



# Closer Inspection



For January's Winter Classic game, Gunnarsson designed Semyon Varlamov's mask to make it appear as if Varlamov had been hit in the face with a **snowball**.



A **snarling bear** seems to leap from the top of a 2010 mask worn by Braden Holtby, who played with the Hershey Bears before joining the Caps last season. (He's back with the Bears this season.)

In 2008, Gunnarsson painted this **"America's Heart"** mask, featuring an eagle, the White House and the Capitol, for Jose Theodore (now with the Florida Panthers). Gunnarsson estimates each mask takes 10 hours to complete.



**David Gunnarsson** uses six airbrush guns in various sizes. The paint dries almost immediately and is covered with layers of protective coating to help it withstand pucks and collisions.



Michal Neuvirth's masks feature **Strekov castle** in his home town, Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic. "I'm really proud to be from that city," Neuvirth says.



The first mask Gunnarsson made for Varlamov was in 2009. It depicts **Mount Rushmore** on one side and Russia's **double-headed eagle** on the other, reflecting Varlamov's heritage and his new home country. Gunnarsson painted it freehand.



## The man with the masks

Swedish designer helps Capitals' goalies stand out

BY KRIS CORONADO

**Brainstorming with the world's top** hockey goalies isn't a typical day job. "I'll never get used to it," David Gunnarsson says. "I'll never understand why they called me." The 35-year-old Swede — whose airbrush designs include images of castles, bears and Mount Rushmore — has painted as many as 50 goalie masks in the National Hockey League.

His hobby as a teen soon became a professional calling when he

designed a mask for Boo Ahl, one of the top Swedish goalies in 1996. "When I did that mask, it was like a bomb,"



says Gunnarsson, who runs DaveArt, based in Vrigstad, Sweden. His creations eventually made it to the NHL. Today he has six employees and paints 170 masks a year for players in the NHL and other leagues.

Since 2008, Gunnarsson has designed goalie masks for the Washington Capitals, starting with one for former goalie Jose Theodore. "The goalies are

very involved with their masks," says Gunnarsson, who consults with them before starting his design. "They do a lot of thinking. Most of them are very into it."

Here, a look at Gunnarsson's designs for Caps goalies past and present.

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