

Phoenix Suns were regressing, and change had to be made

Written by
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"We were regressing," Lon Babby said of the [Phoenix Suns](#) today. "I didn't feel like we were moving forward, and I don't think Alvin thought we were moving forward."

Babby described the meeting as one that gathered after last night's game, one that not coincidentally had the players and the coach at their most depressed, frustrated point of the season to date. Babby and managing partner Robert Sarver asked to meet with Alvin, and a long meeting and a night to sleep on it resulted in a mutual decision to end the relationship.

"It's not something we planned for. A month ago, Robert Sarver was direct and blunt that Alvin would be here through the end of the year. But sometimes in this business it gets to the point where it doesn't feel right and we just reached that point."

Certainly, there was a lot wrong with the Suns and there still is a lot wrong. Letting the coach go doesn't solve any problems, though it does allow the team to move in a new direction with a new voice at the helm.

"I think in fairness it would not be realistic to not say at this stage given our record," he said. "That maybe the emphasis is going to shift a little bit in the direction of player development, but we're still trying to win games and still try to compete, but maybe the emphasis is slightly altered."

It is easier to switch gears with a new coach than it is for the existing coach to suddenly change everything he's been saying to the team all season.

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[Alvin Gentry](#) was trying to win games first and foremost because the team went into the season thinking they the talent to produce better results than they have shown so far this season.

"I think we gave him a team that was better than the way they were playing," Babby said. "But I don't put that all on him. I don't even put the lion's share on him. That's not what this is about. It's not about winning enough games.

"The decision for Alvin and us to part ways wasn't a reflection of the quality of him as a coach. It's just that at this time, in this place, in this moment with this group it obviously just wasn't working."

Ultimately, the team was regressing. At the very least, they were making the same mistakes today that they were making on day one of training camp. Since the beginning of 2013, the Suns have the worst offense in the league after starting the season in the middle of the pack.

"I want us to progress culturally," Babby said of the next steps. "I want us to begin to see some modest or substantial growth in our young players. I want us to play hard every night, which for the most part we have done. I'd like us to be disciplined. I'd like us to execute.

"I think progress is something that, if you see it, you'll know. And I want us to feel good about moving forward. And that's how I think we have to judge the season going forward."

But he knows it all comes back to him.

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"I'm going to be judged every day on what we do. Ultimately I am accountable."

An interim coach will be named in the next 24-48 hours from among the current coaching and player development staff. Likely Elston Turner or Lindsey Hunter, who are both highly regarded nationally as future head coaches. It's just that neither has ever done it before.