurby's comment on Cow Palace was "... Just because of the size of it compared to some of the other rinks. And it was a small ice surface there too, and we had a big team; we had a lot of big guys on that team, and I think we just dominated at home. Teams coming in there were kind of shocked, I guess, at the amount of people that was there the first time they played there, and we always played well at home."

As the fan base took root in San Francisco, fan efforts were made to promote the professional hockey club more and more. The founding of the Seals Booster Club took place in 1962. Through the club, fans made commemorative items for the San Francisco Seals and later the California Golden Seals, including stickers, pins, patches, and mugs.

The Seals saw a solid start for their first season, finishing off with 29-39-2 and making it to the playoffs where they would be eliminated by Spokane 2-0. By the end of this year, coach McNab stepped down to take over the Vancouver Canucks. In search of a replacement, Seals management was able to attract and hire Norman "Bud" Poile from the Edmonton Flyers, defending champions at the time. Poile had a solid record behind him as a coach, with three championships over the course of eight seasons leading Edmonton, experience that would bring the Seals to two of their own victories.

Under Poile, newcomers to the ice lead the show, including Orland Kurtenbach, Ed Panagabko, Nick Mickosi, Charlie Burns, and goaltender Jim McLeod. This team, later nicknamed "Adversity on Ice", would take second place during their 1962-63 season. As their on ice skills became known, rivalries began to take route. The Seals found a fierce competition with the Portland Buckaroos, another rising WHL playoff contender. With the intensity of the two teams, their contests became some of the most attended by fans, attracting 8,000 or more attendees. Their sibling team of California, the Blades, were also considered rivals, with fans taking great pride in hating defenceman "Big Burly Bill Burega" of Los Angeles.

During the 1962-63 season, the Seals played by Poile's strategy of leading in penalty minutes. This proved to be beneficial; the Seals finished the season at 44-25-1 in the regular season, going on post season to eliminate Los Angeles over three games in round one and playing the Buckaroos over seven semifinal contests. Finally, at an away game in Portland, the Seals beat the Buckaroos 3-1 and heading to the Lester Patrick Cup finals.

At the final contest, the Seals were faced with the Seattle Totems, the same team they launched their on ice careers against. All seven of the contests were held within Cow Palace (due to scheduling conflicts in Seattle), with the Seals trailing 3-1. However, San Francisco turned it around in the second half, winning the last three games (one in regulation, two in overtime), with the winning goal being shot by Kurtenbach for a 4-3 victory. With these victories came both the Seal's and San Francisco's first professional hockey championship.

Going into the 1963-64 season saw some struggles for hockey on the West coast. The WHL was facing struggles by losing two of its contracted teams, the Edmonton Flyers and Calgary Stampeders to a leave of absence. This season saw a less than stellar finish for the Seals, finishing in fourth behind the Denver Invaders (a new franchise from the relocated Spokane Comets). However, the team saw a turn around during the post season with the help of all star players Al Nicholson and Bob Perreault. The forward and goaltender duo propelled the Seals back into the competition, winning three of their first-round playoff contests against Portland. From there, the energy didn't slow and carried them all the way to defeating the Blades and the Lester Patrick Cup for a second time (the first WHL team to earn back to back titles).

Despite the incredible success at this time, owner Coleman Hall decided to sell the Seals to real estate developer and heir to the Fairmont Hotel chain Mel Swig in 1965. The hockey market was considerably volatile at this time, with the announcement of the NHL planning to expand its reach across a new six team division. This announcement from the NHL came from the pressure of a new television contract to reach greater markets and as a defensive measure against the WHL and American Hockey League (AHL), as rumors had been circulating of a merger happening. These two league matched up their playing schedules for the 1965-66 season as an effort to oppose this, but lost this battle with the NHL.

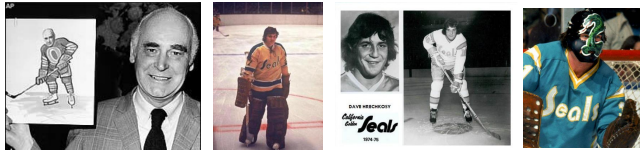
Following the expansion announcement, the NHL planted roots in six new locations: Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Minneapolis-St.Paul, St. Louis, and San Francisco-Oakland. Behind the scenes moves were taking place, including millionaire Barry Van Gerbig buying the team from Mel Swig's group, done to not build a brand new hockey club. Gerbig's purchase led him to becoming the new owner and potential governor for the team (a role that would lead the team into officially being part of the NHL). Coach Poile had left the team during the 1966-67 season, placing the position on Charlie Burns, who acted as both the Seals coach and a player.

This season for the Seals was the only one where the team was heading toward missing playoffs, having gone every year since their inception. Barely getting in post the regular season, the 1966 playoff run was a short one with the Seals losing the last two first-round games against the Victoria Maple Leafs 4-3.

With the Seals out, the NHL transition process began in earnest. Gerbig moved the team from Cow Palace in Daly City to the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, located across the bay in Oakland. This move would prove to be an early sign of the shaky foundation the Seals had entering the NHL; much of the teams existing fan base was unhappy with the move, unwilling to travel across the bay to see the team play. As well, the start of the Seals identity crisis began here, starting with the name change to the California Seals.

Coaching also experienced a transition here, with Rudy Pilous (former Chicago Black Hawks coach) splitting the role with Burns. This period of coaching gave way to the second highest winning record in the Seals history, coming to a final tally of 32-30-10. The end of the Seals six year tenure in the WHL was marked with the elimination from the first-round of playoffs against the Seattle Totems, with the last score of the team being a 4-1 loss on April 15, 1967.

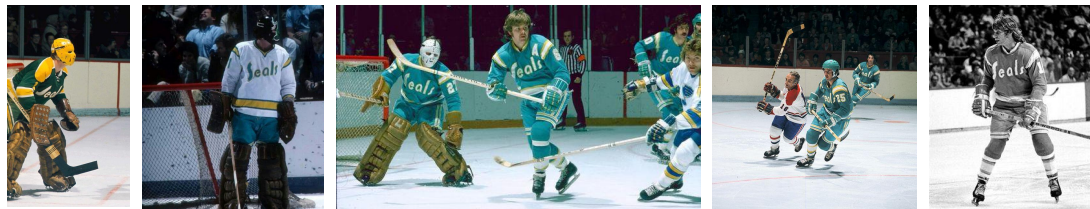




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Entering into the NHL proved to be a rather rocky start for this new addition of the NHL. Following Barry Van Gerbig's purchase of the Seals club and moving them to Oakland, he was intending on the team to have a new arena to play in. These plans fell through however, causing the Seals to use the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Arena as their new home. With the move came the first name change for the Seals: the California Seals. The start of the renaming efforts came from the hope the move wouldn't drive away fans from San Francisco and to push back against criticism that Oakland wasn't a major enough city for an NHL team.

1967 marked the start of the Seals time in the NHL and problems arose early on with the players. Being part of the six team expansion draft of 1967 came with a hearty list of rules for the newcomers, including a policy that the Original Six could protect key players. The Original Six (the Chicago Black Hawks, Boston Bruins, Detroit Red Wings, Montreal Canadiens, New York Rangers, and Toronto Maple Leafs) had a one side advantage due to this; while they kept key players, these new teams would only be able to claim duals, unknown minor league players, and veterans past peak playing potential. Facing with this disadvantage, Gerbig decided to retain some of the existing team, including Charlie Burns, George Swarbrick, Gerry Odrowski, Tom Thurlby, and Ron Harris. Besides trying to have a well established base of players, Gerbig pushed to retain key names to keep familiarity and interest high with the original San Francisco Fan base.

Despite these efforts, the Bay Area quickly proved to be a lackluster market for ice hockey attendance. Attendance was low consistently, as fans fans refused to cross over the bridge into Oakland and the Seals new home had no existing roots in hockey. As well, the name change in the first NHL season did nothing to help; the Seals ended off the 1967-68 season with the lowest attendance out of all of the teams. Hope seemingly blossomed with a new television contract with CBS; the network wanted two teams to be in California and, besides the Kings, no other team had the same caliber as the Seals in the state.

The beginning of the official season was a poor one, even with established players on the roster and new additions holding Stanley Cup titles and Vezina trophy winner Charlie Hode, the team was lackluster. For the first few games, the Seals came out on top, with two wins against Philadelphia and Minnesota but it was short lived. By the end of the first season, the Seals game had scored a meager 153 times, averaging out to about two goals per game. Seals would finish out their first official NHL season sixth in the Western conference and not reaching the play offs with 15-42-17.

In addition to the poor scoring, the Seals reputation was not turning out to be a particularly good one. With the firing of Rudy Plouffe shortly after the expansion, Bert Olmstead was the new coach for the 1967-68 season. Olmstead was reported to have clashed violently with players, subjecting them to intense practices that did little to help them out on the ice. Using a punishment system, the coach would have players skate many laps when they lost and/or on a losing streak, pushing them to the point players would be vomiting on the ice. Olmstead detested being a coach and, after leading the Seals to their worst season in franchise history, quit and promoted George Fasthway to his position.

Name change number two would happen on November 6, 1967. Realizing that "California Seals" was having no impact on game attendance, Gerbig changed the name to the Oakland Seals in hopes of drawing a more local presence. Even still, little impact was made to draw more fans in, to the point Gerbig was heavily considering moving the team to somewhere else. Backing him up, coach and then general manager Bert Olmstead pushed for the team to move to Vancouver and secured a deal with Toronto-based brewer Labatt's to finance the move to Canada. As well, buyers from Buffalo, New York were interested in taking over (Buffalo, like Vancouver, lost their bid in the 1967 expansion).

When word of the potential move was caught on by the NHL, the organization quickly acted to stop the process. After gaining the television contract in California with CBS, the league did not want to risk the deal and rejected both offers. Instead, the Buffalo-based Seymour and Northrup Knox bought a minority share of the Seals in 1969. Their purchase only lasted a year though, as in 1970 the NHL decided to expand again, this time offering Buffalo a team; the Knox brother's shares were then sold to finance the founding of the Buffalo Sabres.

After being rejected by the NHL, the Seals organization decided to retaliate. Claiming the league was invasion of the Sherman Act (an antitrust law that protects free competition of organizations taking place in commerce and prevents attempts at monopolization). The Seals saw the rejection as a way of illegally regulating the teams and an attempt to keep the club in the Bay Area to prevent rival organizations from forming. This legal attack didn't do much to help the Seals. Courts ruled that the NHL functioned as a single entity, with its teams not falling in the jurisdiction of an independent entity, therefore not causing a restriction on commerce.

Frustrated to make an impact with the Seals, the clubs organization made drastic moves to enhance ticket sales. This included revamping the roster of the team, following the first season only seven players remained, with the rest of the bench filled with new names. These new faces made the team slightly more successful on ice and with fans. The new roster would account of the only two season the Seals ever made it to the playoffs.

The new build of the Seals included trading away veterans of the team to bring in new names such as Ted Hampson, Bill Hicke, Norm Gerguson, and goal tender Gary Smith. As well, new general manager Frank Selke Jr hired AHL coach Fred Grover to lead the Seals but to lackluster results. Players felt frustration at his coaching style and didn't gain much from it, as he pushed for nothing but scrimmages. Soon enough the Seals players realized Grover took the role to show he was still worthy of playing in the NHL, so they would let him score (which would result in practice ending right afterwards). Grover brought the Seals to the 1969-70 playoffs and they made their way through seven contests with the Los Angeles Kings before being eliminated. This season would mark the very subtle high note of the franchise's history and the decline began.

At his wits end, Gerbig decided to sell the team and part ways. He sold the club to Trans-National Communications in 1969-70, but soon after the company folded and returned the Seals back (who promptly went back up for sale). The next owners of the team would be one of the most infamous figures of the California Golden Seals history; Charles O. Finley.

Better known as Charlie Finley or Charlie O, the new owner of the Seals was well known in the Oakland area by owning the Major League Baseball (MLB) team the Oakland Athletics (also known as the Oakland A's). He had come to the Bay Area in 1968 after buying the baseball franchise in Kansas City, Missouri and relocating them to Oakland. Finley was in a bidding competition for the team with Jerry Seltzer, a local roller derby owner, and came out top. Seltzer had come up with a better and detailed plan for a Seals revival, but was pushed back against the NHL, who ultimately voted for Finley's bid.

This purchase is one that, to this day, most people don't understand. Finley made it very clear he had no understanding or any interest in ice hockey, even going as far to announce "I wanna be the first to tell you I know nothing about the game of hockey" to an audience. Rarely did Finley take the time to visit the Seals in their arena and paid even less attention to how they were being coached.

Finley's beginning with the Seals was cause for major alarm. Halfway through the 1970-71 season, general manager Bill Torrey quit due to clashes with Finley. The next round of remaining began, with "Bay Area Seals" but the name was quickly dropped after two games. On October 16, 1970, the team name was changed to "California Golden Seals". The changes did not stop here, however, as Finley's wild marketing tactics came into full swing.

To match the new name, new hockey sweaters were made for the players. This included a palette change; originally kelly green, royal blue, and white, the California Golden Seals would wear jerseys of kelly green, California gold and snow white. The palette swap was taken from Finley's Oakland A's, as he wanted his two sporting teams to have matching, garish colors. Kelly green became a main feature of the Seals on and off ice looks. As part of the club rules, Finley would force the players to wear green blazers and travel with matching green suit cases (now appraised to be worth around \$1,000). Seals players were not fond of the road uniform, with Ernie Hicke saying the players "felt like a traveling circus".

In addition to all of the name changes, the Seals logo underwent many variations in a short amount of time. While the San Francisco Seals maintained a consistent logo during their existence, the Seals would go through four total logos. Starting out was the Oakland Seals logo: bold and heavy, a yellow seal with green flippers and a black head holding a hockey stick was overlaid on a royal blue O. Both elements were outlined in white and then had a second outline in black, resulting in a very complex and visually heavy design. The change to California Golden Seals brought in the next logo; using similar visual language, the seal remained almost the exact same (albeit slightly happier looking now) and was jumping from the negative space of a royal blue C. The line weight was balanced out much better here, making for much more visual clarity on both the letter and seal. The final pictorial logo was during Finley's time, using his Oakland A's colors, the palette was reduced down to kelly green, California gold, white, and black. Very few outlines remained, with a golden C having it's negative space filled with green; the now yellow and green seal was leaping from the green holding a white hockey stick. Fourth, and finally, the seal itself was completely lost in favor of a typographic word mark spelling "Seals" in a heavy sans serif, green and outlined in gold.

Not all of the sweater changes were negative; the California Golden Seals were the first hockey club to put the players last names on the back of jerseys. Initially there was push back toward this, so much so that the Seals had to carry a second set of jerseys in case the opposing team owners got too fussy about it. Despite it, Finley's choice was one that would later take effect across all modern hockey teams.

The palette, jersey, and logo switches would not be the most famous part of Finley's visual rebrand of the Seals, however. To keep with the theme of modeling the Seals after the Oakland A's, Finley wanted the players skates to match their cleats in the color of "polar bear white". Immediately, the players pushed back against the idea. In Canada, white skates were connected to figure skaters and knew that coming out against an opposing team in them would lead to ridicule. Intent on having his way, Finley pushed and got his way, having all the players wear white skates during the 1971-72 season.

White skates, besides being an easy target for chipping, had quite a few disadvantages. The largest being how they appeared on TV, as the Seals were playing during a time of black and white television, the cameras could not pick up the details in the broadcasts. This lead to the players looking as if they were skating around on stumps on the ice. In addition to this, Finley was fixated on keeping the skates as white as possible. Paint would become scuffed from tape, pucks, and hitting the boards, so he required every player to have their skates repainted between each period. Layers and layers of paint accumulated over time, putting almost double the initial weight on the players feet and making it incredibly difficult to skate with.

Besides their impracticality and connotations, white skates were a core memory for one Wayne Gretzky. His first NHL game he attended was at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens with his grandmother, where the Leafs faced off against the Seals. This memory has left him with a soft spot for the club but he has been quoted about the skates as: "I remember seeing the white skates and thinking, 'Boy, if I play in the NHL, I hope I don't have to wear white skates.'"

For marketing, Finley became well known for his less than ordinary approaches to attracting fans to Seals games. With an extremely small budget of \$5,000 for the entire season, Finley and the Seals organization had to get creative. One of the first efforts he employed was bringing out a live seal to center ice (who promptly fell asleep in front of the entire arena). Another was paying the stick boy's girlfriend to come skating out completely nude, with the word "seals" painted across her body. He also hosted a barber night, where he invited local hardiness in the Oakland area to come for free to the game and spread the good word of hockey around (they did not).

One of the more interesting developments of the Seals marketing came in the form of George Henderson. Henderson at the time was a highschool teacher in Oakland that decided to take his class to a Seals game as a field trip. Getting so into the spirit, the Seals organization thought his antics were highly amusing and hired him to be a cheerleader during home games. Using instruments such as a drum and tambourine, "Krazy George" would make an effort to rile up the opposing team. His efforts became so successful once that Bruin's player Terry O'Reilly got up from the bench and assaulted him. Krazy George would be scouted as a professional cheerleader for several other teams and later credited as the creator of "The Wave", first performing it in 1979 Oakland A's game.

All of these ostentatious efforts were for naught. Finley's leadership style was causing intense friction within the club, leading to much leadership and player distaste towards him. Then Seals captain said of Finley, "He was a lot of talk, like a used car salesman... He was full of ballyhoo, whatever you call it. And we felt like the used cars." His intense micromanaging style caused general manager Frank Selke Jr quit soon after he bought the team and replacement Bill Torrey would be quick to follow. This lead to Fred Grover acting a both a coach and executive vice president at this time.

Team performance was suffering at the expense of all of the antics, finishing the 1970-71 season with an abysmal 20-53-5. With the Seals at the lowest end of the rankings, they were a shoe in for first round picks in the upcoming draft. Anticipating this, though, was one Sam Pollock. Pollock, the general manager for the Montreal Canadiens, expected the Seals to get first round picks due to their on ice performance and stuck up a deal: by trading defenceman Francois Lacombe to the Habs in 1970, Pollock orchestrated a string of trades to make the Los Angeles Kings stronger in order to beat the Seals. By the Seals losing, this would make the club have to do good on a deal to give the Habs their first round pick. This pick would turn out to be Guy Lafleur, a future NHL hall of fame member; to date, this is considered one of the most one-sided trade deals the league has ever seen.

During the 1971-72 season, the Seals appeared to have a decent start, hitting 17-25-10 after 52 games played. They ended up slipping in the ranks soon after, battling with 4-14-8 in the following games. As well, major players in the NHL's history were rising quickly, including one Bobby Orr, defencemen of the Boston Bruins. Orr would sweep the Seals in their contests, causing the Oakland team to winless in the last eight games of the season. Following the Bruins sweep, the Seals were out of the playoffs, missing the minimum by six points.

The 1971-72 season saw the rise of a new rival in professional ice hockey; in 1972, the World Hockey Association (WHA) was officially the competitor to the NHL. The WHA snatched up a great deal of the Seals team, cleaning them out of almost all talent the bench had to offer. Finley's stubbornness was a direct cause of this as he refused to match the WHA's contract offers and, notorious for paying the players incredibly low wages, much of the team took off. Only one name of note stayed around, goaltender Gilles Meloche, but he was not enough and the Seals would sink to last place for the remainder of the team's history.

A rebuild of divisions occurred during the 1974-75 season, meaning that three teams per divisions made the playoffs. This shuffled the Seals to the Adams Division (during 1974-83, the teams were broken into four divisions named Adams, Norris, Patrick, and Smythe), a change that only hampered Oakland more. Their new rivals were exceptionally strong and included the Boston Bruins, Buffalo Sabres, and the Toronto Maple Leafs.

This heavily skewed competition lead to a sharp decline in fan interest in the Seals. Attendance had consistently dropped, so much so that Finley cut the price of tickets to half. Finley was incredibly frustrated with the Seals, as their constant failure was in sharp contrast to the Oakland A's, who had recently become the World Series champions. Fed up with the club, Finley began the process of selling the Seals and was met with very little interest. He seemed to have found a potential customer in Indianapolis in 1973, but the proposal was shot down by the NHL's board of governors. In the end, Finley sold the team back to the NHL for \$6.585 million and let the fate of the California Golden Seals rest in the league's hands.

While in the limbo, the hockey club was rumored to be making a move to Denver in 1975 as part of an agreement awarding the city a team as part of a "conditional" franchise expansion. This deal never came through and the Seals were facing liquidation by the end of the 1975-76 season until a man named Mel Swig took interest. Swig, a San Francisco hotel magnate, purchased the Seals on July 28, 1975. His purchase was done with the intention of moving the team to a new arena in San Francisco, but the team missing the playoffs and a recent mayoral election, arena development was stopped. Finally, after all of the push back from the league, the NHL gave in; the Seals were approved to be relocated.



Relocation efforts began in earnest following the 1975-76 season, the final time the California Golden Seals would play in Oakland. Wanting some control over the relocation, minority share owner George Gund III managed to persuade then owner Melvin Swig to move the team to Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland was the home town of Gund but had little ties for Swig, as he had much more equity in San Francisco. A similar sentiment was felt among the players about this potential relocation. Play-by-play announcer Joe Starkey said "[The Seals] went as far as they could... They tried very hard. I think at the last minute they really were desperate to try to keep it. Nobody wanted to go. Swig certainly is a three-generation San Franciscan. His family name in the city is magic..." As well, Seals Booster Club PR leader Len Shapiro commented, "The move to Cleveland was very tough to swallow...I was totally depressed. I finally land my dream job and now it was gone." Despite this push back, Gund eventually won out and the Seals last day as a team would be July 14th, 1976.

The rebranding of the Seals came in the form of the Cleveland Barons, a name chosen to honor the renowned AHL team that had played in the city from 1929-1973. Despite the original Barons success, having won nine Calder Cups, their owner Nick Mileti moved the team to Florida so his WHA team (the Cleveland Crusaders) could take over. Besides Gund's personal connections, Cleveland was not new to potentially having an NHL team. During a particularly bleak period of the Canadiens history in the 1930s the team had considered relocation to here as well had been turned down for an expansion team three separate times.

Approval for the move took place on July 14th, 1976 by the NHL but all contract details would not be finalized till the end of August, edging on the start of the 1976-77 season. This gave the Barons very little time to promote themselves, something that would permanently damage the team in their short existence.

Arriving to Cleveland to start the season, the Barons would make their new home out of the Richfield Coliseum in Richfield, Ohio. Richfield Coliseum was built for the Cleveland Crusaders and the National Basketball Association (NBA), with a whopping 18,544 seats. Despite the large capacity, the location left a lot to be desired; it was 26 miles outside of Cleveland and only able to be reached via a two lane highway. Attendance was low for the Crusaders due to this and would ultimately lead to their folding after only four seasons.

Attendance proved to be just as much of a struggle for the Barons in Richfield Coliseum and even worse than the attendance in Oakland. Never filling the arena once in its two year stay, the opened the season on October 7, 1976 to a meager 8,900 fans. Over the course of 1976-77, the Barons would only draw around 10,000 fans to seven out of forty home games. With worse attendance than before and a bad leasing contract, Swig became worried the team may not even make it to the end of the season.

Swig reached out to the NHL for help but was met with no assistance, as the board did not believe it was as bad as he made it seem. At the time, the NHL had not had a team fold since the Montreal Maroons in 1947 and no team fold mid season since the Montreal Wanderers in 1917-18. With no help, all came crashing down in Cleveland; team workers went unpaid for two months and the team missed two payrolls. Finally acknowledging the issues, the NHL debated on what to do; they considered a dispersal draft or just folding the team.

Fed up with the treatment by the management and the league, Barons players began to retaliate. They threatened a strike by not playing against the Colorado Rockies and were looking into other teams to take contracts with. In order to save face from a strike and team folding, the National Hockey League Players Associations (NHLPA, a union meant to protect players in the league) came in with a \$1.3 million loan to help the Barons finish out the season. Money did little to help their actual ice ability and the Barons would finish out this tumultuous season in last place in the Adam division.

Swig decided to move on from the Barons and sold his last holdings in the club to Gund and his brother Gordon. The Gund's would pour a great deal of money into the club during the 1977-78 season to moderate success, with impressive victories over then Stanley Cup champions Montreal. Player trades were made by general manager Harry Howell to toughen up the team, bringing in players that would take down the Toronto Maple Leafs, New York Islanders, and Buffalo Sabres. This winning streak would come to an end during a contest with the Philadelphia Flyers that resulted in a tie, tail-spinning the team into a 1-13-8 streak that disqualified them from the playoffs.

A fast decline came from the disqualification; the Gund's had tried to purchase the Richland Coliseum but failed. The Barons were such a minor team in the sports market of Cleveland and the Gund's saw that there was nothing the team could do to become more relevant. Eventually, the brothers would put the team up for sale, taking bids from Kenneth Schnitzer (who owned the WHA Houston Aeros), but the plan fell through.

Across the United States, a team named the Minnesota North Stars were facing a similar set of financial struggles. Seeing the issues plague both teams, the NHL approved the decision to merge the two teams from there on June 14, 1978. With this the Barons were no more, as they took on the North Stars' name, colors, and history under the ownership of the Gund brothers. Unfortunately, the North Stars would never really move past their financial problems and would be sold to Howard Baldwin (owner of the Hartford Whalers) and be relocated as the current Dallas Stars in 1993.

Hockey was not gone from the Bay Area for too long, however. The Gund's wanted to return the sport to California and, in 1991, were granted an expansion team in San Jose. This would develop into the San Jose Sharks a team, while not directly tied to the California Golden Seals, would honor the history of the team through their main Pacific teal brand color.

Despite a messy history and lackluster performance on ice, the California Golden Seals have remained a team with a cult following. Author Brad Kurtzberg would publish the first comprehensive book on the Seals in 2006, titled *Shorthanded: The Untold Story of the Seals: Hockey's Most Colorful Team*. A website dedicated to the team called [GoldenHockeySeals.com](http://GoldenHockeySeals.com) was founded in 2016 to act as an archive and news source for everything relating to the team, from history to players to memorabilia. As well, filmmaker Mark Grezmeil took on a person project to document the team in his film *The California Gold Seals Story*, a documentary funded through Kickstarter and released on iTunes in 2017. Another book was written on the team with the help of [GoldenHockeySeals.com](http://GoldenHockeySeals.com) titled *The California Golden Seals: A Tale of White Skates, Red Ink, and One of the NHL's Most Outlandish Teams*, which offered a comprehensive history of the team from the WHL to becoming the Cleveland Barons.

San Jose has paid multiple tributes to the California Golden Seals as well. In 2017, the Sharks hosted a 50th anniversary tribute night during a home game against the Detroit Red Wings. Seals alumni Bert Marshall, Dennis Maruk, Gilles Meloche, Norm Ferguson, Ernie Hicke, Gary Simmons and even play-by-play announcers Tim Ryan and Joe Starkey were set to attend. To the team member's surprise, there was a massive turnout in support for the Seals.

Gary Simmons said Dennis Maruk, "I can't believe they remembered us," as people lined up to meet the players. Tables full of memorabilia including pennants, sticks, photos, and jerseys were on display in the SAP Center, allowing fans old and new to see part of the Bay Area's hockey history. Lines were massive to see the Seals, with fans wrapping around the concourse of the SAP Center patiently to get to see the players.

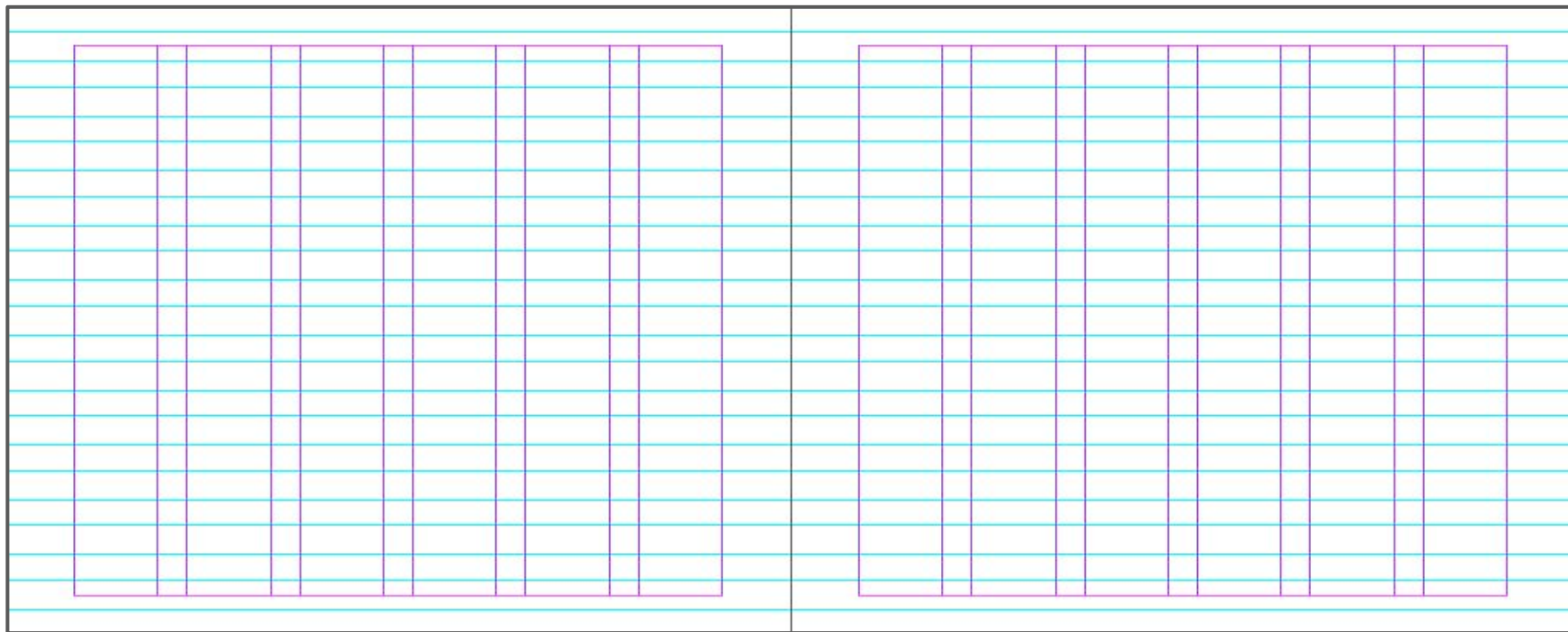
During the opening face off of this game, all Seals players came down to the ice wearing Sharks jerseys were introduced before the crowd of 16,856. In the stands, fans wore jerseys and shirts of the Oakland Seals logo and rose to give the players a standing ovation. Asked about the event, Bert Marshall said "That was wonderful...It's been so long. You wondered if people still remembered us."

And remember they do; in 2022, as part of Adidas Reverse Retro 2.0 jersey collection, the Seals appeared once again before modern hockey fans. Taking the jersey designs post the NHL's purchase of the team, the San Jose Sharks stepped on the ice wearing Pacific teal, California gold, and white with a logo saying "Sharks" in the same typeface as the Seals logo.

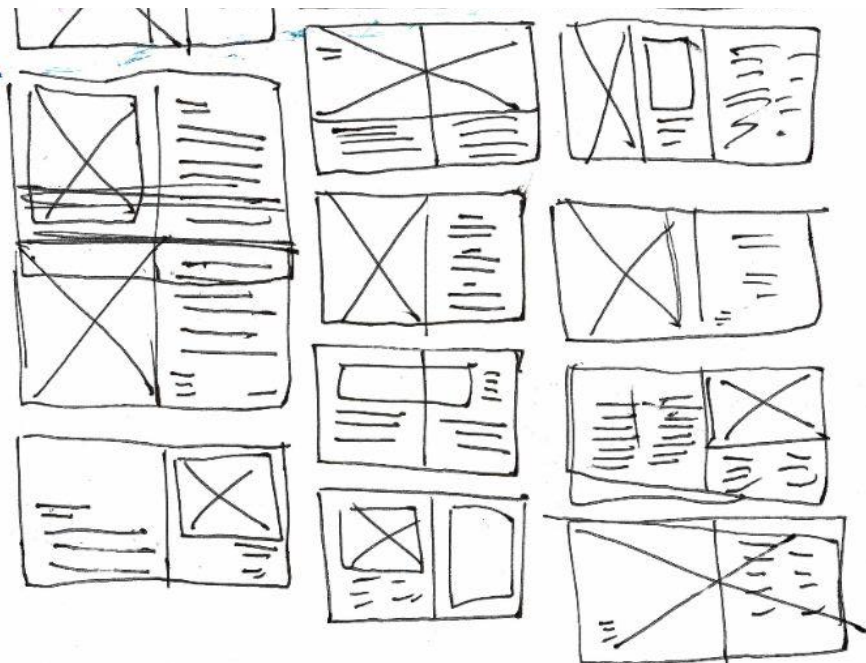
While the Seals history was one wrought with issues and struggles, their fans have never stopped believing in them. No matter what had happened to the club, the Bay Area will always remember the California Golden Seals as their hockey team and keeps their memory alive to this day.



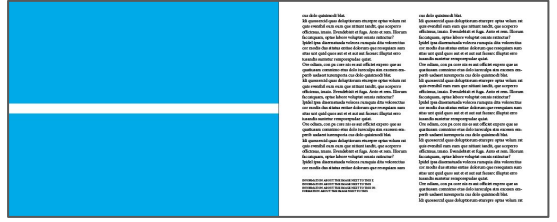
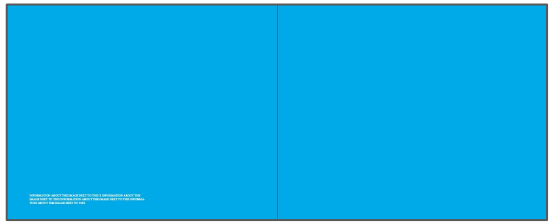
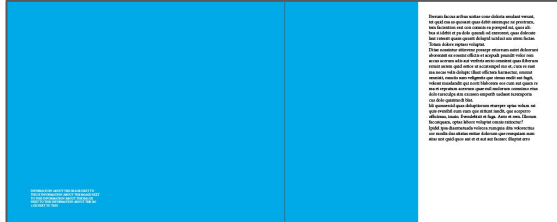




# Seals Book Layouts









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# Seals

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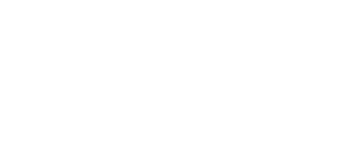
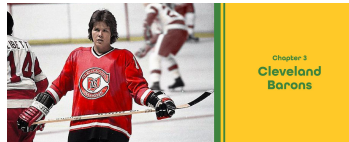
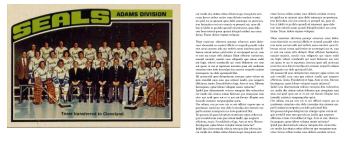
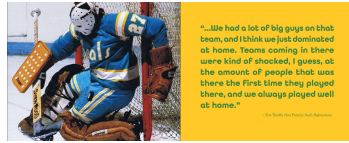
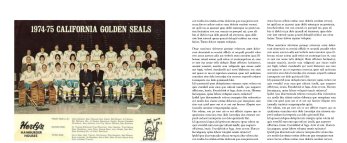
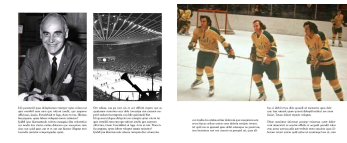
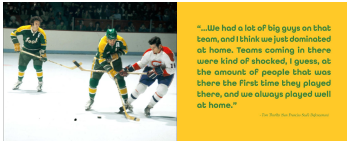
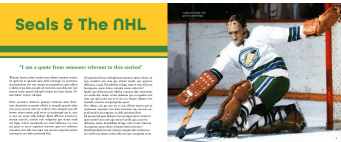
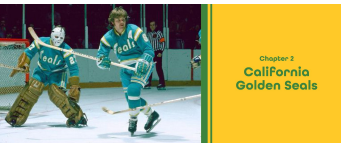
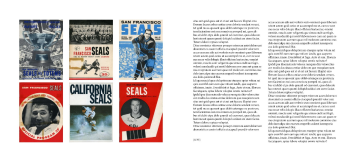
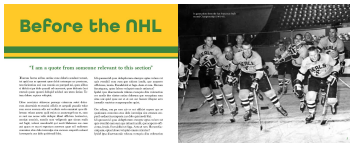
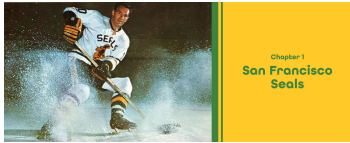
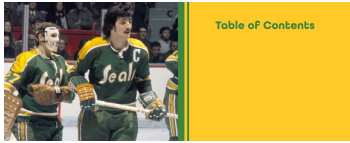
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## Hockey's Most Colorful Team

The California Golden Seals are still known as one of the most outrageous teams in all of the NHL's history. From their early roots in the Western Hockey League, *Seals: A Visual History* looks at this colorful team from start to finish. With Cow Palace to white skates to a relocation journey across four different states, this book is the visual companion to the colorful story of the California Golden Seals.



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Back

# Seals

## A VISUAL HISTORY

Written & Designed By  
Krista Miller

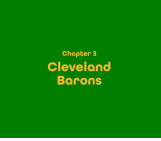
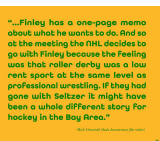
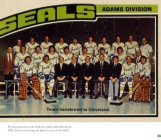
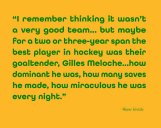
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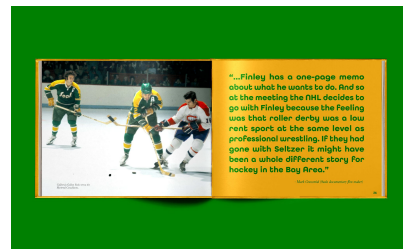
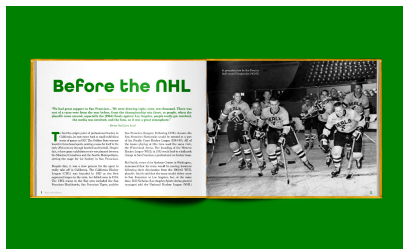
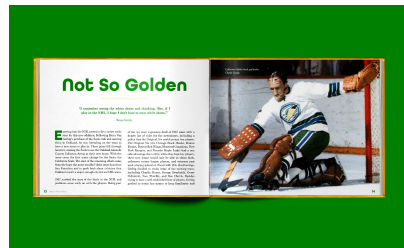
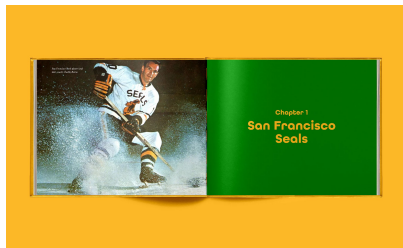
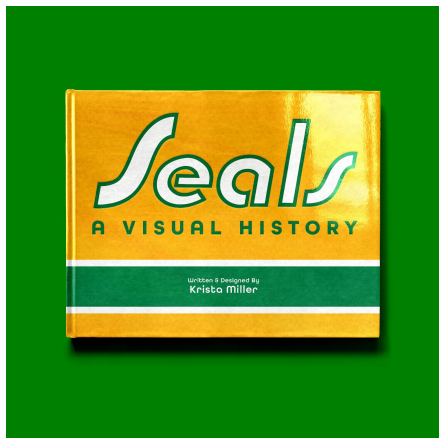




## Table of Contents

San Francisco Seals  
California Golden Seals  
Cleveland Barons





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<https://www.vintagehockeyjerseys.net/san-francisco-seals2.html>  
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