

Capitals Insider

Many more stories and pictures from two days at Mitch Korn's goalie camp



By Alex Prewitt September 16 Follow @alex_prewitt



(Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

“This is not my first rodeo,” Mitch Korn said as he lugged four buckets of black pucks — some miniature, some normal, all inscribed with the logo for his website — into the coaches locker room here at the Ice Time Sports Complex in Newburgh, N.Y., the latest host for another summer goaltending camp. He had always ascribed to Murphy’s Law, that everything which can go wrong will, and so the upstairs classroom had already been organized with chairs, 48 in all for the campers coming the next morning.

Eight emails and text messages had already arrived, thanking Korn and his staff for the session in Connecticut. Televisions, DVD players, cameras, microphones, props all flooded from his equipment van, and when Korn entered the rink he raised his arms high, like a professional wrestler making a grand entrance.

“Hey guys,” he said, to no one in particular.

“Hey, Mr. Korn,” someone replied.

Said Justin Camuto, Korn’s right-hand man: “Everybody knows you.”

Over the next two days, Korn welcomed a reporter into his world, the world he has loved for decades. He attended his first goalie camp at 15 years old, never imagining a playing career in hockey, but perhaps thinking something in coaching might suffice. Now here he was, two months from his 57th birthday, bounding up the stairs in Crocs and having every bit the energy and youthfulness of the kids scheduled to attend, even though some of them were second-generation campers, Korn having coached their fathers long ago.

“I teach with stories,” Korn said, “and Lord knows after 23 years I’ve got a lot of stories.”

Though the camp lasted four days, the short stint spent there became crammed with dated pop-culture references, nostalgic hockey stories, quirky props, enough goaltending instruction to fill an encyclopedia and plenty of laughs, all beneath one of Korn’s favorite mantras to describe the thick skin needed by netminders: “Nobody is sacred.”

So here, [with the full feature story running in Tuesday’s print edition](#), are some leftovers from Mitch Korn Camp. As Korn said the next morning, when the campers gathered for orientation, “All right. Here comes the show.”

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‘NO ONE IS SACRED’

Before driving up to Newburgh, Korn offered the following advice: No one is sacred. Not coaches, not counselors, not campers, not coaches. This ties into Korn’s overarching principle that all goalies must sport a thick skin. At orientation, he joked that the staff benefits are “medical, dental and making fun of you.”

“Execute what we taught you,” Korn then told the campers. “Do you know what execute means? It means we kill you if you don’t do it right.”

He is blunt, even with children, to the point of once pulling aside a 12-year-old who asked to sit out because a stomach ache and telling him, “I know your act. You’re full of crap. You can leave, but leave because it’s you. Not because of your stomach.”

On the first day in Newburgh, Korn called a camper named George near center ice and knelt down beside him to conduct an interview over his wireless microphone.

The questions were simple. What’s your name? Where are you from? How far? What’s your favorite sport other than hockey?

Then he went into rapid-fire mode.

Baseball or tennis? Apples or oranges? Breakfast or lunch? Hot dogs or hamburgers? Sleet or snow?

“Snow,” the kid replied.

“One more time?” Mitch asked.

“Snow,” the kid said, and as he did Camuto swung a stick of snow smack into the mask’s cage.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF GOALTENDING

Many of Korn's jokes come from his Jewish heritage – including about how the only ones in the NHL are him and commissioner Gary Bettman – so during classroom instruction on the first morning he connected goaltending to a high holiday.

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“So on Passover, what do we say?” he asked. The four questions, someone answered. “When we play goal, we have four questions too. There’s no matzo involved, but we have four questions too.”

For netminders, they are:

1. Where do I stand? “I believe that depth is based on the situation,” Korn said. “You determine the situation with your goalie brain.”
2. What save do we make? “There’s no bad save selection,” Korn said. “Just bad uses.”
3. What do you do with the puck?
4. How do you recover?

Korn bristles at new pupils who try labeling themselves “butterfly goalies,” referencing the move when goalies drop to their knees, though the older ones know better. There are eight types of half-butterflies, Korn said. Seven types of butterflies. Five types of power pushes. “You’re either going to be a Macbook or a slow computer,” Korn said. The campers nodded. Now he was speaking their language.

THE THREE MANTRAS OF MITCH KORN

At orientation, Korn told the campers about his three mantras, with each offering insight into his background as a goaltending coach.

First: You never know who’s watching. Korn got hired in Buffalo that way. He was showing a training video at a camp inside the Sabres practice locker room as Rick Dudley, then the head coach, watched. One year later, the phone rang. Korn believes in luck and karma, but this was purely based off how much his work impressed Dudley. John Van Boxmeer and John Tortorella were assistants on that team. “Without them,” Korn said, “I had no chance.” So whenever they pass through town, he always buys them dinner.

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Second: It’s not worth doing unless you do your best. In Buffalo, Korn crash-edited VHS tapes for \$400 at a week-long camp, which doesn’t sound like a lot until he tells the story about several Sabres signing autographs for two hours and the team services employee peeling off \$1,500 in \$100s. Besides, it took 20 hours to make a 15-minute video back then.

Third: “I don’t know” is not an answer. “Playing goal is like a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle,” Korn said. “Black and white to color. Wizard of Oz? Pleasantville?” No camper got the reference.

FAMILY COMES FIRST

Korn grew up the son of a man whose nickname was Pop Korn. He passed away less than a decade ago, but during his life managed a supermarket near Yankee Stadium and later a bagel store in New Jersey. His mother used to work at Scholastic Magazine. Now she’s 76 years old and visits Newburgh every year for a family reunion, because Korn’s sister lives in the next town over.

On the second night, Korn's sister hosted a staff barbecue. The grill belched meat smoke and everyone crushed the family's pudding pie. The younger staffers huddled to make bar plans for that night, and another coach's kids belly-flopped into the pool, but soon a hush fell over the deck as Korn held court, telling stories.

Soon, after dusk, it was time for Korn's mother to tell one. Several years back, she took her grandchildren to a local mall. They went into an arcade and the children began playing a hockey video game. Soon, another mother spied the pixellated goalies and approached. In a rather braggadocios manner, she told Korn's mother, "You know, my son's going to Mitch Korn's camp."

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BRIEF PICTURE INTERLUDE



Korn oversees his kingdom.



The on-ice mirror.

GOALIE SCHOOL NEEDS - single group - 4 day

For each ice session (as of 2014)

	First Ice Session	Second Ice Session
First Day	2 nets	<p>Rink provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need 9 - 9 nets (w/6 sets of pins) - screenboard - pylons - video replay station (table/cart) <p>Mitch provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high shot - reaction cones - white pucks mini pucks - cameras/tripod/TV - magnums - stabilizer bag - bungee balls <i>Bungee balls</i>
Second Day	2 nets	<p>Rink provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need 8 - 9 nets (w/6 sets of pins) - tall deflections boards (2) - screen board - pylons - video replay station (table/cart) <p>Mitch provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high shot with mirror - cameras/tripod/TV - magnums - focus enhancers, mini pucks, white pucks - angle cones. bungee balls
Third Day	2 nets	<p>Rink provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need 8 - 9 nets (w/6 sets of pins) - tall deflections boards (2) - pylons - video replay station <i>1 wide</i> <p>Mitch provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high shot screen board with mirror white pucks - mini pucks - - reaction cones - magnums - TV - stabilizer bag
Last Day	8 nets	<p>Rink provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need 8 - 9 nets (w/6 sets of pins) - screenboard - on ice table <p>Mitch provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bouncy whites, minis, focus enhancers, glove weights, - magnums - bungees for ice Racquetballs (12th station?)

Nets for Defense Camp: 1st ice session - ask us

2nd ice session - 6 nets

Ice cuts: before we start, _____



Korn wearing the corn shirt one camper bought him.



The high-shot screen board.



The campers ready to hit the ice.

ONE FINAL STORY

It was 1971. Korn was playing goalie in Brick Township, N.J., inside an old rink where balconies jugged from the upper reaches. Back in those days, fans could drink beer and smoke cigarettes indoors, free to puff and guzzle in the seats, which at the time weren't protected by nets.

Up in the balcony, a woman chain-smoked, cheered on her son and heckled the opposing goalie, which happened to be a 14-year-old Korn, wearing goofy sport-frame glasses in the net.

You stink, goalie! What kind of name is Korn?

“And she’s drinking,” Korn recalled. “She’s smoking. She’s drinking. She’s smoking.”

Intermission comes. Then the second period. The woman doesn't bother to move to the other end. By the third period, she's drunk and a pack deep into her cigarettes. Now, young Korn had developed a particular talent as a goaltender. In that day, they taught skate saves, and Korn learned to deflect shots over the glass with a simple flick of the ankle.

“For the argument of the story, let's make believe,” Korn continued. “It was her son. Makes it a better story. So her son shot the puck.”

It flew toward Korn, glove-side. He whipped around and deflected it, right off his skate and into the air, end over end toward the balcony.

“It sounded like a woman giving birth on TV,” he said. The puck whacked the mother straight in the head and the only sound louder was

when she fell off her chair. Blood trickled out. An ambulance arrived. Korn's team won, 2-1.

"What's the moral of the story?" Korn asked the campers. Some were stunned. Most were laughing.

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"Karma?" one asked.

"No," Korn said, before turning it into a lesson about not enjoying the suffering of other people. "The moral is that rebounds should be un-handleable."



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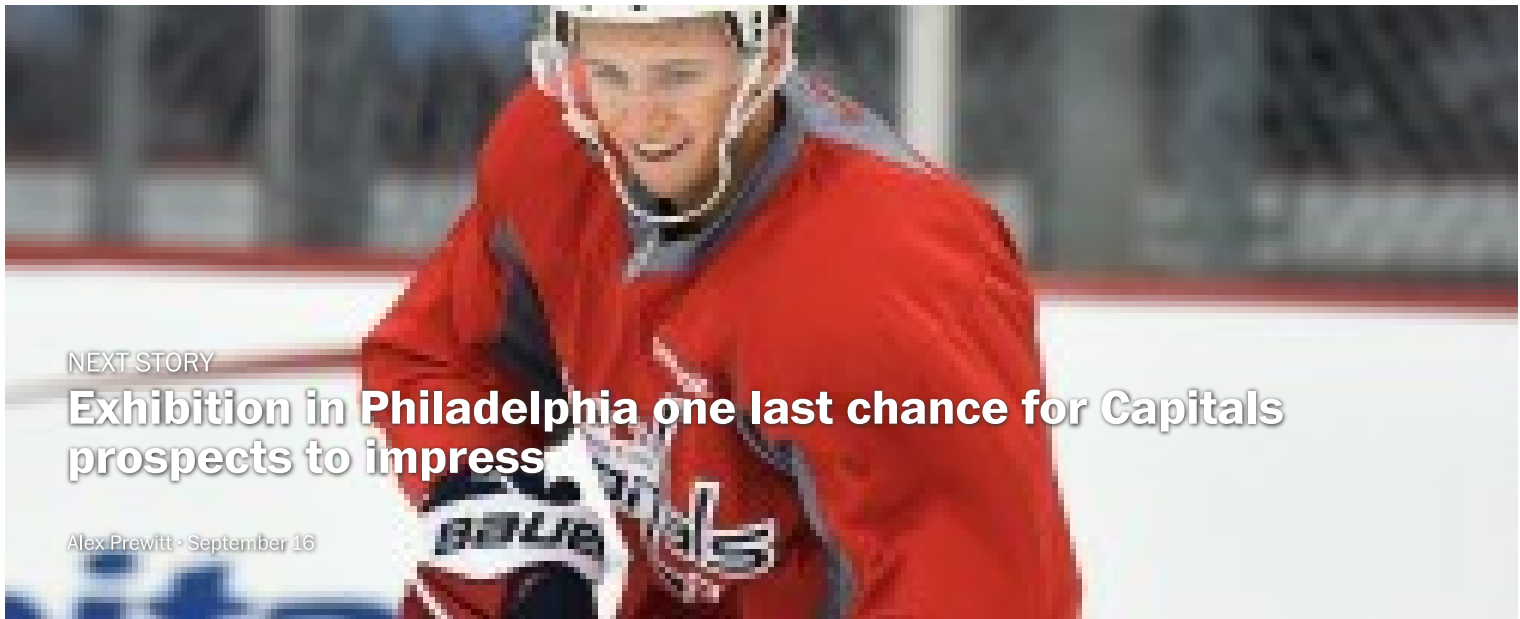
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