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School coaches are teachers, too

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As the leagues took a break at the end of the year, the sports pages and websites were filled with stories about coaching changes.

News on Aldin Ayo's supposed departure from La Salle's senior basketball team could not wait until the new year. With such a high profile and winning program in mind, the news triggered buzz and speculation among fans and netizens why Ayo reportedly departed and supposedly left for the University of Santo Tomas program.

Whether subtle or dramatic, changes in the school ranks can raise eyebrows and trigger spirited talk from fans and school community members. Often, the personalities involved opt to remain mum. Nothing is really official until the schools make the proper announcements.

When coaching shifts happen in the pro ranks, it creates some buzz but seems to fade out quickly once a change is made. It doesn't seem to be the same in the collegiate level, where the role of sports in school life surfaces.

Coaching in schools can be both rewarding and problematic. Some mentors know how to deftly create a winning program that satisfies a hungry and anxious community

while there are those who succumb to the pressure of having to win right away. Unlike in other countries where coaches are allowed to develop school teams over a period of time, the pressure here is to win as quickly to make it a viable program.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is best to allow the schools to determine what is suited to their needs. Alumni and other community members have good intentions but need to let the schools weigh a coaching candidate's qualifications as well as the financial and academic factors involved. Schools need not only winning coaches but also teachers who will guide student-athletes to value their sports participation.

A one-time college coach told me that life isn't all basketball and that student-athletes must work to complete a degree to help them if the athletic path doesn't work out or the horror of an injury or illness forces a career shift. INQ

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