

Next for MVP: Tough PH team to FIBA-Asia

Written by Nelson Beltran

Tuesday, 29 January 2013 12:26



Talk n Text coach Norman Black (left) and MVP Group top executive Ricky Vargas (second from left) pose with the triumphant Texters and their supporters and family members including Vargas first granddaughter Julia. (Photo by Jun Mendoza)

MANILA — Hardly had the euphoria of their historic feat in the Philippine Cup died down than a bigger and more challenging task awaits Talk n Text and sports patron Manny V. Pangilinan — forming a highly competitive national team to the 2013 FIBA-Asia tournament.

For Pangilinan, just about everything takes backseat as they shift their focus on forming and preparing the best possible team for the 2013 FIBA-Asia Championship set here in August.

“It’s now about FIBA-Asia and attaining our goal there,” said Pangilinan, who worked hard to

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gain the hosting rights for the event to give the country a better chance of making the FIBA-World Cup in 2014.

“So be it if we don’t win the next two conferences (in the PBA) as long as we can form a competitive team for FIBA-Asia,” said MVP Group top executive Ricky Vargas, hinting at releasing most of the TnT stars to Gilas Pilipinas.

“If that is what it takes to make the team competitive, we’re willing to send most of our players. If we need to pass up playing in the third conference, we’re prepared to do that,” Vargas added.

The former PBA board chair, however, is hopeful the pro league will take a look at possibly revising the third conference format and schedule to resolve its conflict with the FIBA-Asia Championship slated Aug. 1-11.

“I’m confident because of the recent pronouncement of full cooperation of the PBA to build the best team and most competitive. When you talk about competitive, it goes without saying best preparation or most opportune time for the national team to prepare for the tournament,” said Vargas.

PBA commissioner Chito Salud earlier said he’s ready to revise the format if so ordered by the league board.

The second conference — the Commissioners Cup — is slated to start Feb. 8 with San Mig Coffee defending the crown it won over Talk n Text last year.

The Texters suffered a bitter loss then, blowing what had looked like a won series as import Denzel Bowles carried the Mixers (then called B-Meg Llamados) to an incredible come-from-behind win in the deciding Game Seven.

Talk n Text also had a futile bid in the succeeding Governors Cup, placing fourth behind Rain or

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Shine, B-Meg and Barangay Ginebra.

All these bad memories, however, are forgotten as Talk n Text marked a historic return to the top with a mighty four-game sweep of Rain or Shine in the PBA Philippine Cup finals.

The Texters secured their place among the league's immortals as they clobbered the E-Painters, 105-82, last Wednesday at the Smart Araneta Coliseum to stretch their all-Filipino reign to three seasons and win the perpetual Jun Bernardino Trophy in the process.

"Yesterday's (last Wednesday night's) game was the most emotional that I have witnessed. We're not only looking at winning a fourth game. There were two things: the sweep that had not crossed our mind and bringing home not for one year but perpetually the all-Filipino trophy," said Vargas.

It took a very special group to make the great feat.

"I don't know where they're getting the camaraderie, teamwork and friendship. They're really a group of special people," said Vargas.

"Talk n Text just played great basketball. Sometimes, it happens," said coach Norman Black of the emphatic victory they fashioned out to highlight yet another dominant conference keeping their status as the most dominant team of their time.

Through the last 11 conferences, Talk n Text was easily the best team with five championships.

The Texters were a determined bunch in pulling off the unprecedented all-Filipino three-peat via a sweep.

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“Good health by everybody made the journey easier. *Parang ngayon lang conference na ito na walang na*

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players

namin

,” said Vargas.

He wishes not just good health but good breaks for the Philippine team embarking on a journey to make good in the coming FIBA-Asia Championship.