



Korn keeps producing goaltending winners

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.

Sitting high above the ice surface at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, **Predators** goaltending coach Mitch Korn watched Tuesday night's game against the **Washington Capitals** like a proud father.

At one end of the ice wearing the Predators' gold jersey was his current star pupil **Pekka Rinne**. The other crease was manned by **Tomas Vokoun**, a player Korn mentored from 1998 through 2007, turning him from a relative unknown into one of the NHL's

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For the first 55 minutes of Tuesday's game, Rinne and Vokoun traded saves like heavyweight fighters trade punches.

In the end, Rinne and the Predators came out on top 3-1, but the goaltending was so stellar it almost seemed a shame that one side had to lose. Nashville's last goal was an empty-netter.

"I just said that to Pekks that it was pretty cool watching them go save for save between the two of them," Korn said after his postgame meeting with Rinne.

Rinne had to be strong early.

Late in the first and with Nashville's all-world defensive tandem of **Shea Weber** and **Ryan Suter** both in the penalty box, Rinne denied **Brooks Laich** from point-blank range off of a **Nicklas Backstrom** feed.

Not to be outdone by his younger counterpart, Vokoun kept the game scoreless by denying **Mike Fisher's** short-handed breakaway in the second.

Korn affectionately calls the players under his charge "Children of the Korn." The two on display Tuesday night were hardly can't-miss prospects when they were given to him.

Korn uses some unorthodox methods in training his players. It is not unusual for his

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Other former Predator goalies enjoying success around the league are Winnipeg's Chris Mason and Anaheim's Dan Ellis. Prior to his time in Nashville, Korn worked for the **Buffalo Sabres**, where one of his pupils was Dominik Hasek.

The Predators selected Vokoun in the expansion draft from the **Montreal Canadiens**. When he arrived in Nashville, he was out of shape and did not appear destined to be much more than a backstop to provide organizational depth.

With hands-on work from Korn and a dedication to fitness, Vokoun turned into Nashville's go-to man for a great deal of the Predators' early history. When Craig Leipold put the team up for sale in 2007, players with big contracts were dealt to make the franchise more appealing to buyers, so Vokoun was shipped to **Florida**, where he played the last four seasons.

During his time in the Finnish Elite League, Rinne had trouble cracking the starting lineup because he played behind current

Nashville's scouts showed up early to watch the 6-foot-5 Rinne in Karpat Oulu's warm-up before games.

They liked what they saw enough to take him with the 258th overall pick in the 2004 NHL Entry Draft.

Rinne eventually worked his way to the No. 1 spot in Nashville and has put himself in the conversation among the league's best, as evidenced by his second-place finish in last season's Vezina Trophy race and a somewhat surprising fourth-place finish for the Hart Trophy.

On his 29th birthday, Rinne was rewarded with the largest contract in Predators history when he inked his name to a seven-year, \$49 million deal. The money and long-term security did not go to his head either — Rinne posted his franchise-best 23rd shutout later that evening.

Vokoun entered this season as Nashville's franchise leader in shutouts with 21, but Rinne quickly surpassed him. Vokoun appeared in 383 games in his Nashville career; Tuesday was Rinne's 193rd appearance for Nashville.

Solid goaltending has defined much of Nashville's brief history. A lot of the credit can be directly attributed to Korn.

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Chicago captain Jonathan Toews has four goals and two assists on his current three-game point-scoring streak. His performance last week was good enough for him to be named the NHL's Third Star of the week that ended Sunday. ... Columbus C Jeff Carter returned to the lineup Saturday after missing 10 games with a right foot injury. In two games since his return, Carter has yet to record a point and is minus-3. ... Toews was not the Central Division's only representative in the week's Three Stars, as Detroit G Jimmy Howard took Second Star honors after posting a 3-0-0 record with a .948 save percentage and a goals against average of 1.33. For the season, the former University of Maine standout has an 8-4-1 record with a 1.69 GAA. ... Nashville's victory over the Capitals on Tuesday night was its ninth win this season. **Colin Wilson** scored the game-winner against Washington, making him the ninth different Predator to record a game-winning goal this season. ... Since Ken Hitchcock was named coach in St. Louis, the Blues have amassed a 3-0-1 record. Two of the wins were shutouts, which should make the defensive-minded



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