

Written by
Friday, 19 April 2013 08:55 -



Injured [Phoenix Suns](#) center [Marcin Gortat](#) is always honest and is burdened with fewer PC filters than most. He says it like he sees it.

He started simply enough, like everyone else has done.

"I don't understand what's confusing about playing hard." -Marcin Gortat

"I think we need some changes," he said regarding what's missing from the team. "We need some serious conversations. First of all, I'm going to look at myself. Hopefully the management and personnel guys will do the right thing."

And then Marcin got on a roll and let it all out.

"We are missing character," he said. "We are missing strong minds in the team. We are just weak mentally. I would say that we need more talent, more athletic energetic guys, people who want to compete and fight. That's the most important thing."

Asked more about the origin of character, whether the coaches can bring it out of guys, he agreed only slightly.

"It has to come out of the players," he replied. "The coach is someone who can pull that out of the player in certain situations, but it all comes from the players. If you don't feel that you've got to work, if you feel comfortable that someone's coming into your house and punking your ass by 30 points every night it's just not right. It's just not right."

"I've been in the league 6 years and it's never been like that," he continued. "I've seen people acting tough in the locker room, acting tough going to the club, and when they were going to the

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court they were ripping peoples' head off. We got a different situation here. We just got to be tougher with everything we do, including me. Starting with me. I got to be tougher, do everything 100% better.

"I never want to be in a situation like that the rest of my life. It was just so uncomfortable, crazy season. Nobody wants to have a season like that again."

Asked whether [Lindsey Hunter](#) was part of the problem or the solution, Marcin Gortat came to the defense of his rookie coach.

"I think he did a pretty good job," Gortat said of Hunter. "He got put in a difficult situation, an uncomfortable situation. The team lost a lot of games and all of a sudden he's the head coach. I don't think he was expecting that and then all of a sudden the whole pressure fall on his shoulders. He tried to keep the discipline better than Alvin."

Gortat put even more color into his description of the season with an example.

"We had this one situation in a game where players were saying they were confused," Gortat said. "The one thing that coach was asking was to play hard. And people say they were confused. I don't understand what's confusing about playing hard."

Several veteran players this season made reference to others not playing hard in a game, and we saw a handful of timeout huddles where players and coaches were going after each other. It could be they were discussing how confused they were, or it could be guys getting on one another about effort.

"I learned from a great great coach, [Stan Van Gundy](#) ," Gortat said. "I learned one thing it doesn't matter what going on around, you got to come out every single night. If you don't do that, there's a 1000 kids behind you ready to get your spot."

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"I think we had this little bond, me and Lindsey, we understood each other on a lot of different levels. Unfortunately we had a lot of young guys that didn't understand."

One more dig...

"These young guys, they just think they're better than they really are."

Stay you, Marcin. I had forgotten how much I appreciated Gortat's interviews. He is refreshingly honest about his thoughts and feelings, unburdened by filters. He may be wrong sometimes. He may be wrong a lot. But he's not passive when it comes to the media.

You could say it was Gortat's job to be the veteran who got in the kids' faces and required them to stop fooling around and pay attention, and you'd be right. I'm not sure Gortat sees himself in that role. He was asked if he or any other veterans acted as an enforcer.

"We did," he said, after a rare moment of hesitation. "I try, at least, to approach guys during the season. I don't think I have that impact yet, only 6 years in the league."

He talked of Jermaine O'Neal's influence, but that the guys just weren't listening.

"I don't know. I checked out 6 weeks ago," he answered when asked if Hunter was getting guys to listen more by the end of the year. "I didn't even travel with the team the last two trips. A lot of meetings and talking happens on the road."

So, Gortat wasn't the problem but neither was he the solution.

"The whole season wasn't pretty," he concluded. "No one wants that situation any more. There's a lot of different issues."

Phoenix Suns Marcin Gortat says they are "weak mentally" and "missing character"

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