

# Capitals goalie coach opens his bag of tricks

July 8, 2014, 4:15 pm



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**CAPITALS INSIDER**



Capitals goaltender Philipp Grubauer dropped his stick, shook off his blocker and catching glove, and stood in front of Mitch Korn with a pair of open palms.

That's when the Caps' 56-year-old goalie coach handed him a basketball and, for the next 20 minutes directed Grubauer to shuffle from side to side, the entire width of the ice, never letting go of the ball.

By the end of the drill, which was observed by Caps associate goalie coach Olie Kolzig, Grubauer had cut a three-foot wide path of ice shavings that stretched from one dasher board to the other.

A fan asked Korn if Grubauer was done. "Done like dinner," he said with a laugh. That was on Monday.

On Tuesday, Korn guided goaltending prospects Pheonix Copley and Rasmus Tirronen into a small area near the side of the net and had them face each other in full equipment.

For the next 20 minutes he had them skating forward and backward, mimicking each other's moves, like dance partners on a tiny dance floor.

Welcome to world of Mitch Korn, one of the oddest yet most respected goalie coaches in hockey.

"My girlfriend's father is a goalie coach and we've done that drill before," Grubauer said of his rink-wide shuffle. "But not with a basketball. That makes it a lot tougher."

The reason for the basketball?

"It forces you to keep your arms in close, so you're not flying," Korn said, showing a scoring hole under his armpit. "And it really works the core."

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By the end of the drill, Grubauer was sweating profusely and smiling.

"They told me Grubauer never smiles," Korn said. "I got him to smile three times on that drill alone! You want these guys having fun while they're getting better."

Copley, who was signed by the Caps as a free agent on March 19 following two seasons at Michigan Tech, said he'd heard of Korn through one of his disciples, former Buffalo Sabres goalie Steve Shields, who coached Copley at Michigan Tech.

"Mitch is kind of known for his different drills," Copley, 22, said. "That one we did was kind of reacting off one another. I'd never done it before."

Copley said that when Korn was hired, he received a text from Shields, saying, "You hit the jackpot." After just two days, Copley said he's starting to see why.

"He talked about three things: mental, emotional and physical," said Copley, who hopes to land a spot with either Carolina of the ECHL or Hershey of the AHL next season. "He has a unique way of coaching and so far I really like it, and his track record speaks for itself."

Korn said he's already ordered white pucks and mini pucks and an assortment of other props that he intends to use throughout training camp in September.

In his 22 years of coaching in the NHL, Korn has worked with Hall of Fame goalies Grant Fuhr and Dominik Hasek, along with Pekka Rinne, Tomas Vokoun and Marty Biron.

He said he's already talked extensively with Braden Holtby over the phone and is anxious to build on what Holtby has accomplished in his first two seasons in the NHL.

"He's had a lot of voices in the last couple years and I have to remember that," Korn said. "It will be a process with Braden and he knows that."