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PBA

Marcial gets nod

Board agrees to appoint longtime league official

By JONAS TERRADO

Willie Marcial, who worked numerous jobs for the Philippine Basketball Association since its infant years, was given the biggest role of them all when he was appointed commissioner by the league's board of governors yesterday.

PBA Chairman Ricky Vargas of TNT KaTropa formally announced Marcial's ascension after an annual board meeting held at the PBA office in Libis, Quezon City where all 12 team representatives expressed no objection toward handing the reins over to the longtime official.

Marcial was given a three-year term while retaining his role as head of media affairs.

"It was an appointment without any objections," said Vargas, who later called Marcial the "healing commissioner" in reference to the impasse that marred the league's offseason.

The board had given Marcial a 30-day term as officer in charge after a di-

vision between member teams ended in the resignation of Commissioner Chito Narvasa last December.

Marcial immediately implemented changes within the league, namely the hiring of a five-man committee to oversee trade proposals, allowing more leeway for physicality during games and the creation of a CSR project known as the "PBA Hardcourt".

"The PBA Board has gone through a very difficult time before the opening of this season, and we're looking for somebody who can put it together and help us heal, since there will be a lot of changes as we move along," said Vargas. "We felt that it is very appropriate na we have somebody like Willie who will see us through this organization, through its process."

Marcial, 56, completed a rags-to-riches story that began when he worked as a statistician for the PBA during the latter years of founding Commissioner Leo Prieto.

He then became one of the men working behind the scenes when Vintage Sports handled the league cov-

erage during the tenures of Mariano Yenko, Rudy Salud, Rey Marquez and Jun Bernardino, his name oftentimes being mentioned in jest by play-by-play commentators.

When Vintage Sports seized coverage of the PBA in 2002, Marcial was named media bureau chief upon the appointment of former broadcaster Noli Eala as commissioner, retaining the post during the terms of Sonny Barrios, Chito Salud and Narvasa.

Marcial earned the nod after the names of Salud, UAAP Executive Director and basketball Commissioner Rebo Saguisag and broadcaster Charlie Cuna surfaced as possible candidates.

In the end, the board decided to go with a familiar figure.

"At this time, it's important to give it to somebody who grew up in the PBA, who understands the PBA, the by-laws; who has been mentored by many PBA commissioners in the past. He's one who has learned over the years in the PBA," said Vargas.

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