ROOKIE CAMP
Stickhandling guru
Skinner extols virtues of NHL puck control

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THE GAZETTE

In a quest to increase specialization, rookie teams employ strength coaches, special-term coaches, positioning coaches, video coaches and psychologists.
And the Canadiens have taken the trend one step further by exposing their players to a stickhandling coach.
"You look at the great players and they were all stick-handling geniuses," says Sean Skinner, who goes on to recite a litany of great players with Maurice Richard and Gordie Howe, and then continuing through Reggie Leach, Shane Chabot and contemporary stars like Joe Sakic, Joe Nieuwendyk and Radek Dvorak.
"I believe that he can improve our players. To have one of the best in the world teaching our kids is awesome," says assistant coach Alain Vigneault, who coincidentally has a son who plays in the Quebec junior league.
"We can expose players to the Orr, the Gretzky move, the Lemieux fake."

I can compare what we do to the Harlem Globetrotters," says stickhandling guru Skinner, leading drill at Habs' rookie camp yesterday. "They dribble a basketball and we dribble a puck, and they both require a certain amount of skill. There are so many different skills that can be learned that I have been teaching these guys. We can expose players to this type of move, the whacky move, the Lemieux fake. Each one is a little different, but they all revolve from being able to control the puck."

"It's something different and it's exciting," says defenseman PJ Fransoo, who became smitten with a shooter's pot.

The enthusiasm for doing the drills was obvious and it wasn't a surprise that when Skinner needed a groom to demonstrate a drill, he looked on Sakic.

"I hope to see his Habs, Page 3. Habs need you to get your fan club going."

HABS Drills remind Koivu of Finnish warmups

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TOWNE/TIMKINSON, the Canadiens' new coach player turned coach, called Skinner for tips on stickhandling and he has been working with Skinner on video material.
"He has such a busy schedule," Skinner said.

"I've wanted to teach him at one developmental camp in the summer, but then he was in contact with his country to coach the Canadian junior country program of Team Canada U-20." As it is, Skinner oversees a lot of work in ten days. Each of the sessions run 25 hours with varying drills.
"As far as I know, he's got a lot of work in here. I'm not sure if the sessions run 25 hours or 26 hours."

"There were a lot of drills, but he had some success."

"When players first started seeing graphic drills, there were complaints that they didn't have them in the NHL, but when they started using them, they were in every NHL game."

"It's a new area for a lot of kids, but all NHLers are working on it and they use it at the start of the season and they warm up, they warm up with it."

The rookie camp wraps up today with the players using their first body contact in a series of six on-ice workouts beginning at 10:30 a.m. and continuing until 2:30 p.m. The sessions are open to the public.

For more information on the camp, contact the Habs.