Before last night's game against one of the best teams in the league, I asked Alvin Gentry at what point does the season become more about player development than wins and losses?

"I would say we're approaching that," he replied to me, but with a visible drop in energy.

He had not yet publicly discussed the idea of scrapping the season, but recent losing streaks of 5, 6 and 7 in a span of just 23 games (that's 18 of 23 for you math majors) has forced everyone in the organization to start looking past the playoffs.

Clearly, this wasn't the first time Gentry contemplated his future and that of the team. But it was the first time he went public with the admission.

"We have to look at the big picture," he continued trying to hedge a bit. "Obviously if things don't turn in a hurry here, that would be our top priority to start looking at younger players, putting guys in situations to see what they can do."

It's dangerous for the coach to toss in the season before the halfway point. You run the risk of losing the team entirely, especially your veterans.

How do you bench veterans like the hard-working Luis Scola in favor of giving more minutes for second-year man Markieff Morris or Luke Zeller?

How do you bench a guy like Jared Dudley , who may be playing for his next team as much as for the Suns , in favor of former high draft picks Michael Beasley or Wesley Johnson ?

And how do you bench an already-frustrated Goran Dragic and/or Sebastian Telfair in favor of untested rookies Kendall Marshall and Diante Garrett ?

"I think it's difficult," Alvin Gentry said today after practice to the pool of reporters, clearly readier to discuss this topic after a night to think it over, "because everyone has a competitive nature about them."

Yeah, try telling Luis Scola - who wants to play for a winner more than anything - that he can't showcase his talents. Plus the Suns front office will want to get asset(s) for Luis this summer, and they won't get anything if he spends the rest of the season on the bench.

"I think ultimately you have to try to do what's best for the team and the future," he continued. "Somewhere along the line we are going to have to start playing the young guys."

Don't expect to see a whole 5-man unit of youngsters any time soon. To Gentry, it would be a disservice not to pair them with quality veterans who can help make it easier to succeed. He wants them to play quality minutes, not a bunch of garbage time.

There are 42 games left in the schedule as of today. When will this youth movement start?

It starts when everyone with blood in the game is on board with it, starting with the guy who

offers the contracts and signs the paychecks. Gentry and PBO Lon Babby's contract are expiring at the end of the season, after all. And if Babby goes, GM Lance Blanks almost certainly goes with him. Ending the season in a mountain of losses could be their death knell.

But Gentry is pragmatic. He knows he has to think about the bigger picture. He will soon have a heart-to-heart with Lon Babby, Lance Blanks and Robert Sarver to "decide what's best and understand from that standpoint that there might be other things more important things than the win-loss record at this stage."

No one else in the organization has yet spoken publicly on this topic. Gentry acknowledged that a collective decision will come soon, but did not indicate it was imminent.

"We got to figure out what exactly do we have for the future, to see if they can show improvement over the next 30 games or whenever we decide to do this."