

It was truly time for Alvin Gentry and the Phoenix Suns to part ways

Written by

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I did not get to know him very well, but former [Suns](#) head coach [Alvin Gentry](#) was generally sociable and affable with the media before games. He joked with reporters on non-basketball topics and was quick with a good-natured snark at the expense of Suns employees or policies when the opportunity presented itself.

Being the rookie on the media circuit, I did not have (a better word might be that I did not *make*) the chance strike up an "off-recorder" relationship with Gentry like others have done. Walking with him in and out of press rooms or practices, sharing off-the-record observations, was already taken by the host of veteran media and dedicated bloggers already in tow. Nay, I am the rookie this season and just aren't aggressive enough to drop my ride into 5th gear this early.

So I cannot say, without equivocation, whether Alvin Gentry is really this nice or if he's craftily shaping public perception for a rainy day just like this one.

The twittersphere blew up yesterday with outrage over the ouster of Gentry, wondering why a team in such transition was dumping the only semblance of long-term continuity left? And, why replace someone that wasn't really the problem?

But the reality of professional sports is that when a team is not jelling, when a team is visibly imploding upon itself, change must be made.

Player comments in recent weeks have shown the lack of cohesion amongst this group.

[Luis Scola](#) began the year saying that the Suns must scrap and claw for 48 minutes to win games. This is a statement from a man who thinks he might just have an answer.

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The team eventually got this message - that hard work must propel an under-talented team - but other cracks began to show once they started playing playoff-caliber teams over the past month. It's been painfully obvious to anyone actually watching these games, including yours truly, that the Suns players had lost confidence in themselves.

The season started with hopes and dreams. Confidence comes easy to guys who have not yet faced adversity. Despite digging big deficits in nearly every game, the Suns started forming a tenuous identity around coming back from those deficits to win (6 times) or at least make the game exciting before eventually succumbing. Some of the players took heart in their ability to fight back, while others was the writing on the wall.

But the Suns could not beat good teams, and then eventually could not beat average to below-average teams. They have a small handful of wins against teams who were winners at the time of the game, but even now - 41 games into the season - you can count the wins over playoff-caliber teams on a couple of fingers.

Eventually, the team began to realize their own futility. It started with a 7-game losing streak, broken momentarily by a nice easy home stretch of 4 wins, before devolving into a stretch of 13 losses in the last 15 games. Add in the 7-game streak and you've got 20 losses in the last 26 games.

The last loss came to a Milwaukee team barely above .500 on the season that struggles to win road games. The Suns built a ten-point lead in the third quarter before seizing up and barely scoring the rest of the game.

Whatever you think about the Suns (lack of) talent, their psyche is broken even moreso.

When the Suns talk of "feel" and "regression", everyone around the team knows what that means. Those who watched the game saw the players lose confidence game after game.

Scola said recently that the Suns are just "waiting for bad things to happen" every game. They all know, collectively, that every game is doomed from the start.

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We see it on the court. We see a semblance of execution and effort that helps the Suns keep games close or take leads against their opposition in the second half.

And then we see the self-destruction unfold before our very eyes. Ball movement stops. Shot-jacking and "dribble tantrums" start. Missed layups and dunks. Bad passes. Turnovers. You name it, the Suns can do it.

Every single game. To the tune of 13 losses in 15 tries. 20 losses in 26 tries. 28 losses in 41 tries.

It's not the losing that required change at the head coach level.

It's the loss of spirit. The loss of confidence in the plan and schemes it takes to win games.

It's months of "I don't know" answers from coaches and players on queries of *"How do you fix this?"*

Sure, they are partly refusing to give scathing answers about the talent-acquisition department or their teammates, but they also appear to genuinely be confused and defeated.

It's not a fun locker room anymore. And the prospect of 41 more games of the same-ole-same-ole is not appetizing to anyone.

So while Alvin Gentry is a good NBA coach and will thrive somewhere else where he can enjoy a higher level of talent, it just was not working here at this time, in this place, with this set of guys.

I will miss seeing Alvin Gentry. But I am looking forward to hearing another voice, even if that

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person ends up with a big or bigger mess.